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The Potential of the Quiet Room in Today's School Environment

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Abstract. The study aims to explore the necessity and potential benefits of introducing a Quiet Room in the school environment and to implement this initiative in a comprehensive educational institution. The research employs theoretical analysis and empirical methods, including a student survey, followed by data processing and statistical analysis. Creating an effective Quiet Room requires careful consideration of location, safety, and comfort. Age-appropriate design elements—such as soft seating, cushions, and suitable lighting—are essential. Most importantly, students' intrinsic motivation to spend time in silence is a critical prerequisite for success. Survey results indicate a notable shift in attitudes: the proportion of students expressing no desire for silent breaks decreased, while those showing interest increased. Most respondents preferred visiting the Quiet Room several times per week; a smaller group opted for daily use, and a few wished to attend every break. Nearly half reported improved concentration in subsequent lessons, highlighting the potential of Quiet Rooms to enhance focus and well-being.

Keywords: choice, individualized recess strategies, silence, Quiet Room, well-being, a student, recess, breaks

Introduction

The learning process requires "planning time for work and leisure in order to achieve one's goals" (Valsts izglītības satura centrs, n.d., p. 76). Recess is an essential component of learning, supporting students' psychological well-being and concentration. From recess benefit both students and adults, and its importance increases with cognitive load (Pellegrini & Bjorklund, 1997). This study explores the potential of Quiet Rooms for secondary school students in a comprehensive school setting. Unfortunately, many students spend breaks on smart devices rather than engaging in restorative activities. Excessive use of social networking sites during breaks increases stress and anxiety and reduces concentration, negatively affecting learning (Atsunori & Lleras, 2011). Daniela et al. (2008) emphasize the low quality of school life in Latvia, reflected in both physical and social environments. Schools are often associated with noise and chatter, especially during breaks, while silence is typically linked to classroom activities, e.g. individual work. Students usually spend from 1 hour 10 minutes to 1 hour 40 minutes daily on break.

Although social interaction during breaks is valuable, this research focuses on opportunity to provide a silent place to students who are willing to spend their time in silence. Research confirms that silence and reflection play a vital role in learning. Silence fosters self-discipline,

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deeper thinking, and stress reduction, while promoting well-being and awareness of choices (Weeks, 2018; Eswaran, 2021). Despite challenges in integrating silence into a busy school day, creating opportunities for quiet time can support deep learning (Weeks, 2018).

OECD (2023) highlights that well-being is an important goal in education, not just an add-on. It includes emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions, which are directly supported by Quiet Room initiative. Schools should create environments that reduce stress and promote mental health providing safe, calm spaces is highlighted as a practical strategy for fostering resilience and engagement (OECD, 2023). Henriksen & Gruber (2024) highlight the necessity for practical implementation mindfulness into daily school routines, not just isolated sessions. Quiet Room could become one of spaces for mindfulness practice at school.

Quiet Rooms, or designated quiet spaces, are increasingly common in schools worldwide, as well as workplaces. Furniture manufacturers now produce acoustic booths designed for individual work and equipped with advanced technology (ISKU, n.d.). Historically, however, Quiet Rooms were sometimes misused as disciplinary tools, associated with isolation and punishment (ProPublica, n.d.).

The relevance of the topic "The potential of the Quiet Room in today's school environment" is underscored by:
• Rapid technological development;
• Students' preference for mobile devices during breaks, reducing concentration and learning effectiveness;
• Lack of awareness about how break activities impact well-being and learning;
• The need for authentic, individualized activities during breaks, including opportunities for silence and reflection.

Research aim: To identify the need and opportunities for Quiet Rooms in schools and implement a "Quiet Room initiative" in a comprehensive educational institution.

Research methods:
• Theoretical analysis;
• Empirical methods (student surveys), data processing and analysis (quantitative, graphical representation, data reduction, abstraction).

The Necessity of Recess to Promote Students' Well-Being

Ivanova (2022) emphasizes that life in the 21st century is marked by constant change, presenting new challenges for education. These challenges create additional pressures on students and teachers, demanding adaptability, flexibility, and effectiveness. Consequently, the physical and psychological well-being of all participants in the learning process becomes crucial. Specialists in pedagogy and psychology, as well as practicing educators, continue to debate what well-being entails, why it matters in everyday life, and how it can be ensured (Ivanova, 2022). Well-being is a central component of education for sustainable development, as it supports students in understanding themselves. Promoting well-being is increasingly recognized as one of the most important goals in education (Salīte et al., 2016). However, well-being extends beyond mere life satisfaction. Eudaemonic well-being—derived from the Greek *eudaimōn* (happy)—is understood as the well-being of the personality. This perspective emphasizes self-determination, attitudes toward oneself, actions, behaviors, and the transformation of habitual beliefs. The eudaemonic tradition is closely linked to psychological well-being (Ivanova, 2022).

Recess plays a significant role in supporting students' well-being. They provide opportunities for students to make choices about how to spend their personal time (Murray et al., 2013). For example, some students may prepare for the next lesson, while others prefer

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socializing with friends. Observations indicate that many students often use this time on smart devices. However, without an understanding of the benefits and positive outcomes of certain activities, students' choices during breaks may negatively affect future learning (Ramstetter et al., 2010).

A recess is defined as a pause during the learning process, which can occur in various settings, including outdoors when weather permits. It often involves unstructured time for relaxation, play, and social interaction, typically under minimal adult supervision. However, breaks may not qualify as true rest periods if students engage in activities such as leaving the school campus or reporting early to the next lesson (Baines, Blatchford, & Golding, 2020). Research suggests that recess during breaks can effectively reduce disruptive behavior, enhance concentration, and improve cognitive performance (Kohl & Cook, 2013). Thus, integrating well-structured and meaningful breaks into the school day is essential for fostering students' holistic well-being and academic success.

Silence can play a significant role in implementing mindfulness practices within the school environment. Weeks (2018) argues that the experience of silence enables students to develop essential skills such as communication, collaboration, shared decision-making, and attentive listening to diverse opinions and beliefs. Silence can also be integrated into lessons—for example, at the end of a class, when teachers invite students to reflect quietly on what they have learned and assess their progress. This practice is particularly valuable in situations where tension or frustration is evident.

However, the implementation of silence in schools can be viewed from both positive and negative perspectives. Some teachers may misuse silence as a punitive measure for behavioral infractions, which Weeks (2018) describes as an "outdated model of punishment" incompatible with a humanistic approach. Silence offers time for reflection, allowing students to pause before responding, reconsider ideas, and understand perspectives that may differ from their own. In this way, silence fosters deep learning, confidence, conflict resolution, and the management of disagreements (Weeks, 2018). Eswaran (2021) adds that practicing silence helps students cope with anger and find solutions during stressful situations. It promotes conscious choices that reduce negativity and enhances creativity, concentration, self-control, self-awareness, perspective-taking, and even spiritual growth (Monk, 2018). While Burmansah (2024) recommends integrating silent sitting into classroom routines as an effective strategy for improving concentration and academic success.

Despite these benefits, many people fear silence because their daily lives are dominated by noise. Eswaran (2021) describes silence as a "natural filter for thoughts," offering opportunities to organize ideas, plan future activities, and reflect on emotions. Similarly, Monk (2018) emphasizes that "silence has power" and can be used for both positive and negative purposes. For instance, silence as emotional manipulation—such as the "silent treatment"—can harm relationships. For some, silence may evoke feelings of loneliness or awkwardness. Nevertheless, research confirms that silence itself provides physical and psychological benefits (Monk, 2018).

Ross (2014) further highlights the importance of silence for health and well-being, noting its relevance in discussions of environmental issues such as noise pollution. Creating quiet spaces in schools requires careful consideration of location and design to ensure comfort and safety (Cornerstone Schools, n.d.). These spaces are increasingly recognized worldwide as schools shift toward addressing not only academic but also mental, social, and emotional needs (Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission, 2020). Quiet spaces—often called "peace corners" or "calming corners"—allow students to practice mindfulness (Buckner, 2022). Some schools even provide designated areas within classrooms for students who need solitude (Edutopia, 2018). Su, Wood, and Tribe (2023) admit that silence can be viewed as non-participation. However, through a systematic review of literature, they argue that

silence can be a positive, participatory pedagogical strategy that fosters reflection, and deeper learning.

Initiative: "Quiet Room" in the School Environment

Creating a Quiet Room involves more than choosing a name or location—it requires thoughtful design to ensure the space meets students' needs. The room should be age-appropriate and arranged to support calming and reflective activities. Comfortable seating, such as beanbags, cushions, or sofas, is essential. Lighting also plays a key role; soft lamps or alternative light sources can help create a sense of separation from the typical classroom or corridor environment (Buckner, 2022).

When launching the Quiet Room initiative, the authors considered insights from theoretical sources: the most critical prerequisite for a Quiet Room is not only time and space but, above all, the student's willingness to spend time in silence. The room also offered opportunities for various quiet activities.

The initiative was implemented on 14 January 2025 in a separate room at the end of the school corridor, away from high-traffic areas. Activities were designed for secondary school students (ages 16–19) and included viewing optical illusions, reading educational articles (e.g., on the relevance of reading), and playing logic games such as Sudoku. Students could also choose to do nothing.

The Quiet Room rules emphasized a noise-free environment and prohibited smart devices. Recommendations included taking time for oneself, reflecting on future plans, relaxing, and resting the eyes. Böttger & Zierer (2024) emphasize that restricting smartphone use in schools leads to better concentration and higher academic achievement. Therefore, Quiet Rooms should prohibit smart devices to maximize cognitive recovery.

- Silence provides students with opportunities to develop communication, collaboration, and decision-making skills, as well as the ability to listen to diverse opinions and reflect on contrasting perspectives. It also helps manage anger and maintain calm in stressful situations, promoting conscious choices to avoid negativity.
- Silent practice can be integrated into lessons—for example, at the end of a class for reflection and self-assessment—and is particularly useful when tension or frustration is present.
- While silence offers many benefits, its misuse as punishment is incompatible with a humanistic approach.
- Creating a space for silence in schools requires attention to comfort, safety, and age-appropriate design. Elements such as beanbags, cushions, and soft lighting enhance the experience. However, the student's own motivation to engage in silence remains the most important factor.

Empirical research on the need for a Quiet Room

Research Methodology

The Quiet Room was established within a secondary school setting in Liepāja, Latvia, where students aged 16–19 attend their lessons. Visiting the Quiet Room was entirely voluntary, and students who chose to enter were invited to complete a questionnaire both before and after their visit. Participation in the survey was optional, and full anonymity was ensured. The Quiet Room offered a range of calming and engaging options: students could focus on optical illusions, read educational articles (such as one on the importance of reading), play games like Sudoku, look out of the window, meditate, or simply do nothing. Kolesar (2025) discusses the growing trend of "wellness rooms" and "calming corners" in schools as a response to rising

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student stress and mental health needs. There is also importance of integrating these rooms into the overall school environment. This variety aimed to create an environment conducive to relaxation and reflection.

The survey was conducted both before and after the visit of the Quiet Room in paper format.

- o   The questions included in the pre-visit survey were:
- o   Please describe how you feel at the moment.
- o   What do you associate with silence?
- o   How and where do you prefer to spend your rest breaks between lessons?
- o   Is how you spend your rest breaks, and what activities you do during them important to you?
- o   Have you ever wanted to have a rest break in silence?
- o   Would you be interested in spending time in a room where there is silence?
- o   Why do you want to visit the Quiet Room?

The questions in the post-visit survey (answered at the end of the school day) were:

- o   Did you like being in the silence?
- o   How many breaks did you take in the Quiet Room?
- o   What did you do there?
- o   Did you feel relaxed?
- o   Did you feel any change in yourself? What?
- o   Did you find it easier to concentrate in the next lesson after your break in the Quiet Room?
- o   Would you take advantage the opportunity to visit the Quiet Room again?
- o   How often would you like to spend time in the Quiet Room?
- o   Please justify your answer to the previous question.
- o   Would you recommend this opportunity to other students of the school?
- o   Comment on your previous answer - why yes or why not?
- o   What would need to be improved in this room if it was available all the time?

Research Results

The survey was completed by 35 respondents: 21 boys and 14 girls, including 6 students from grade 10, 21 from grade 11, and 8 from grade 12 (see Figure 1). Each respondent visited the Quiet Room once—28 during break time (at different breaks) and 7 during a lesson period when they had no scheduled class due to timetable changes. The maximum number of students present in the Quiet Room at the same time was five, and the longest stay recorded was 20 minutes. When asked about recommending the Quiet Room to others, 20 respondents said they would do so, while only two indicated they would not. These findings support the aim of the empirical part of the study: to explore the necessity and perceived value of a Quiet Room for secondary school students.

When asked to describe how they felt at the moment, most respondents said they felt tired, sleepy or wanted to sleep (20 respondents). A relatively high proportion of respondents also said that they feel good and satisfied at the moment (7 students). At the same time 5 students felt stressed or worried about something (see Figure 1).
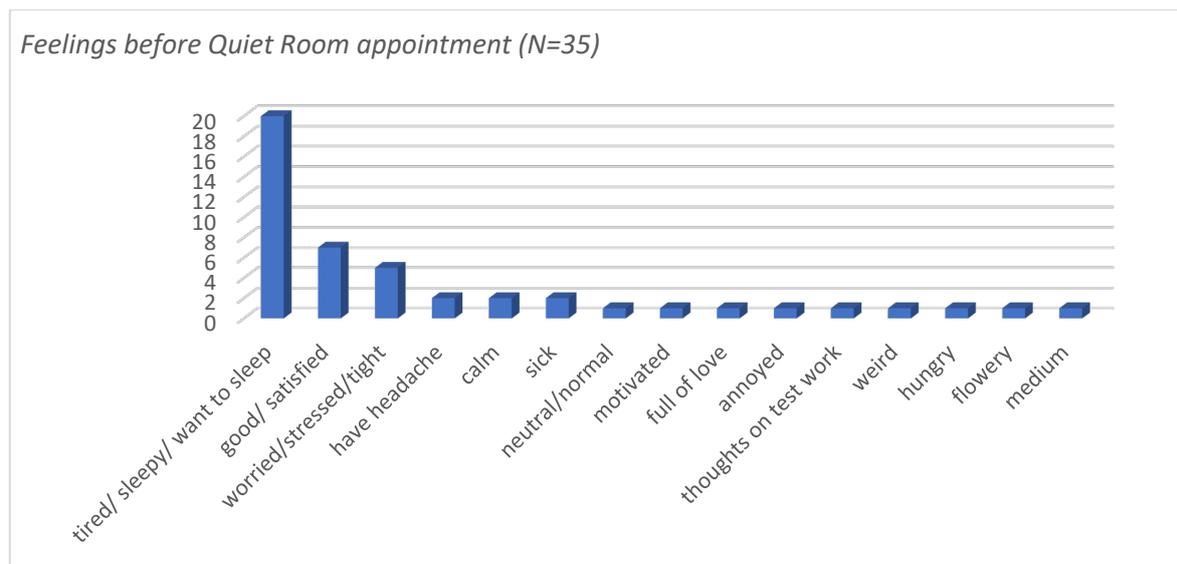
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Figure 1 **Students' feelings before attending the Quiet Room**

It is interesting that some answers were contradictory for some respondents, e.g. *I feel good but worried; I feel tired but in a good mood; I feel good but thinking about test; I feel tired but happy; I feel calm but worried*. There were also answers with several characteristics, such as: *I feel hungry, tired, sleepless; I feel tense, stressed and tired; I feel normal but have a headache and cough; I feel tired, sleepless, resigned but motivated*.

In response to the question "What do you associate with silence?" most respondents said they associate silence with peace, and a significant number associate it with reflection and sleep or relaxation (see Figure 3). The vast majority of respondents associate silence with positive concepts (nature, freedom, balance, sea, beauty, etc.). However, there are also answers with negative associations - "anxiety", "tension", "loneliness" (see Figure 2).
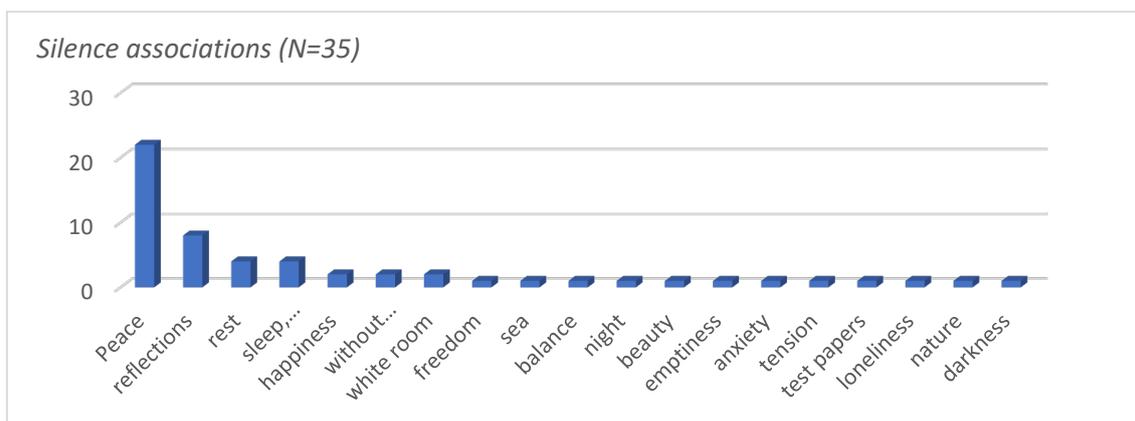

Figure 2 **Silence associations**

Students could select multiple answers to the question: *"How and where do you prefer to spend your breaks between lessons?"* Most respondents indicated activities such as talking, listening to music, doing nothing in particular (mostly sitting), active movement (walking inside or outside the school), using smart devices, and other options (see Figure 4).

The most popular choice was using smart devices, reported by 27 respondents. At the same time, 26 respondents also engaged in talking or listening to music, suggesting that even while using devices, students continued to communicate with peers rather than isolating themselves in virtual spaces. Additionally, 21 respondents reported active movement during breaks, while 17 respondents admitted to doing nothing in particular and mostly sitting.

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Interestingly, 7 respondents sought quiet spaces even in noisy corridors. Other less common activities included spending time in the library (4 respondents), playing cards (3 respondents), playing chess (1 respondent), and visiting former teachers during breaks (1 respondent) (see Figure 3).
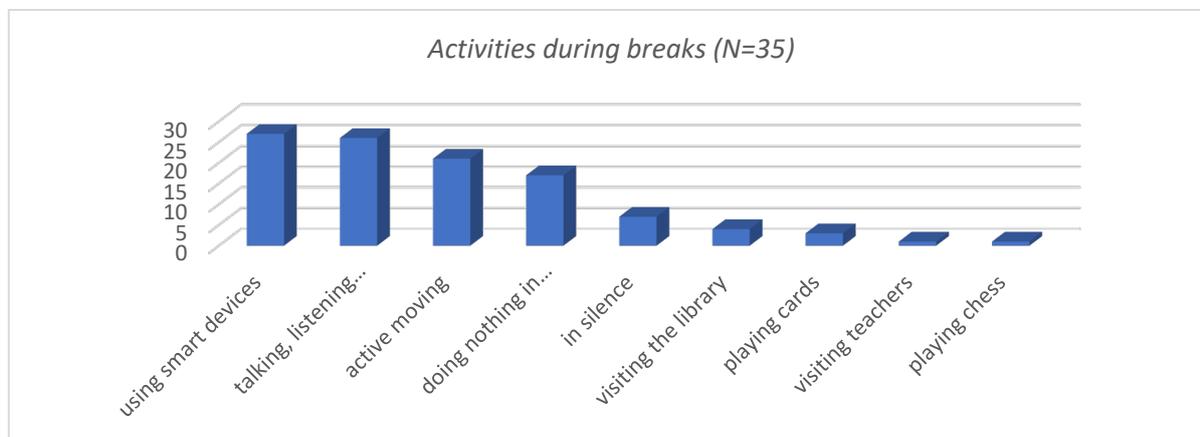

*Figure 3 **Break time activities***

Only slightly more than half of the surveyed students considered activities during their rest breaks important. Specifically, 19 out of 35 respondents stated that how they spend their breaks matters to them, while 16 respondents indicated that it does not. Interestingly, 26 students expressed a prior desire to spend their breaks in silence, which was an unexpected and positive finding for the author. When asked, *"Why do you want to visit the Quiet Room?"*, the most common response was curiosity or a desire to try something new. Four respondents stated they wanted to relax and enjoy peace and quiet, while three left the answer field blank. Other reasons included doing homework, reflecting, taking a short nap, and visiting because a teacher invited them. Before visiting the Quiet Room, 26 respondents indicated that they wished to spend time in silence, and 27 expressed readiness to spend their break in the Quiet Room. After the visit, 24 respondents reported that they enjoyed being there. Notably, the number of students who previously stated they had no desire for silence decreased significantly; only two respondents said they did not like being in silence after the experience. Additionally, nine respondents provided partial positive answers, suggesting a shift toward a more favorable attitude. The most popular activity in the Quiet Room was the Sudoku game, played by 22 respondents. The students' responses show the importance of offering a variety of activities, which is also highlighted by the findings from theoretical research (Buckner, 2022). 2 respondents admitted that they used smart devices even though they were asked not to do so. This finding illustrates that even in a quiet space, most students prefer to engage in some activity rather than simply sit in silence. They are not accustomed to having time for themselves for meditation, reflection, or thoughtful consideration of their experiences. A potential direction for future research could be to explore whether students would still choose to visit the Quiet Room if it offered no games or activities—only silence and the opportunity to sit, relax, think, reflect on previous lessons and conversations, or simply look out of the window. Would such a minimalist Quiet Room be as appealing to them? Mazzeo (2025) highlights the importance of co-designing Quiet Rooms through participatory approaches that involve students, educators, and mental health professionals. It is also emphasized that Quiet Rooms as spaces for resilience and mental health support rather than reactive measures.

19 respondents said they felt relaxed after visiting the Quiet Room, while12 respondents chose "hard to say" and 4 respondents said they did not feel relaxed. When asked, *"Did you feel any changes in yourself after visiting the Quiet Room? What changes?"*, almost half of

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respondents reported feeling calmer, making this the most common response. The second most frequent answer was that nothing had changed. A notable proportion also indicated feeling more relaxed, experiencing an improved mood, or having a clearer and quieter mind. Furthermore, 13 respondents stated that they found it easier to concentrate in lessons following their visit, highlighting the potential value of individualized recess strategies. Not all students require silence during breaks; however, for those who do, such strategies can enhance focus on listening, understanding, and learning. Students who recognize which activities help them recharge during breaks are better positioned to improve their academic performance. Importantly, the Quiet Room was not perceived as positive or inspiring by everyone—a finding that is valuable for future planning. Despite this, 29 respondents expressed willingness to visit the Quiet Room again. Even among those who did not report improved concentration or mood, many appreciated having the option to spend free time in a quiet environment. Overall, the research strongly suggests that Quiet Rooms are an important and necessary feature in schools, providing students with an opportunity to withdraw from noise and engage in restorative activities.

The most frequent response to the question *"How often would you like to spend time in the Quiet Room?"* was *a few breaks per week* (15 respondents). Eight students indicated they would attend once per day, and three said they would visit during every break. This suggests that while students do not necessarily want to spend every break in silence, they value having the Quiet Room as an option for certain breaks when they prefer solitude—even if only a few times a week. Responses regarding the desire to revisit the Quiet Room after an initial experience highlight the importance of offering students' opportunities to explore different activities and reflect on what suits them best. Schools should provide a variety of options for rest breaks while also fostering mindfulness, helping students understand which activities support their well-being and concentration. Encouraging students to evaluate how different break-time strategies affect them can promote informed choices and improve learning outcomes. When asked, *"What would this room need to improve if it was available all the time?"*, the most frequent suggestion was to add more activities, such as chess and card games. This reinforces the observation that even in a quiet space, students prefer having something to do. Many respondents also emphasized the need for more comfortable seating, as the current room was small and furnished only with school chairs and three beanbags. Several students suggested that a larger room would be ideal. It is possible that if the space were more spacious and equipped with comfortable seating, the importance of activities might diminish, allowing students to better appreciate the benefits of silence. Other recommendations included improved soundproofing to block corridor noise, which remains audible even though the room is located at the end of the hallway. Two respondents left the question unanswered, while three suggested making the room darker—possibly even windowless—to create a more calming atmosphere.

Conclusions

Before visiting the Quiet Room, the majority of respondents expressed a desire to go there. After the visit, almost 2/3rd of the respondents reported that they enjoyed being in the Quiet Room. Notably, the number of students who previously indicated no wish to spend time in silence decreased; only two respondents stated they did not like being in silence after the experience. The most popular activity in the Quiet Room was playing Sudoku, chosen by the majority of respondents, while only one student did nothing. This preference highlights the importance of offering a variety of activities, aligning with theoretical insights from research. However, it would be beneficial to encourage students to use silence for meditation, reflection, and self-awareness. Students suggested adding more activities, such as a chess set, and

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improving comfort with better chairs. Enhanced soundproofing was also recommended to ensure complete silence.

These suggestions indicate that students prefer having options even in a quiet environment and that environmental noise can interfere with relaxation.

Most students expressed interest in revisiting the Quiet Room, with the majority preferring to use it a few times per week. Eight respondents would visit once per day, and three would go during every break. Importantly, 13 respondents reported improved concentration in lessons following their visit.

A large proportion of respondents felt calmer after attending the Quiet Room, while the second most common response was that nothing had changed. This suggests that the Quiet Room has a positive effect on emotional regulation for many students.

Although smart devices remain the most common way students spend breaks, respondents emphasized the importance of activities during recess. This underscores the need to identify individual strategies for effective break-time use.

In response to the question, *"What is the need for a Quiet Room at secondary school level?"*, the study concludes that there is a clear shift toward valuing silence. The number of students with no desire for quiet time decreased, while those expressing some interest in silence increased after experiencing the Quiet Room.

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