

Parental Engagement and Academic Achievement of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Learners

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ABSTRACT:

This study determined the extent of parental engagement and its relationship with the academic achievement of Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners at Talon–Talon Central School SPED Center, Zamboanga City. While existing literature confirms the benefits of family support in formal education, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on ALS settings, where learning is less structured and dependent on home support. It involved 40 ALS learners, 23 parents/guardians, and 5 teachers, utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design. Data were gathered using a validated questionnaire with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.88, analyzed through weighted mean, t-test, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. Results revealed that parental engagement was average overall ($M = 3.22$), with high support at home ($M = 3.53$) but low involvement in school activities ($M = 2.86$) and moderate communication ($M = 3.26$). Academic achievement was rated high by learners ($M = 3.73$) and parents ($M = 3.58$), and very high by teachers ($M = 4.73$). No significant differences were found in engagement and achievement when grouped by sex, age, educational attainment, or financial status. A moderate positive relationship was found ($r = 0.305$, $p = 0.011$), indicating that higher engagement corresponds to better outcomes, though this association does not prove causation. The study concludes that active home support is vital in non-formal education, and recommends intensified home-school collaboration, capacity-building for parents, and improved communication channels.

Keywords: Parental engagement, Academic achievement, Alternative Learning System, Non-formal education, Descriptive-correlational design, Zamboanga City, Philippines

Introduction

Parental engagement is recognized globally as a fundamental right, a family duty, and a societal necessity. It refers to the active, continuous participation of parents in the social, emotional, and educational development of their children. It

encompasses setting academic expectations, guiding learning tasks, monitoring progress, and participating in school governance and activities. In the Philippine educational context, this is institutionalized through the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), established under

Department of Education Memorandum No. 74, s. 1999, and reinforced by Republic Act 8525 (Brigada Eskwela), which promotes shared responsibility between home and school.

Despite these mechanisms, recent studies by Castillo (2022) and Mendoza (2023) show that engagement remains uneven, often limited to physical attendance rather than meaningful involvement in learning. This gap is more pronounced in the Alternative Learning System (ALS), a parallel program designed for out-of-school youth, working adults, and marginalized groups who cannot access formal schooling. ALS operates on flexible schedules, community-based instruction, and limited contact hours, making the home environment a critical extension of the classroom.

Research Gap and Significance

Most existing research focuses on formal education settings, where structured classes and regular school contact provide a stable framework for learning. There is a scarcity of recent studies (2022–2025) that examine how parental engagement functions in non-formal education, particularly in the BARMM and Zamboanga Peninsula regions. Previous works (e.g., Nierva, 2009) are outdated and do not account for current ALS policy reforms. This study fills the gap by providing updated, context-specific data; it differs from prior research by analyzing perspectives from three stakeholders—parents, learners, and teachers—rather than relying on a single source. The findings will help policymakers and ALS implementers design more effective support systems tailored to the unique needs of non-formal learners.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model (2018), which posits that student learning and development improve when home, school, and community work together. It is also supported by the Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 2022), which suggests that family involvement builds trust, communication, and shared norms that enhance educational outcomes. Additionally, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2024) explains that

support and encouragement from significant others increase learner motivation and persistence—key factors in flexible learning environments.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to assess the level of parental engagement and the academic achievement of ALS learners at Talon–Talon Central School SPED Center. Specifically, it aims:

1. To determine the level of parental engagement as perceived by parents, teachers, and learners in terms of involvement in school activities, communication with teachers, and support at home.
2. To identify the extent of academic achievement of the learners along the dimensions of knowledge and skills, learning progress, and motivation and engagement.
3. To ascertain if there is a significant difference in parental engagement and academic achievement when respondents are grouped according to sex, age, educational attainment, and financial stability.
4. To establish if there is a significant relationship between the level of parental engagement and the academic achievement of the learners.

Scope and Delimitation

The study focused exclusively on ALS learners enrolled in Grades 7–10 equivalent levels at Talon–Talon Central School SPED Center during School Year 2024–2025. Parental engagement was measured across three dimensions; academic achievement was assessed through perceptual ratings and available portfolio-based assessment results, as standardized tests are not uniformly administered in ALS.

The study relies on self-reported and perceived data, which may be subject to response bias. The sample size is small and limited to one center, so findings cannot be generalized to all ALS sites. Furthermore, correlation analysis only identifies association, not cause-and-effect relationships.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive method described the status of variables, while the correlational method determined the strength and direction of their relationship. This design is appropriate for observing existing conditions without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Talon–Talon Central School SPED Center, located in Barangay Talon–Talon, Zamboanga City. It was selected because it serves a large and diverse population of ALS learners, providing a representative setting for this research.

Population and Sampling

The respondents consisted of 40 learners, 23 parents/guardians, and 5 teachers. Total enumeration was used for parents and teachers due to their small population size. For learners, simple random sampling was applied to ensure every enrolled learner had an equal chance of selection, reducing selection bias. This approach is recommended for studies with small populations (Palatino, 2022).

Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire used in this study was adapted from validated instruments developed by Bautista (2023) and Cruz & Reyes (2024), with necessary modifications made to ensure relevance and appropriateness to the Alternative Learning System (ALS) context. The instrument is organized into three distinct parts: Part I gathers information on the respondents' demographic profile, Part II measures the level of parental engagement through 15 items, and Part III assesses academic achievement using 12 items. All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to Never or Strongly Disagree, 2 to Rarely or Disagree, 3 to Sometimes or Neutral, 4 to Often or Agree, and 5 to Always or Strongly Agree.

Validation and Reliability

Content validity was established by three experts (ALS specialist, measurement expert, and statistician), yielding a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.91, which is above the acceptable threshold of 0.80. A pilot test with 15 respondents not included in the final sample produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.88, confirming high internal consistency. The instrument was translated into Chavacano and back-translated to ensure accuracy and cultural appropriateness (Diaz, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

Formal approval was secured from the Schools Division Office and the school principal. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time. No personal identifiers were recorded, and data were used exclusively for research purposes.

Data Gathering Procedure

After securing permissions, the researcher explained the study purpose and provided assistance to respondents with limited literacy. Questionnaires were distributed and collected personally, achieving a 100% retrieval rate. Data were coded and tabulated for analysis.

Statistical Treatment

All collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Version 26. The weighted mean was computed to determine the levels of parental engagement and academic achievement. The t-test was used to compare significant differences between respondents grouped by sex, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to examine differences across categories of age, educational attainment, and financial status. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was then calculated to measure the strength and direction of association between the study variables. Prior to running all statistical tests, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were verified, and the level of significance for all analyses was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Results and Discussion**Level of Parental Engagement****Table 1 Level of Parental Engagement**

Indicators	Parents		Teachers		Learners	
	Mean	Rating	Mean	Rating	Mean	Rating
Involvement in School Activities	2.54	Low	3.24	Average	2.79	Average
Communication with Teachers	2.93	Average	3.64	High	3.20	Average
Support at Home	3.43	High	4.04	High	3.11	Average
Overall Mean	3.00	Average	3.64	High	3.03	Average

Results show that engagement is average overall. Home support is consistently high, reflecting Filipino cultural values where parents prioritize learning within the household (Castillo, 2022). However, participation in school activities is low, likely due to work demands, distance, or limited

information. This aligns with findings by Mendoza (2023), who noted that logistical barriers are the main reasons for low school-based participation among families in non-formal education.

Level of Academic Achievement**Table 2 Level of Academic Achievement**

Indicators	Parents		Teachers		Learners	
	Mean	Rating	Mean	Rating	Mean	Rating
Knowledge and Skills	3.48	High	4.67	Very High	3.75	High
Learning Progress	3.81	High	4.73	Very High	3.85	High
Motivation & Engagement	3.46	High	4.80	Very High	3.60	High
Overall Mean	3.58	High	4.73	Very High	3.73	High

Academic achievement is rated positively by all groups. Teachers gave the highest scores, likely due to direct observation of progress. These results are consistent with Dela Cruz (2024), who found that ALS learners often show high motivation when supported by flexible

instruction and family encouragement. It should be noted that these are perceptual assessments, which may differ from standardized test scores; however, in ALS, portfolios and observations are the standard evaluation tools.

Differences in Variables by Demographic Profile

Table 3 Test of Differences

Grouping Variable	Variable	Test	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	Academic Achievement	t-test	0.332	Not Significant
	Parental Engagement	t-test	0.792	Not Significant
Age	Academic Achievement	F-test	0.738	Not Significant
	Parental Engagement	F-test	0.936	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	Academic Achievement	F-test	0.785	Not Significant
	Parental Engagement	F-test	0.439	Not Significant
Financial Stability	Academic Achievement	F-test	0.074	Not Significant
	Parental Engagement	F-test	0.351	Not Significant

No significant differences were found across all demographic groups. This suggests that ALS provides equitable opportunities, and that support is not determined by gender, age, or

income level. This finding supports UNESCO (2023), which highlights non-formal education as an effective tool for reducing socio-economic and demographic achievement gaps.

Relationship Between Parental Engagement and Academic Achievement

Table 4 Correlation Analysis

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Parental Engagement vs. Academic Achievement	0.305	0.011	Moderate Positive Relationship*

*Note: This indicates association, not causation. Other factors may also influence achievement.

The correlation coefficient of 0.305 shows a moderate positive relationship, meaning that as parental engagement increases, achievement tends to improve. This confirms the findings of Henderson & Mapp (2021) and Palatino (2022), who concluded that family support is a significant predictor of success, especially in programs with limited class time. However, it is important to

recognize that this relationship is not linear, and external factors such as teacher quality and learning materials also play roles.

Conclusions

Parental engagement in this study is rated as average overall, characterized by strong home-based support but limited active involvement in school activities and two-way communication

with educators. Academic achievement, as perceived by all participating stakeholders, is considered high. Demographic factors such as age, sex, and financial status do not exert a significant influence on either the level of parental engagement or student outcomes. There is a moderate positive relationship between parental engagement and academic achievement, though this association does not establish direct cause and effect between the two variables.

Study Limitations

This research has notable constraints that should be considered when interpreting the findings. In terms of sample size and scope, the study is limited to a single ALS center, so the results cannot be generalized to other learning centers or regions. Regarding measurement, the assessment relies primarily on stakeholder perceptions rather than official standardized test scores, which may affect objectivity. Additionally, the cross-sectional research design only captures data at one point in time and cannot track how engagement or achievement may change over longer periods.

Practical and Policy Implications

The findings offer actionable directions for different stakeholders. For schools, it is recommended to schedule flexible meetings and conduct regular home visits to accommodate working parents, while also providing clear, simple guides on how families can effectively support learning at home. For parents, orientation sessions and skill-building activities should be offered to boost their confidence and competence in assisting their children's

education. For policymakers, explicit parental engagement strategies should be integrated into the official Alternative Learning System implementation plan to help improve learner retention and completion rates.

Future Research

To build on this work, further investigations are suggested. Future studies should use larger sample sizes and cover multiple ALS divisions to ensure broader representativeness. Researchers may also adopt longitudinal designs to observe and track changes in engagement and achievement over an extended period. Finally, combining objective measures of academic performance alongside perceptual data will provide a more complete and rigorous understanding of the topic.

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