The Relationship of Classroom Environment and Engagement of Alternative Learning System Students

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ABSTRACT

The classroom environment plays a critical role in fostering engagement among Alternative Learning System (ALS) students, as it directly influences their motivation, attendance, and academic performance. Despite existing research highlighting the importance of physical and psychosocial factors in traditional educational settings, there remains a gap in understanding how these variables specifically impact engagement within ALS contexts, where learners often face unique challenges and require tailored support. The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between classroom environment sub-variables-physical and organizational environment, social and emotional support, and intellectual and academic stimulation-and the engagement levels of ALS students.

A quantitative survey was administered to ALS learners, yielding mean scores of 4.66, 4.72, and 4.73 respectively for the three sub-variables, all rated as "Strongly Agree" and qualitatively interpreted as "Highly Practiced," resulting in an overall mean of 4.70. Key findings indicate that a highly supportive classroom environment, particularly in terms of social and emotional support, is a major indicator of increased student engagement, attendance, and academic achievement. These results are consistent with previous studies, which emphasize that teacher and peer support, as well as a personalized and resource-rich environment, significantly enhance student connectedness, motivation, and participation.

The implications of this study suggest that strengthening the physical and psychosocial classroom environment in ALS settings can lead to higher levels of student engagement and improved educational outcomes. Educational stakeholders are encouraged to invest in both the physical infrastructure and the social-emotional climate of ALS classrooms to maximize learner success and retention.

INTRODUCTION

The classroom environment is a critical factor influencing the engagement and success of learners, particularly within the context of the Alternative Learning System (ALS), which serves out-of-school youth and adults seeking alternative pathways to education. Engagement in learning is multifaceted, encompassing behavioral, cognitive, and affective dimensions, all of which can be shaped by the quality and characteristics of the educational setting.

Recent studies underscore the significant role of the physical and social environment in fostering learner engagement among ALS students. For example, the physical location and design of the classroom-such as spacious layouts or outdoor learning spaces-can promote active participation, group work, and hands-on activities, thereby enhancing behavioral engagement. Similarly, the broader community culture and support systems surrounding ALS learners contribute to cognitive and affective engagement by nurturing curiosity, critical thinking, and a sense of belonging.

Research has shown that when ALS programs prioritize adaptability and inclusivity, they create participation-friendly environments that are conducive to learning and engagement. The flexibility inherent in ALS frameworks addresses barriers to education by responding to the diverse needs of learners, making educational experiences more relevant and effective. Data from recent analyses indicate that improvements in classroom

layouts, instructional materials, and interactive teaching methods significantly increase engagement levels among ALS learners, with educational setting variables showing strong statistical effects on engagement outcomes.

Moreover, studies on alternative and creative classroom designs in various educational contexts have found that student-centered environments-characterized by flexible seating, collaborative spaces, and interactive pedagogical practices-lead to higher levels of student satisfaction and engagement compared to traditional classroom setups. These findings are consistent across different educational systems, suggesting that optimizing the classroom environment is a key strategy for enhancing engagement and learning outcomes among ALS students.

The relationship between classroom environment and student engagement is well-established, particularly in alternative education settings like ALS. Prior research highlights that thoughtful design and management of learning spaces, along with supportive community and instructional practices, are essential for fostering meaningful engagement and achieving the goals of alternative education programs.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between classroom environment and student engagement among Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners. The design allowed for the assessment of the strength and direction of the relationship between variables without manipulating the classroom environment.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Pangantucan West District, located in the Municipality of Pangantucan, Bukidnon, Philippines. This predominantly rural area comprises several barangays characterized by hilly terrain and a culturally diverse population, including indigenous communities such as the Talaandig and Manobo. The district serves a varied group of Alternative Learning System (ALS) students, many of whom come from marginalized backgrounds. The unique geographic and socio-cultural setting of Pangantucan West provides an ideal context to examine how classroom environment factors influence student engagement among ALS learners.

Participants of the Study

The study involved 90 ALS students enrolled in various learning centers within Pangantucan West District. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they were actively attending ALS classes during the data collection period. The sample included both male and female students aged 15 to 65 years, representing diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Research Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire designed to gather data on the classroom environment and student engagement among Alternative Learning System (ALS) students. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections: the first section measured students' perceptions of their classroom environment, including physical, social, and instructional factors; the second section assessed various dimensions of student engagement, such as behavioral, cognitive, and emotional involvement in learning activities. Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing for quantifiable analysis of the relationship between classroom environment and engagement levels. The questionnaire was adapted from validated instruments in previous studies and was pilot-tested to ensure reliability and clarity for the ALS learner context.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the ALS program coordinators and learning center administrators. After securing informed consent from the participants, the questionnaires were administered during regular class hours. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and assured confidentiality to encourage honest responses.

Statistical Techniques

Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were computed for all variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between classroom environment and student engagement. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify which dimensions of the classroom environment significantly predict student engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Sub-Variables	**Mean**	**Descriptive Rating**	**Qualitative Interpretation**
Physical and organizational Environment	4.66	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Practiced
Social and Emotional Support	4.72	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Practiced
Intellectual and Academic Stimulation	4.73	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Practiced
Over-all Mean	4.70	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Practiced

Legend:			
Scale	**Range**	**Descriptive Rating**	**Qualitative Interpretation**
5	4.50-5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Experienced
4	3.50-4.49	Agree (A)	Experienced
3	2.50HP-3.49	Neutral (N)	Moderately Experienced
2	1.50-2.49	Disagree (D)	Slightly Experienced
1	1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Not Experienced

The summary table of collaborative learning environments shows an overall mean of 4.70, which falls under "Strongly Agree" and is interpreted as "Highly Practiced." This high overall mean suggests that, as perceived by respondents, collaborative learning environments are well-established and consistently implemented in the classroom setting.

Highest and Lowest Indicators

Among the three sub-variables, "Intellectual and Academic Stimulation" received the highest mean score of 4.73. This indicates that activities and interactions that challenge students' thinking, encourage problem-solving, and stimulate intellectual curiosity are the most prominent features in these classrooms. Such a strong presence of academic stimulation is significant because it is closely linked to higher student engagement and improved learning outcomes. International studies have emphasized that cognitive activation-where students are encouraged to evaluate, integrate, and apply knowledge-leads to better academic achievement and deeper learning (Baumert et al., 2010; Fauth et al., 2014). This aligns with the findings of Kyriakides et al. (2009), who noted that instructional quality, particularly cognitive activation, is a key determinant of student success.

"Physical and Organizational Environment" registered the lowest mean at 4.66, though it still falls within the "Strongly Agree" category and is considered "Highly Practiced." This suggests that while the physical setup and organizational aspects of the classroom-such as seating arrangements, resource availability, and clear routines-are well-managed, they are perceived as slightly less prominent than the intellectual and social dimensions. The implication is that, although these foundational elements are in place, there may be minor areas for improvement in optimizing the physical and organizational aspects to further support collaborative learning. International research highlights the importance of a safe, orderly, and well-organized classroom environment as a prerequisite for effective learning and positive student outcomes (Wang & Degol, 2015; Thapa et al., 2013). A well-structured environment not only supports academic tasks but also fosters a sense of security and belonging among students.

The high score for "Social and Emotional Support" (mean = 4.72) indicates that students feel supported by their peers and teachers, fostering a positive classroom climate. Studies have shown that supportive classroom climates, where students feel cared for and respected, are associated with increased motivation, engagement, and academic performance (Kane & Cantrell, 2012; Klieme et al., 2009).

Implications of the Results

The results showing a high overall mean (4.70) and strong ratings across all sub-variables of the collaborative learning environment imply that such environments are well-established and effectively practiced in the classroom. This has several important implications. First, the strong intellectual and academic stimulation indicates that students are actively engaged in critical thinking, problem-solving, and meaningful learning tasks. This kind of engagement is linked to deeper understanding and better retention of knowledge, which enhances academic achievement. Collaborative learning encourages students to share ideas, analyze problems together, and develop essential skills like communication and critical thinking, preparing them for real-life challenges (Faculty Focus, 2024; Cornell Center for Teaching Innovation, n.d.).

The high social and emotional support score suggests that students feel valued, supported, and connected with their peers and teachers. This positive social climate fosters motivation increases participation, and builds respect for diverse perspectives, which are crucial for effective collaboration and learning (Frontiers in Psychology, 2025). When students experience emotional safety and support, they are more likely to take intellectual risks and engage deeply with the material.

Even the slightly lower but still strong rating for the physical and organizational environment implies that the classroom setup and routines are conducive to collaboration, providing a structured yet flexible space for interaction. A well-organized environment supports focus and smooth group work, which are essential for collaborative learning to succeed (Education Endowment Foundation, n.d.).

Together, these findings imply that collaborative learning environments not only improve academic outcomes but also enhance social skills, peer support, and student motivation. They create a dynamic and inclusive atmosphere where students take responsibility for their own and others' learning, leading to higher engagement and better preparation for future academic and professional settings (Frontiers in Psychology, 2025; IJIP, 2024).

Local studies in the Philippines also support these implications. Research by Ramos (2019) and Dela Cruz et al. (2021) found that collaborative and supportive classroom environments contribute significantly to student engagement and achievement in Filipino schools. These environments help students develop teamwork and communication skills essential for success in a diverse and interconnected society. The high ratings across all aspects of collaborative learning environments indicate that students benefit from intellectually stimulating, socially supportive, and well-organized classrooms. These conditions promote deeper learning, motivation, and essential life skills, highlighting the value of continuing to foster and improve collaborative practices in education.

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