

Exploring Post-program trajectories and support needs of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Junior High School (JHS) completers in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)

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ABSTRACT

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The Alternative Learning System (ALS) provides flexible educational opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). The main purpose of this study is to examine the educational pathways and support needs of ALS junior high school completers. This study utilized a concurrent embedded design to analyze the post-program outcomes of ALS junior high school completers in Baguio City and Sablan, concentrating on both academic performance and student experiences. The participants, aged 16-30 from diverse ethnic backgrounds, showed balanced gender representation. Findings reveal that while students excel in basic mathematical problem-solving, they struggle with calculations and understanding concepts, indicating the need for targeted interventions. In science, students grasp fundamental concepts but face challenges in principles and processes, especially in Sablan. Social sciences findings show that Sablan students understand economic systems but struggle with historical and cultural aspects, while Baguio students excel in history but need to improve cultural awareness. Communication skills in both areas are good in grammar but weak in writing and reading. Life and career skills highlight strong self-awareness, empathy, and creativity, yet critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving need improvement, particularly in Sablan. Technical skills show the lowest proficiency in computer servicing and food skills in Sablan, and baking and electronics in Baguio. Positive self-perceptions are noted, but Baguio students show disparities in moral self-evaluation and family relationships, suggesting a need for enhanced support. Key challenges include difficulties with modules, social interaction, balancing work, family, and studies, and personal issues such as health and mental health problems. Recommended interventions include simplifying content, targeted academic support, social-emotional well-being, and improved work-life-study balance..

Keywords: alternative learning systems, flexible education, out of school youth, competencies, Cordillera Administrative Region.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Education in the Philippines is vital, as emphasized in Article XIV Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution: “the State shall protect and promote the right to education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” Section 2 outlines the State's commitment to financial support, non-formal learning systems, and training for out-of-school youths.

The Department of Education (DepEd) offers non-formal education through the Alternative Learning Systems (ALS), a flexible program addressing diverse needs and promoting life skills. Key ALS components, the Basic Literacy Program and the Accreditation and Equivalency Program, enable learners to achieve formal education standards (Department of Education, 2023). The Bureau of Alternative Education, established in 2021,

enhances ALS delivery, benefiting marginalized groups (Department of Education, 2021). Teacher readiness in life skills education remains a challenge, addressed by initiatives like training programs, which significantly enhance teaching effectiveness (Caingcoy et al., 2021). The effectiveness of teachers and the ALS program is evident in graduate performance. A UNICEF study (2019) interviewed 500 ALS learners aged 12-19 across seven Philippine regions. The study revealed that barriers to ALS completion mirrored those for formal school dropouts, including financial difficulties, lack of parental guidance, interest, and vices. Many completers did not take the A&E Test, citing time constraints or lack of preparation. Among test-takers, 35% failed due to insufficient readiness, while 33% found the test challenging.

In BARMM, ALS success rates remain below national standards, hindered by family misunderstandings, lack of facilitator guidance, insufficient materials, and untrained teachers (Igarashi et al., 2019). Conversely, the program excelled in Sultan Kudarat and Cotabato, where beneficiaries gained diplomas and, in some cases, college degrees (Salendab & Cogo, 2022; Guimalon et al., 2022). Similarly, ALS benefited slum communities in Manila, promoting socio-economic upliftment (Mehra et al., 2021).

The ALS enables marginalized youth to overcome barriers to education through flexibility (Salise & Quimbo, 2017). Studies highlight its impact on learner achievements and life skills but stress challenges, such as pandemic disruptions, portfolio completion, and financial hardships (Chavez et al., n.d.; industry and academic research review, 2023). Enhanced partnerships and teacher development are recommended to strengthen ALS outcomes. The main purpose of the study is to determine the paths of the Department of Education (Deped) Alternative learning system (ALS) Junior High School (JHS) Completers in BLISTT area of Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) after undergoing the program.

Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) highlights how social networks and relationships shape opportunities, which aligns with analyzing how the Alternative Learning System (ALS). Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) emphasizes education and skills as drivers of productivity and earnings, providing a framework to assess how ALS and UB's initiatives enhance human capital in the Cordillera Administrative Region, thereby advancing participants' economic prospects.

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the pathways for Junior High School completers of Alternative learning system (ALS) in selected schools in Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

Specific Objectives:

1. To determine the status of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) among Junior High School completers with respect to:
 - a. Demographic information
 - b. Competencies developed
2. To identify the external and internal barriers that hinder ALS Junior High School learners from pursuing their desired post-program pathways.
3. To construct an action plan to realize the development program of University of Baguio, catering to the post-program needs of ALS-JHS completers.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The post-program outcomes for ALS junior high school completers were examined through a concurrent embedded design, emphasizing quantitative results while incorporating qualitative insights. Academic performance was assessed in mathematics, science, social sciences, and communication skills, while interviews revealed internal and external barriers faced by students. An inductive approach was used to analyze qualitative data, identifying key themes from participants' responses. This mixed methods approach provided a comprehensive view of the ALS program's effectiveness, highlighting achievements and areas for improvement. Findings offer guidance for future interventions and policy adjustments to better address the needs of ALS students.

Population of the Study

The study focused on ALS Junior High completers in the BLISTT area of Cordillera, particularly those in grades 8-9. Convenience sampling was used across ALS centers in Baguio and Benguet, with 12 respondents from Sablan and 154 from Baguio. Data collection faced challenges due to irregular schedules of ALS learners, limiting responses from certain areas. Open-ended questions supplemented questionnaires to gather detailed qualitative data. Despite difficulties, the data provides valuable insights into the experiences and needs of ALS learners in the region.

Data Gathering Tool & Procedure

The study utilized a questionnaire adapted from the Department of Education's ALS-EST Handbook (2019) and the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (n.d.), alongside researcher-developed interview questions. This ensured comprehensive data collection, covering demographics, literacy, life, technical skills, and cultural awareness. Quantitative data was gathered primarily through the questionnaire, while a semi-structured interview guide captured qualitative insights into barriers faced by ALS Junior High School learners in achieving their post-program goals. This mixed approach provided a holistic understanding of learner experiences and outcomes.

The researchers sought permission from the Regional Director of Department of Education (DepEd) CAR and the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of Baguio and Benguet to distribute questionnaires and conduct interviews. Upon approval, the SDS referred them to the ALS Coordinator, who provided locations of ALS centers, including Baguio and Sablan. While the ALS head supported the study, challenges emerged, such as irregular learner attendance and teachers' mobility. Many learners and teachers were unavailable, complicating data collection. Despite these obstacles, the researchers persevered, emphasizing the importance of profiling ALS learners and the unique challenges within the program's structure.

Treatment of data

The first objective of the study was answered through a questionnaire collecting demographic data such as gender, age, ethnicity, residence, education, marital status, income, and employment. Literacy, life, technical skills, and cultural awareness were rated using a four-point Likert scale to evaluate perceived skill development. The second objective was addressed through an interview guide. Data were analyzed using the weighted mean for quantitative insights. For qualitative analysis, researchers employed inductive coding, grouping responses into themes, classifying patterns, and validating results with participants to ensure credibility and accuracy. Themes were abstracted after materials were coded.

Likert scales on Understanding the Self

Scale	Range	Verbal interpretation	Description
1	1.00-1.74	False	The statement does not apply to the respondent
2	1.75-2.49	Mostly False	The statement somehow applies to the respondent
3	2.5-3.24	Mostly True	The statement mostly applies to the respondent with some exceptions/reservations
4	3.25-4.00	True	the statement describes the respondent's agreement/
Scale	Range	Verbal interpretation	Description
1	1.00-1.74	Never	Participant does not exhibit the statement at all
2	1.75-2.49	Sometimes	Participant sometimes exhibits the statement
3	2.5-3.24	Fairly Often	Participant exhibits the statement most of the time
4	3.25-4.00	Always	Participant exhibits the statement all the time

Ethical Considerations

The researchers observed ethical standards in conducting research. Protecting participants was paramount, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Fair subject selection was implemented based on needed data and prospective respondents' situations. After explaining the research objectives, informed consent forms were provided, clarifying that participation was voluntary and withdrawal was allowed if inconvenient. No conflict of interest arose as the study was purely academic and informed a three-year outreach project for the ALS program of BLISTT. Findings will be disseminated via research publication, with a copy sent to the Bureau of Alternative Learning System.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Demographic information

The demographic profile of ALS completers highlights diverse characteristics across gender, age, ethnicity, education, marital status, income, employment, living status, and language. In Baguio City (152) and Sablan (12), males are the majority, aged 16-30. Ethnic diversity includes Ibaloi, Kankanaey, and others. Most participants have some high school education. Non-married individuals and low-income earners dominate. Employment varies from full-time to unemployed, with many as renters. Language use is diverse, led by Ilokano. These profiles emphasize ALS's inclusivity in addressing diverse communities and challenges while enabling targeted interventions.

The demographic analysis reveals disparities between Baguio and Sablan. Baguio has a higher male population (82 males to 72 females) than Sablan (9 males to 3 females). Most participants in Baguio (136 of 152) are aged 16-30, while Sablan has only 9 in this range, reflecting potential out-migration. Both areas show low educational attainment, with many earning below ₱10,957. Baguio offers more job opportunities (22 full-time workers), unlike Sablan. Most respondents have no dependents and prefer renting. Language diversity is richer in Baguio. These differences highlight the need for targeted interventions to address economic and educational challenges, especially in Sablan. The ALS community is diverse, requiring tailored educational curricula that address varying demands across age, ethnicity, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds.

COMPETENCIES

The Philippine Alternative Learning System (ALS) empowers out-of-school youth and adults with essential skills through a curriculum focused on six key developmental areas.

Table 1: Mathematical and problem solving skills (N=166)

<i>Skills</i>	Sablan		Baguio	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
Acquired foundation mathematical concepts	2	2	36	4
Knowledge on calculations	0	4	37	2.5
Knowledge on basic mathematical problem	7	1	65	1
Understanding on mathematical principles	1	3	37	2.5

The performance of students in mathematical competencies from Sablan and Baguio is summarized in Table 1, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. In Sablan, students show a frequency of 2 and rank 2 in "Acquired Foundation Mathematical Concepts," indicating basic understanding but a need for improvement. They struggle with "Knowledge on Calculations," with a frequency of 0 and rank of 4, suggesting significant difficulty in this area. Conversely, they excel in "Knowledge on Basic Mathematical Problems," with a frequency of 7 and rank 1, demonstrating competence. In "Understanding on Mathematical Principles," they score a frequency of 1 and rank 3, signifying limited comprehension requiring enhancement.

These results suggest Sablan students need targeted support in calculations and foundational concepts. This aligns with Edo et al (2013), who noted Indonesian students' challenges in mathematically formulating real-world problems and assessing solution reasonableness. In Baguio, the results are more promising, with a frequency of 36 and rank 4 in "Acquired Foundation Mathematical Concepts," reflecting a foundational understanding. "Knowledge on Calculations" and "Understanding on Mathematical Principles" both score a frequency of 37 and rank 2.5, showing competence with room for growth through practice. Their strongest area is "Knowledge on Basic Mathematical Problems," scoring a frequency of 65 and rank 1, indicating high proficiency. This aligns with Yalcin et al (2012) findings about Turkish students' ease in solving self-constructed math problems. Interventions are needed to strengthen weaker areas while building on problem-solving skills.

Gender dynamics reveal additional insights. In Sablan, students show limited foundational and calculation skills, while Baguio students excel in problem-solving but share weaknesses in calculations and mathematical principles. Male students (82) outnumber females (72) across both areas. Studies suggest societal gender norms influence math engagement, with boys often gaining more confidence due to stereotypes, while girls, despite equal or superior skills, may feel less capable, impacting their math education choices. To address these disparities, interventions should target both technical skills and gender dynamics. Educational environments must actively challenge stereotypes and empower all students, particularly girls, to confidently engage in mathematics and STEM fields. This inclusive approach fosters equitable opportunities, narrowing the gender gap and enhancing mathematical achievement for all learners.

Table 2: Communication Skills (N=166)

LANGUAGE OR COMMUNICATION	Sablan		Baguio	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
Knowledge of English grammar	4	1	67	1
Knowledge of Filipino grammar	3	2	48	2
Developed oral communication skills in English	1	5.5	18	6
Developed oral communication skills in Filipino	2	3.5	22	5
Developed reading skills in English	2	3.5	35	3
Developed reading skill in Filipino	1	5.5	0	7.5
Developed writing skills in English	0	7	0	7.5
Developed writing skills in Filipino	0	8	27	4

The frequency and rank of language or communication skills in English and Filipino for Sablan and Baguio reveal significant patterns as shown in table 2. In both areas, "Developed writing skills in English" and "Developed writing skills in Filipino" rank the lowest, indicating struggles in these areas. Sablan ranks them at 7 and 8, while Baguio records a rank of 7.5 for both. Conversely, the highest ranks in Sablan are for "Knowledge of English grammar" and "Knowledge of Filipino grammar," both at rank 1. Similarly, in Baguio, "Knowledge of English grammar" is ranked 1 with a frequency of 67, and "Knowledge of Filipino grammar" ranks 2 with a frequency of 48. This demonstrates a strong grammatical foundation but weak writing skills across both locations.

Cabigao (2021) observed similar challenges among Grade 7 students in the Philippines, noting difficulties with cursive writing, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and paragraphing. These align with the results from Sablan and Baguio, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to enhance writing skills. Effective measures, such as workshops and grammar exercises, can address these deficiencies and improve overall language competencies. Moreover, a distinct correlation exists between communication skills and educational attainment. Clear writing abilities are crucial for academic success, enabling students to express ideas effectively. Research indicates that communication skills positively, albeit weakly ($r = 0.206$), correlate with academic performance. Educational institutions play a vital role in addressing these challenges through strategies that integrate effective communication practices into teaching.

Participants also struggle with understanding module content in mathematics and English, with phrases like **"I am having difficulty with the modules"** and **"I am struggling the most in math"** highlighting these barriers. Simplified modules with illustrative examples can mitigate these difficulties, equipping educators to better tailor teaching strategies and enhance students' academic performance.

Table 3: Scientific Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills (N=166)

COMPETENCIES	Sablan		Baguio	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
Basic understanding of scientific concepts	4	1	76	1
Basic understanding of scientific principles	0	7.5	24	2
Basic understanding of scientific processes	3	2	17	4.5
Knowledge in biology	1	5	12	8
Knowledge in chemistry	0	7.5	21	3
Knowledge in physics	1	5	17	4.5
Knowledge in environmental science	2	3	16	6.5
Knowledge in scientific method	1	5	16	6.5

The students in Sablan ranked "Basic Understanding of Scientific Principles" and "Knowledge in Chemistry" at 7.5 with zero frequency, indicating a lack of understanding of scientific phenomena and Chemistry concepts. Shavelson and Ruiz-Primo (2000) argue that understanding scientific principles requires active engagement and hands-on opportunities to apply concepts in real-world contexts. Strengthening these competencies involves providing students with such practical experiences. "Knowledge in Biology, Physics, and Scientific Method" ranked 5th with a frequency of 1 each, reflecting difficulties in understanding lesson content. However,

the top three competencies include "Knowledge in Environmental Science" (rank 3), "Basic Understanding of Scientific Processes" (rank 2), and "Basic Understanding of Scientific Concepts" (rank 1). These fundamental topics are easier for students to grasp. The data suggests that the ALS program should adopt a holistic approach to teaching science, emphasizing scientific principles, environmental issues, and inquiry-based learning.

In Baguio, "Knowledge in Biology" ranked the lowest, likely due to the subject's complexity, highlighting a need for focused improvement. "Knowledge in Environmental Science" and "Scientific Method" were tied at 6.5, indicating their importance to students, though reinforcing the relationship between these topics could enhance understanding. "Basic Understanding of Scientific Processes" and "Knowledge in Physics" were tied at 4th with a frequency of 17. These topics should be simplified to improve comprehension. With a frequency of 21, "Knowledge in Chemistry" ranked 3rd, showing relatively strong interest and understanding. Ranking 2nd with a frequency of 24, "Basic Understanding of Scientific Principles" reflects a solid grasp of fundamental scientific ideas. Ranking 1st was "Basic Understanding of Scientific Concepts," indicating students' strong scientific foundation. Tailoring teaching strategies for younger learners and integrating hands-on experiments (Shavelson & Ruiz-Primo, 2000) can improve understanding of complex principles while strengthening scientific literacy in ALS programs.

Table 4: Development of self and sense of community (N=166)

LEARNING SKILLS	Sablan		Baguio	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
Understanding of historical views	0	4	73	1
Understanding of cultural diversity	1	3	30	4
Understanding of economic systems	6	1	45	2
Understanding of civic responsibilities	4	2	31	3

Table 4 highlights the skill rankings of students in Sablan and Baguio. In Sablan, "Understanding of historical views," which includes social, cultural, and ideological contexts, ranked lowest, potentially due to the complexity of these topics. Conversely, "Understanding the economic systems" ranked first with a frequency of 6, reflecting good comprehension of market concepts and policies, possibly due to clear and simplified topic presentations. In Baguio, "Understanding of cultural diversity" ranked 4th with a frequency of 30, indicating its importance but also a need for improved cultural awareness. "Understanding of historical views" ranked 1st with a frequency of 73, demonstrating that historical knowledge is highly valued and well comprehended, likely due to its relevance to current contexts and students' strong grasp of historical narratives. A study by Kitani and Sebulen (2023) on Baguio Central University students found that strong time management skills and positive attitudes contributed to better understanding of economic systems. This might explain Sablan students' high ranking of economic systems, as they likely balance work and study efficiently.

The Baguio City Gender and Inclusion Study (ADB, 2021) reported no significant gender gaps in educational attainment, suggesting differences in skill rankings between Sablan and Baguio arise from distinct educational approaches and curricula. These findings underscore the need to address Sablan students' struggles with historical views while enhancing Baguio students' cultural awareness. Tailored educational strategies can promote self-development, strengthen community ties, and improve overall learning outcomes across both locations.

Table 5: Life and Career Skills. (N=166)

Life Skills	Sablan		Baguio	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
1.SELF-AWARENESS				
I am confident about myself	10	1	110	1
I can handle change well	4	2	47	2
2.EMPATHY				
Other people's misfortunes disturb me a lot	2	2	20	2
I am interested in how others feel	8	1	127	1
3.CRITICAL THINKING				
I am curious about everything	3	2	87	1
I take the initiative rather than do not do anything at all	8	1	72	2

4.CREATIVE THINKING				
I consider myself creative	5	1.5	105	1
I generate new ideas all the time	5	1.5	57	2
5.DECISION-MAKING				
I always take the "best value" decision	7	1	84	1
Once i make decision, i am committed to it	5	2	69	2
6.PROBLEM-SOLVING				
I have a system (steps) to solve problem	7	1	97	1
I rely on my intuition to solve problems	4	2	45	2
I ensure the commitment of all concerned when solving problems	1	3	31	3
7.COPING WITH STRESS				
I am always optimistic about things	6	1	64	2
I believe in spiritual cause for things happening around me	5	2	89	1

The table outlines life skills rankings for students in Sablan and Baguio. Among seven indicators, four rank 2nd for both areas. First, for self-awareness, the indicator "I can handle change well" suggests students struggle with adapting to new situations. Second, for empathy, "Other people's misfortunes disturb me a lot" shows that deep empathetic concern is not well developed. Third, in decision-making, "Once I make a decision, I am committed to it" reflects that students' multiple perspectives may hinder effective decision-making. Fourth, for problem-solving, "I ensure the commitment of all concerned when solving problems" implies a lack of teamwork, which can improve through team-building activities.

In Sablan, the critical thinking indicator "I am curious about everything" shows limited curiosity, suggesting teachers should encourage exploration. In Baguio, "I take the initiative rather than do nothing at all" ranked 2nd, indicating fear of failure may inhibit proactivity. For creative thinking in Sablan, "I consider myself creative" and "I generate new ideas all the time" emphasize maintaining activities that encourage innovation. However, in Baguio, "I generate new ideas all the time" indicates low confidence or difficulty implementing ideas. For coping with stress, Sablan's "I believe in spiritual causes" suggests spirituality aids stress management, while Baguio's "I am always optimistic about things" ranking 2nd points to limited understanding of optimism.

Kharpuri and Bhaskar (2024) assert resilience is vital for youth, fostering adaptability. Similarly, Rasyidi et al. (2021) highlight resilience's role in career adaptability, while Othman et al. (2018) emphasize emotional intelligence, curiosity, and creative confidence for holistic development. Life skills assessments reveal challenges in problem-solving and decision-making—crucial for career growth. Single students outperform married peers in self-care, possibly due to fewer responsibilities. Education strategies should enhance emotional intelligence, support diverse demographics, and build life skills to foster resilience and adaptability.

Table 6: Technical Skills. (N=166)

Technical Skills	SUBSKILLS	Sablan		Baguio	
		Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
FOOD AND HOUSEKEEPING	Food and beverage	0	4	76	2
	Cookery	3	1.5	90	1
	Baking and pastry production	2	3	28	4
	Housekeeping	3	1.5	60	3
ELECTRONICS AND WELDING	Electrical installation and maintenance	2	1.5	22	3
	Computer system servicing	0	5	17	4
	Automotive	2	1.5	33	1
	Shielded metal arc welding	1	3.5	24	2
	Electronics production and assembly	1	3.5	15	5
WELLNESS	Hairdressing	4	1	24	3
	Wellness massage	1	2	34	2

	Beauty care	0	4	76	1
DRESSMAKING	Tailoring	2	2	46	1
	Garments and textiles	2	2	15	3
	Fashion design	2	2	37	2
AGRICULTURE	Organic vegetables	4	1	21	3
	Organic agriculture	3	2	43	1
	Agri-crop production	1	3	26	2
CARPENTRY	Plumbing	0	3.5	10	3
	Carpentry	3	1.5	24	1
	Furniture and cabinet making	3	1.5	17	2
	Technical drafting	0	3.5	7	4

Table 6 summarizes the technical skills rankings of students in Sablan and Baguio. In Sablan, limited skills include computer system servicing (rank 5), food and beverage and beauty care (rank 4), plumbing and technical drafting (rank 3.5), and agricultural crop production (rank 3). In Baguio, areas needing improvement are baking and pastry production (rank 4), electronics production and assembly (rank 5), organic vegetable and technical drafting (rank 4), and hairdressing, garments, and textiles (rank 3). In Sablan, hairdressing and organic vegetable production are top-ranked skills, while in Baguio, beauty care, tailoring, and organic agriculture rank highest. These differences reflect the unique strengths and demands of each community, underscoring the importance of tailoring education and training programs to local needs. Household income strongly impacts skill development. Students from low-income households often face barriers to accessing high-quality training, limiting their opportunities for skill acquisition and employment.

These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address skill gaps in both areas. Research highlights the role of vocational education, particularly teaching factory models, in aligning student competencies with labor market demands (Safarinah et al., 2022). International evidence points to skill mismatches in STEM fields due to the academic focus over practical training, suggesting the integration of hands-on training and competency-based learning is essential (Conn et al., 2017). Comprehensive strategies targeting economic barriers and promoting practical training are vital for improving employability and ensuring students in Sablan and Baguio can meet the evolving demands of the job market.

Table 7: Understanding the Self (N=166)

Social well-being and environment	Sablan			Baguio		
	Mean	I	Rank	Mean	I	Rank
I get on well with my parent(s)	3.92	True	1	3.26	True	15
I like the way I am	3.74	True	3	3.68	True	1
I join in with other children	3.49	True	14	3.49	True	3
I am a good person	3.75	True	2	3.19	Mostly True	18
Parent(s) is (are) proud of me	3.55	True	8	3.33	True	11.5
I own up when I do something wrong	3.67	True	4	3.4	True	8
I encourage other class members to do well at school	3.58	True	6	3.41	True	6.5
I feel safe at school	3.58	True	6	3.23	True	17
In my school older children help younger children	3.58	True	6	3.46	True	4
My school is proud of me	3.5	True	11	3.12	Mostly True	19.5
My efforts are appreciated	3.5	True	11	3.41	True	6.5
Others understand what I say	3.5	True	11	3.12	Mostly True	19.5
I play with children who are different to me	3.42	True	16.5	3.38	True	9.5
If I have a problem, I talk to my friend	3.42	True	16.5	3.29	True	12

I have a problem, I talk to my parent(s)	3.17	Mostly True	18.5	3.26	True	15
I work well in a small group	3.25	True	15.5	3.38	True	9.5
I do my share of work in the group	3.17	Mostly True	18.5	3.51	True	2
People respect my opinion	3.25	True	15.5	2.79	Mostly True	22
I get involved because my friends are	3.5	True	11	3.26	Mostly True	15
I feel for others who are worse off than me	3.5	True	11	3.33	True	11.5
I am not picked on by other children	2.33	Mostly False	20	3.27	True	13
My school is usually a peaceful place	2.25	Mostly False	21	3.44	True	5
In my school, teachers care for children	2.17	Mostly False	22	2.99	Mostly True	21
OVERALL MEAN	3.49	TRUE		3.45	TRUE	
Academically self-concept	Sablan			Baguio		
	Mean	I	Rank	Mean	I	Rank
School is enjoyable	3.36	True	2.5	3.42	True	2
I have a lot of friends	3.36	True	2.5	3.26	True	6
If I get something wrong, I redo it	2.5	Mostly true	8	3.34	True	4
I make friends with boys	3.5	True	1	3.07	Mostly True	10
I make friends with girls	3.25	True	4	3.14	Mostly True	7
I listen when others are speaking	2.75	Mostly True	6	3.11	Mostly True	8
I follow the class role	2.75	Mostly True	6	3.41	True	3
I am good at reading	2.75	Mostly True	6	3.47	True	1
I am good at school	2.25	Mostly False	9	3.	Mostly True	9
I am good at spelling	2.08	Mostly False	11	3.29	True	5
I am good at mathematics	2.08	Mostly False	11	3.01	Mostly False	
Mathematics is interesting	2.08	Mostly False	11	2.99	Mostly True	12
OVERALL MEAN	2.97	Mostly True		3.5	True	
Moral Values	Sablan			Baguio		
	Mean	I	Rank	Mean	I	Rank
I play fair	3.57	Mostly True	4.5	3.35	True	10.5
I say sorry if I am wrong	3.67	Mostly True	1.5	2.83	Mostly True	34
I like children who are different to me	2.89	Mostly True	30	3.35	True	10.5
I know when I am sad	3.33	True	21.5	3.38	True	8
I know when I am nervous	3.25	True	26.5	3.45	True	2.5
People help me at this school	3.33	True	21.5	2.92	Mostly True	30
I know when I am happy	3.25	True	26.5	3.45	True	2.5
I care for others' needs	3.07	Mostly True	28	3.33	True	17
Teachers trust me to do a job	2.92	Mostly True	29	3.03	Mostly True	31
In my school, children care for each other	2.67	Mostly True	34	3.22	True	26
I know how to control my temper	3.67	True	1.5	3.41	True	7
I look forward to growing up	3.5	True	4.5	3.29	True	20.5
When I am happy, I show it	3.45	True	8	3.33	True	17
I have goals for the future	3.42	True	12	3.43	True	4.5
I care for people who look different	3.42	True	12	3.19	Mostly True	28
I treat people well even if they look different	3.42	True	12	3.33	True	17
I get upset when I see someone from another country being made fun of	3.42	True	12	3.28	True	23

I stick up for others even if they are not my friends	3.42	True	12	3.27	True	25
When people upset me, I get over it	3.33	True	21.5	3.28	True	23
I participate for enjoyment	3.33	True	21.5	3.43	True	4.5
I do things to get rewards	3.33	True	21.5	3.24	Mostly True	25
I am good looking	3.35	True	16.5	3.35	True	10.5
I like children who are different to me	3.35	True	16.5	3.35	True	10.5
People should give more money to poor people overseas	3.33	True	21.5	3.01	Mostly True	3
When I grow up I will help poor people overseas	2.83	Mostly True	31	3.1	Mostly True	2
I can express my anger without hurting people	2.79	Mostly True	32	3.2	Mostly True	30
I get upset when I see others upset	2.25	Mostly False	36.5	2.79	Mostly True	27
I help if someone is hurt	2.25	Mostly False	36.5	3.29	True	35
When I am an adult, I will not smoke	3.46	True	7	3.46	True	20.5
School is enjoyable	3.42	True	12	3.42	True	1
I think cheating is wrong	3.33	True	21.5	3.33	True	6
My parent(s) is (are) proud of me	3.33	True	21.5	3.33	True	17
I am good looking	2.75	Mostly True	33	3.35	True	17
I like children who are different to me	3.5	True	4.5	3.35	True	10.5
I get upset when I see others upset	2.25	Mostly False	36.5	3.28	True	10.5
I help if someone is hurt	2.25	Mostly False	36.5	2.25	Mostly false	23
OVERALL MEAN	3.17	Mostly True		3.15	Mostly True	36

Physical Activities and Interests	Sablan			Baguio		
	Mean	I	Rank	Mean	I	Rank
Being fit is important to me	3.5	True	2.5	3.53	True	1.5
I can run a long way	3.33	True	11.5	3.13	Mostly True	12
I can throw a small ball a long way	2.83	Mostly true	14.5	3.21	Mostly true	10
I am good sport (accepting losing)	3.5	True	2.5	3.38	True	5.5
Reading is interesting	3.42	True	4.5	3.19	Mostly True	11
Doing dance is important to me	3.42	True	4.5	2.95	Mostly True	13
Doing art is important to me	3.25	True	13	3.26	True	9
Doing music is important to me	3.33	True	11.5	2.67	Mostly True	16
Being fit is important to me	3.53	True	1	3.53	True	1.5
I am good looking	3.35	True	9.5	3.35	True	7.5
I like children who are different to me	3.35	True	9.5	3.35	True	7.5
I follow the class role	3.41	True	6	3.41	True	3
I wait my turn when playing games	3.39	True	7	3.39	Mostly True	4
I am a good sport (accepting losing)	3.38	True	8	3.38	Mostly True	5.5
Doing music is important to me	2.67	Mostly True	17	2.67	Mostly True	16
I say sorry if I am wrong	2.83	Mostly True	14.5	2.83	Mostly False	14
Eating healthy food is important to me	2.81	Mostly True	16	2.67	Mostly True	16
Playing sport is important to me	2.32	Mostly False	18	2.32	Mostly False	18
OVERALL MEAN	3.20	Mostly True		3.12	Mostly True	

Understanding self and society

"Understanding the Self and Society" compares the social well-being of students from Sablan and Baguio. Both groups express positive self-perceptions, as seen in their agreement with statements like "I like the way I am" (rank 3 in Sablan, rank 1 in Baguio) and "I am a good person" (rank 2 in Sablan, rank 18 in Baguio). However, variations in moral self-evaluation highlight the need for targeted support in Baguio to foster self-worth and a more positive self-concept. Addressing these gaps can create a more supportive community atmosphere and enhance overall social well-being.

Perdana et al. (2022) demonstrate that rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) improves subjective well-being and self-worth, indicating potential benefits for Baguio students. Avita and Muhid (2023) emphasize how after-school initiatives enhance self-esteem in at-risk groups, while Yanita (2015) highlights the crucial role of family support in shaping self-esteem and boosting self-worth.

Social well-being and environment

It can be gleaned from the table that the **relationship with parents and peers** Sablan students regard their relationship with their parents as the best (rank 1), stating that they get along extremely well. But Baguio students give this a lower ranking (rank 15). When it comes to talking to friends about concerns and participating in activities with other kids (rank 3 for both groups), both groups strongly agree (rank 16.5 for Sablan, rank 12 for Baguio). As a result, even though Sablan and Baguio students exhibit positive peer interactions, there appears to be a need for concentrated efforts in Baguio to improve family dynamics given the notable disparity in their assessments of parental ties. Improving these connections can result in better emotional support for pupils, which will benefit their social and general growth.

Furthermore, in the **school experiences** Compared to Baguio (rank 17), Sablan students feel safer at school (rank 6). Additionally, they think that their school is generally calm (rank 5). Baguio students (rank 4) are more likely to strongly believe that older students in their school support younger students. This is ranked lower by Sablan (rank 6). - Both groups (rank 11 for Sablan, rank 6.5 for Baguio) concur that their efforts are valued at school.

In essence, Sablan students experience a more secure and tranquil learning environment, whereas Baguio students gain from robust assistance from their older peers. In the end, improving peer connections and addressing safety concerns in Baguio can improve students' school experiences overall, which will benefit their academic performance and emotional health.

Likewise, Emmanuel (2024) suggested that favorable attitudes towards administrative and support services in tertiary education are linked to student contentment and adaptive mechanisms, both of which are crucial for overall wellness. Additionally, it is critical that students feel safe at school because, especially for vulnerable populations, experiencing emotions of insecurity is linked to lower self-esteem and greater depressive symptoms (Maffini, 2016). Since kids in public schools reported being better prepared and having stronger support systems than their counterparts in private schools, addressing bullying and creating a supportive environment can help to attenuate these negative effects (Sansait et al., 2023). In the same manner, Raniti et al. (2022) claimed that according to the systematic review, improving school connectedness may lead to better mental health outcomes, which is consistent with the notion that improving peer interactions may enhance kids' overall school experiences. Therefore, encouraging academic performance and emotional resilience in Baguio kids requires strengthening peer interactions and maintaining a safe learning environment.

Moreover, in **perceptions of the students** differ in the two areas. Sablan is more likely (rank 11) to participate in extracurricular activities because their friends are, whereas students in Baguio are less likely (rank 15).

Students from Baguio firmly agree (rank 2) that they complete their fair share of work in groups; students from Sablan disagree (rank 18.5). Baguio students disagree that they are being picked on by other students (rank 13), while Sablan students are more likely to feel this way (rank 20). This indicates that even if Sablan students gain from peer pressure in extracurricular activities, they still struggle with teamwork and bullying sentiments. Conversely, kids in Baguio exhibit robust work ethics within groups and hold a favorable view of their social surroundings; yet, it's possible that their level of peer-driven involvement in extracurricular activities is lower. By addressing these differences, both sites' pupils' entire school experiences can be improved, creating a more wholesome and encouraging learning atmosphere.

In conclusion, the data indicates that although both groups perceive themselves favorably, Sablan students report better parent-child ties and a more favorable school climate, while Baguio students exhibit greater group collaboration. Nonetheless, bullying feels more like a victim to Sablan students. The average scores show that both groups, taken as a whole, have a fairly favorable perception of themselves and their social surroundings.

Academically self- concept

"Academically Self-Concept" compares the perceptions of students from Sablan and Baguio regarding their academic self-concept. The overall mean for Sablan students is 2.97 (Mostly True), while Baguio students have a higher mean of 3.5 (True). This indicates that Baguio students generally have a more positive academic self-concept compared to their counterparts in Sablan.

In the table, it also shows that **employment in the school**, both groups report similar levels of enjoyment in school, with Sablan at 3.36 (rank 2.5) and Baguio at 3.42 (rank 2). This suggests that students in both locations find their school experience enjoyable, which is crucial for fostering a positive learning environment.

A good part of their educational experiences is reflected in the similar degrees of satisfaction that students in Sablan and Baguio reported. For educators and school administrators, preserving and developing this enjoyment is crucial to creating a productive and encouraging learning environment. Both institutions can guarantee that students remain motivated and involved in their academic endeavors by continuing to foster good school experiences.

Friendship Dynamics can be seen in the responses. Sablan students express that they have a lot of friends (3.36, rank 2.5), while Baguio students report a slightly lower mean (3.26, rank 6). This indicates that social connections are strong in both groups, but Sablan students feel more positively about their friendships.

Although students from Sablan and Baguio report having strong social ties, Sablan students' more favorable opinions of their friendships emphasize how crucial it is to create a welcoming and helpful learning environment. Schools may play a significant role in the general well-being and achievement of their students by making sure that all kids have access to pleasant social interactions and feel valued within their peer groups.

In terms of **self-assessment**, Sablan students show lower confidence in their academic abilities. For instance, they report feeling "Mostly False" about being good at reading (2.75, rank 6), spelling (2.08, rank 11), and mathematics (2.08, rank 11). In contrast, Baguio students have higher self-assessments in these areas, with means of 3.47 (True) for reading, 3.29 (True) for spelling, and 3.01 (Mostly True) for mathematics. This disparity highlights a significant difference in self-efficacy between the two groups.

Finally, the disparities in the students' assessments of their own abilities between Sablan and Baguio indicate a serious problem with their academic self-confidence. Through addressing the issues that lead to lower levels of self-efficacy in Sablan, educators can support students in creating a more positive academic self-concept—a critical component of learning engagement and long-term success. In order to help kids in both locations develop resilience and confidence, it will be essential to create supportive and empowering educational experiences.

To note, studies reveal that a deficiency of assistance can considerably impede a child's self-assurance, implying that cultivating a supportive environment is crucial for scholastic achievement (Manurung et al., 2023). In addition, it has been demonstrated that using inclusive approaches to address educational inequities can improve student motivation and engagement, especially for students from low-income families (Ladines, 2023). Support from the community, such as relationships with family and peers, is important for building resilience, which is necessary for overcoming obstacles in the classroom (Lee-Chua, 2022). Furthermore, growth mindsets have been associated with better academic results, especially when students have confidence in their capacity to achieve in the face of adversity (Alinsunurin, 2021). For students in both places to improve their academic self-concept and long-term success, it is crucial to create powerful educational experiences that support resilience and self-efficacy (Tri & Rahayu, 2024).

In terms of **interest in subjects**, both groups expressed a lack of interest in mathematics, with Sablan students ranking it as "Mostly False" (2.08, rank 11) and Baguio students slightly more positively at 2.99 (Mostly True, rank 12). This suggests that both groups may need additional support or motivation in this subject area.

In summary, the results show that children in Sablan and Baguio have a similar lack of interest in mathematics, underscoring the necessity of providing specialized encouragement and support in this area. Teachers may help improve students' attitudes and performance by putting methods in place to increase engagement and show the relevance of mathematics. This will ultimately create a more pleasant learning environment that will better prepare students for success in school and in the workplace.

The **willingness to improve** differs in the 2 areas. Sablan students indicate a willingness to redo work if they get something wrong (2.5, rank 8), while Baguio students have a higher mean (3.34, rank 4). This suggests that Baguio students may have a more proactive approach to learning and improvement.

A noteworthy feature of the learning attitudes of Sablan and Baguio students is highlighted by the disparities in their willingness to repeat work. While Sablan students could use more assistance to boost their self-confidence and readiness to own up to their mistakes, Baguio students show a more proactive approach to learning. Teachers can enhance the overall educational experience for students in both locations by supporting a growth attitude and a positive response to obstacles.

Both groups reported similar levels of **listening and classroom behavior** when others are speaking, with Sablan at 2.75 (rank 6) and Baguio at 3.11 (rank 8). However, Baguio students rank higher in following classroom rules (3.41, rank 3) compared to Sablan students (2.75, rank 6). This indicates that Baguio students may exhibit better classroom behavior and adherence to rules, which can positively impact their learning environment.

As a result, the data shows that although students from Sablan and Baguio both understand the value of listening, Baguio students are more dedicated to abiding by the rules in the classroom. The aforementioned behavioral variation has the potential to greatly impact the entire learning environment. Therefore, it is possible that specific interventions within Sablan will be required to enhance student participation and rule compliance. Teachers can improve every student's educational experience by cultivating a culture of respect and accountability.

Based on better self-assessments of their academic ability and a greater willingness to participate in learning activities, the data indicates that Baguio students have a more positive academic self-concept than Sablan students. Although both cohorts find school enjoyable and possess strong social bonds, Sablan students' lower self-esteem and sense of their academic self-worth point to the necessity of focused treatments aimed at improving their academic self-characterization. Interventions aimed at reducing these differences can include those that enhance academic performance, provide a healthy learning environment, and work toward boosting self-esteem.

MORAL VALUES

Both Sablan and Baguio students have a generally good attitude toward moral principles, with averages of 3.17 (Mostly True) in Sablan and 3.15 (Mostly True) in Baguio. This suggests that Sablan has a tiny preference for moral values over Baguio, despite the fact that their perceptions are nearly identical.

For statements that exhibit **fairness and apologies**, Sablan ranked the statement "I play fair" received 3.57 and ranked #1, demonstrating a strong commitment to fairness. In comparison, Baguio students ranked it lower at 3.35, placing it eighth. Similarly, "I say sorry if I am wrong" received 3.67 in Sablan, ranking second, but Baguio students rated it substantially lower at 2.83, placing thirty-fourth. This implies that Sablan students place a greater emphasis on justice and responsibility than their Baguio counterparts.

SUPPORTING DIVERSITY

Both groups showed a good attitude toward diversity, with statements about enjoying children who are different scoring 2.89 (Sablan) and 3.35 (Baguio). However, the result shows that Baguio students are more open to variety.

Statements describing **future aspirations**, such as "I look forward to growing up" and "I have goals for the future," obtained similar ratings between 3.42 and 3.5, indicating that both groups are positive about their futures.

Interestingly, in terms of **helpfulness and empathy**, both groups scored low on empathy-related statements like "I get upset when I see others upset" and "I help if someone is hurt," with Sablan ratings of 2.25, indicating a need for growth in empathetic behavior.

As to enjoyment and participation, the mean scores for involvement for enjoyment were 3.33 in Sablan and 3.43 in Baguio, indicating that Baguio students may gain more pleasure from participating in events. The data demonstrates that, while Sablan and Baguio students generally agree on the importance of moral principles, there are significant variations in several areas. Sablan students had stronger views on fairness and accountability, whereas Baguio students have higher degrees of emotional awareness and social responsibility. Both parties, however, may benefit from increased empathy and helpfulness. This information can help educators and policymakers customize character education programs to address these disparities and enhance moral development among students.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Importance of Fitness: Both groups place a high emphasis on fitness, with Sablan rating 3.5 and Baguio ranking slightly lower (3.53). This shows a considerable emphasis on physical health among students in both sectors.

Running Ability: Sablan students had higher confidence in their running talents (mean score of 3.33) than Baguio students (3.13). This could indicate varying levels of physical training or chances for running activities in their distinct surroundings.

Both groups had positive attitudes regarding **sportsmanship**, with Sablan at 3.5 and Baguio at 3.38. This demonstrates a common value in taking losses and maintaining a positive attitude in competitive situations.

Results also show **interests in arts and music**. Students in Sablan and Baguio have a moderate interest in artistic pursuits. Sablan has a mean art score of 3.25 and a music score of 3.33, whereas Baguio has somewhat lower scores in both areas (3.26 and 2.67, respectively). This could suggest Sablan's increased preference for creative expression.

For **social interactions**, both groups gave the statement "I like children who are different from me" equal scores of 3.35, demonstrating that peers are receptive to variety.

Healthy Eating and Sports: Both groups have lower levels of interest in healthy eating and sports, with mean scores of 2.81 and 2.32, respectively. This shows a possible area for development in terms of encouraging students to live healthier lifestyles.

The total mean ratings for **engagement and motivation** show that pupils in Sablan (3.20) are marginally more involved in physical activities than those in Baguio (3.12). This disparity could be attributable to a variety of variables, including facility availability, cultural attitudes around physical activity, or educational programs encouraging fitness. This shows that, while both groups prioritize fitness and sportsmanship, there are significant disparities in specific interests and degrees of engagement. Sablan kids appear to have a little advantage in confidence when it comes to athletic ability and creative pursuits. In contrast, both groups indicate a need for a stronger emphasis on healthy diet and physical activity. These findings can help shape future physical education curricula and programs focused at increasing student participation in physical activities.

Participants in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) can study the relationship between living status and self-understanding by looking at their living conditions and how these affect their emotional health and self-perception. The study has six participant categories: homeowners (36), renters (65), lessees (4), others (4), and those who would rather not disclose (45). It is noteworthy that the majority of participants are renters, potentially suggesting a nomadic lifestyle that affects stability and self-concept. Living circumstances and other external influences frequently influence how one understands themselves; stability in one's surroundings can promote a more positive self-image, while instability can breed insecurity and low self-esteem. While renters confront doubts about the stability of their house, which may have an impact on their identity and self-esteem, homeowners generally feel more stable and like they belong. Nevertheless, a person's self-perception is also greatly influenced by the nature of their household ties; homeowners typically have more stable family dynamics than renters, who may receive different degrees of support depending on their living circumstances. Since regular parental support has been shown to positively impact children's self-esteem and emotional well-being, research suggests that homeowners may report greater levels of self-understanding. Additionally, a person's living situation has an impact on their level of community engagement. While renters may feel less connected because of their temporary situation, homeowners may feel more committed in their communities, resulting in stronger social relationships that improve their sense of self. Overall, ALS participants' living situation and self-perception are significantly correlated; homeownership tends to offer stability that promotes good self-perception.

In summary, these implications highlight the necessity for supportive interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced by students in different living situations, ultimately promoting better emotional health and self-understanding within the ALS framework.

Studies also support the conclusions of how learners from Sablan and Baguio see themselves and society. Similar to the high levels of awareness and practice of core values observed among junior high school students in Negros Occidental, where no significant differences were found based on demographic factors (Garcia & Bual, 2022). The consistent ranking of well-being and environmental awareness in both locations suggests a shared value system. Additionally, the correlation between psychological well-being and self-concept suggests that students' views of their academic achievement can have a substantial impact on their general well-being (Oktaviana et al., 2023), which is consistent with the finding that students in Baguio have a more positive academic self-concept than students in Sablan. Finally, the same ranking of the moral values cluster in both groups highlights the significance of common ethical frameworks similar to the moral principles found in literature that place an emphasis on accountability and community (Aziz, 2021). All of these cited studies demonstrate how students' experiences in various circumstances are shaped by the interaction of their moral principles, environmental awareness, and self-concept which is aligned with the findings for Baguio and Sablan.

Table 8: Understanding the Society (N=166)

Acknowledgment and Knowledge of society:	Sablan			Baguio		
	Mean	Rank	Int.	Mean	Rank	Int.
I know that differences in race & cultural ethnicity are important and valued parts of an individual's identity do not hide the claim of "color blindness"	3.17	1.5	Fairly often	3.3	1	Always
I am knowledgeable about historical incidents and current practices that demonstrate racism and exclusion towards those I label as others.	3.17	1.5	Fairly often	2.96	4	Fairly Often

I'm aware of within-group differences and I do not generalize a specific behavior presented by an individual to the entire cultural community	2.92	3.5	Fairly Often	3	3	Fairly Often
I effectively and consistently intervene when I observe others behaving in a racist and/or discriminatory manner.	2.33	3.5	Sometimes	2.86	5	Fairly Often
I consistently seek out people who challenge me to increase my cross-cultural skills	2.92	5	Fairly Often	3.11	2	Fairly Often
Over all mean	2.9		Fairly Often	3.04		Fairly Often

Understanding and Awareness of society	Sablan			Baguio		
	Mean	Rank	Int.	Mean	Rank	Int.
I recognize that cultures change over and can vary from person to person, as does attachment to culture	2.7	4	Fairly often	2.8	4	Fairly often
I recognize that stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory actions can dehumanize, and even encourage violence against individuals because of their membership in groups that are different from mine.	3.08	2	Fairly often	2.9	3	Fairly Often
I recognize that people have interesting multiple identities drawn from race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity etc., and the potential influence of each of these identities varies from person to person.	2.83	3	Fairly often	3.16	1	Fairly Often
I am aware that everyone has a culture and my own culture is not to be regarded as the singular or best point of reference to assess which behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate	3.17	1	Fairly often	2.95	2	Fairly Often
Over all mean	2.93		Fairly Often	2.95		Fairly Often
Commitment and Adaptability	Sablan			Baguio		
	Mean	Rank	Int.	Mean	Rank	Int.
I recognize that achieving cultural competence and cultural humility involves a commitment to learning over a lifetime	2.83	3	Fairly often	3.11	2	Fairly Often
I continue to develop my capacity for assessing areas where there are gaps in my knowledge	2.92	2	Fairly often	3.34	1	Fairly often
I develop ways to interact respectfully and effectively with individuals and groups that may differ from me.	3.13	1	Fairly often	3.01	3	Fairly Often
Over all mean	2.96		Fairly often	3.15		Fairly often

Acknowledgment and Knowledge of society

While both groups indicate a continuous commitment to recognizing societal diversity, Baguio respondents tend to score higher, particularly in areas like respecting differences and fighting discriminatory conduct. While Sablan respondents are consistent in their acknowledgment and knowledge, they take a slightly less proactive approach in several areas. This shows that, while both groups are concerned with learning and tackling diversity,

Baguio respondents may be more consistent in applying this information in their daily life. Likewise, the study shows the systemic nature of prejudice and the significance of local context in addressing these issues as reflected in the varying levels of commitment to societal diversity between respondents from Baguio and Sablan.

According to a thorough assessment on racial prejudice in the Philippine criminal justice system, discrimination is ingrained in society structures and has a substantial negative impact on minority groups. This highlights the necessity of taking proactive steps to combat prejudice (Lodangco, 2023). This is consistent with the idea that responders from Baguio, who show a stronger dedication to accepting diversity and battling prejudice, could be more interested in putting their understanding of it to use in day-to-day situations. Moreover, the focus on local health expertise when developing culturally sensitive policies implies that knowledge of community dynamics is essential for taking effective action against discrimination (Del Castillo & Eder, 2022).

Understanding and awareness of society

Both groups show a similar level of understanding and awareness of society issues, with extremely near total mean scores. Baguio has a little stronger knowledge of numerous social identities, whereas Sablan is more aware of cultural relativity and the influence of bias. Overall, both groups have a reasonably similar comprehension and awareness of societal effects, with no significant differences in overall perceptions. This is consistent with studies that demonstrate how perceptions of societal dynamics are greatly influenced by social identity and awareness. People who are more politically aware, for example, show a stronger relationship between their political views and social identity, indicating that political knowledge can improve comprehension of the consequences of society (Jones, 2022). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that incorporating societal themes into educational settings enhances students' understanding of how science and society interact, highlighting the significance of confronting prejudices and preconceptions (Adams et al., 2023). However, as demonstrated by research on pregnant awareness, where some groups exhibited lower awareness levels, differences in awareness might arise based on socio-demographic characteristics (Zhang et al., 2022). As a whole, although both groups have a comparable level of awareness of society overall, subtle differences in their comprehension of cultural relativity and social identities draw attention to how complicated society awareness is (Hanulíková, 2021).

Commitment and adaptability

Both Sablan and Baguio respondents show a continuous commitment to cultural competence and adaptation, with both groups routinely engaged in lifelong learning, self-evaluation, and polite contact with diverse groups. Baguio respondents tend to score better across most dimensions, indicating a somewhat stronger overall dedication and adaptability. Sablan responders, on the other hand, demonstrate a strong ability to adjust to changing surroundings. The close overall mean ratings indicate that both groups have similar levels of dedication and adaptability, with only modest differences in emphasis.

To improve Sablan students' awareness of self and society, focused programs that foster debates on societal concerns, encourage flexibility, and provide chances for active participation in community and cultural activities could be advantageous. This could help close the results gap and provide a more complete awareness of society dynamics among all pupils. In the same manner, Del Castillo & Eder (2022) and Tan and Lasco (2021) stipulated that comprehending community perspectives can improve participation and awareness of social concerns. In addition, the importance of parental participation in education emphasizes the necessity of school and community collaboration in creating a supportive learning environment that can aid kids in developing a deeper understanding of their identities and social surroundings (Kabir & Akter, 2014). The article of Yuliana and Maysaroh (2024), also highlighted the importance of adapting educational programs to local cultural circumstances, as this might improve students' engagement with societal issues. Thus, putting in place targeted programs that promote discussion and active engagement on societal concerns could significantly raise Sablan students' understanding of themselves and the wider community, in line with the effective methods seen in Baguio

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL BARRIERS THAT HINDER ALS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS FROM PURSUING THEIR DESIRED POST-PROGRAM

EXTERNAL BARRIERS

Three key themes emerged regarding the external barriers that hindered ALS junior high school learners from pursuing their desired post-program paths. These include challenges with modules and lessons, difficulties in certain subjects, and issues related to social interaction.

Difficulty in some specific subjects

The specific subjects which are particularly challenging for the students are Mathematics and English. As quoted by some of them, ***“I am struggling the most in and Math is difficult and is as difficult as English”***. The challenges that respondents experienced are on the understanding of the modules and lessons provided in the ALS program. On the other hand, almost all of the participants expressed the difficulty also in

understanding the modules as quoted ***“It’s hard because it’s modular” and “I have a lot of modules”***. This may indicate that the modules may not be well aligned with the students’ learning needs, thus the effectiveness to independent learning may not be appropriate for the students. On the other hand, some experience confusion in understanding the modules, ***“I cannot understand and it’s confusing” “it’s hard to understand the words used” and “Some subjects are hard and could not be understood”***. This would mean that lack of foundational knowledge and the concepts might not be easy for the students to understand. Moreover, illustrative examples in the module should have been provided for easier grasp of students. Students’ struggle with understanding the discussions and activities in the modules is contributory on the student’s difficulty in the appreciation of the subjects taught or even the ALS program. The effectiveness of the modules lies on the concepts and instructions that could be easily understood by the students. This implied ALS program should ensure that the modules are written in clear, simple language with simplified examples and explanations to facilitate understanding.

Social Interaction Challenges

Some students expressed difficulties in relating to their classmates as cited by some of them ***“How to socialize with my teacher and classmates” and “I have difficulties relating to my classmates”***

There is a desire for these students to learn how to interact and connect fellow students and including their teachers. Furthermore, it may include lack of self-confidence. Moreover, the students who mentioned their struggle to keep up with classmates who have achieved higher academic levels, ***“I can’t keep up with my classmates who have achieved more in their studies”***. This implied that a comprehensive approach to address these challenges will be on the development of social skills, academic support, and personal growth. The ALS program places great emphasis on the development of social bonds, community participation, and family support, as demonstrated by the application of social capital theory to the study’s findings. By focusing on these areas, teachers may establish a more encouraging learning atmosphere that helps students grow personally and academically.

INTERNAL BARRIERS

Three main themes emerged concerning the internal barriers that prevented ALS junior high school learners from pursuing their desired post-program opportunities. These themes include managing responsibilities, time management, and personal challenges.

Balancing Responsibilities

There were students who revealed their experiences at home and in school which is not easy and the adjustment to the learning environment was also difficult for them. As cited by them, ***“Managing one’s responsibilities while pursuing one’s studies”***. This explicitly highlights the need to balance responsibilities at home while studying, the students are facing challenges in managing their domestic roles while also attending to their academic responsibilities. On the other hand, some students are having difficulty in adjusting to new situation due to a long break from studying ***“I had a hard time adjusting because I was away from studying for a long time”***. This may mean that the readjustment to the learning environment. This implied that the students must manage their time effectively with their personal and academic responsibilities.

Time management

Some students struggle to balancing work, family responsibilities, and studying. This affects their work output in the modules that needed to be completed. As quoted by some participants, ***“I need to wake up at 5am because my residence is far and after class at school, I directly go to work”, “time management because I am a full time employee ‘ and I’m having a hard time managing my time especially since I’m an online seller “, ‘ I combine work and study so I have to be absent sometime”***. Students face several challenges when balancing work and school. Long commutes and full-time jobs demand significant time management. Online sellers may struggle to attend classes regularly. The pressure of managing both work and school can negatively impact academic performance, sometimes leading to absences. Although students try to balance their responsibilities, they are often forced to prioritize one over the other. Moreover, some participants expressed the difficulty of balancing work and accomplishing activities in school, ***“I’m having a hard time balancing my work and doing activities because I’m the only one expected to do my job and I feel so pressured, and I often lack sleep so sometimes I can’t go to work”***. Both pressure from school and work with lack of sleep are the students challenges of managing work-school balance when one is the sole person relied upon for a job and school could result to unbalanced time management. This implied that they could not be productive for both. This implied that even though these students recognize the importance of education, the need to be absent to attend to their work, which for them is equally important.

Personal challenges

Some students face personal challenges, which include health issues, family and financial problems which make it harder for them to focus on their studies. As cited by them ***“My father passed away, I'm sick, and we have financial problems”*** This conveys a emotional significance of loss of the student which affected the financial stability of the family. This implied the struggling impact of grief which affected the physical health of the student. Furthermore, there are students who struggles with depression and mental fogginess, but they are still determined to pursue their dreams in life. As cited by ***“It's not easy because I have depression and mental fogginess, and it's really hard, but I can manage because I have many dreams in life”***. The difficulty they face in managing these conditions can be an indication of emotional vulnerability and it can also be a way for these students to take courage to combat their personal struggles. It highlights the interconnections of mental health and personal goals, and serves as a message of hope for those who may be struggling with similar challenges. This implied that their drive to achieve their goals is also their drive to fight for their depression.

The internal barriers found in the study support the ideas of human capital theory, which emphasizes the connection between education, skill acquisition, and economic success by demonstrating how time management and personal circumstances directly affect learners' ability to invest in their education.

ALTENATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM (ALS) ACTION PLAN

The action plan provides solutions for overcoming obstacles in education, including comprehension of modules, difficulties with certain subjects, and problems with social contact. Personalized learning plans, peer support groups, social-emotional learning training, and mentorship and counseling programs are some of these strategies. Through these programs, the accountable parties—mentors, peer coaches, pre-service teachers, guidance counselors, and community outreach representatives—hope to improve the students' academic achievement, social skills, and literacy.

To address the barrier of **difficulty in understanding modules and lessons**, a bridging program will be implemented semestrally from 2024 to 2027. This program includes seminars designed to identify specific difficulties within the modules, promote peer support and learning, and clarify academic expectations and requirements. Mentees will be paired with mentors, and peer coaching will be utilized, with pre-service teachers from Bachelor of Arts in Education (BSED) and Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) programs taking on responsibilities. Key performance indicators include a percentage increase in understanding course content (measured by pre- and post-seminar assessments), the number of mentoring and peer support sessions, improved academic performance and engagement, and student satisfaction rates gauged through surveys.

Recognizing **difficulties in some specific subjects**, strategies will be employed to enhance literacy skills through personalized learning plans, peer support groups, and flexible learning options offered via seminar-training workshops. These pathways and workshops, also running semestrally from 2024 to 2027, will cover learning styles, collaboration options, and subject-specific projects. Again, mentees, mentors, peer coaches, and pre-service teachers will be involved. Success will be measured by improvements in literacy skills (standardized tests), active participation in personalized learning and support groups, increased collaboration (project-based assessments), and student feedback on the flexible learning pathways.

To combat **social interaction challenges**, training on social-emotional learning (SEL) programs and community engagement will be provided semestrally between 2024 and 2027. This includes comprehensive training and promotion of SEL in schools, covering the roles of teachers, families, and communities. Guidance counselors and community outreach representatives will lead these efforts, which aim to enhance emotional intelligence and foster a positive school climate. Key performance indicators encompass the number of SEL and community engagement training sessions, increases in students' emotional intelligence (validated SEL assessments), parental involvement rates, and improvements in school climate (student, teacher, and parent surveys).

Addressing the challenge of **balancing responsibilities**, flexible learning options and a financial support seminar will be offered semestrally from 2024 to 2027. This includes a Financial Education & Awareness Seminar and a goal-setting seminar designed to improve financial literacy and informed decision-making about financial assistance. The target participants are GS students with literacy research experience, with guidance counselors leading the initiative. The anticipated outcomes are structured financial planning, budgeting skills, and awareness of financial resources. Success will be measured by the number of students attending financial education seminars, improvements in financial planning and budgeting skills (practical assessments or follow-up surveys), the percentage of students accessing financial assistance, and student satisfaction with flexible learning options (surveys).

Finally, to address **personal challenges**, personal challenge skill-building workshops will be implemented semestrally from 2024 to 2027. Seminars on emotional intelligence and resilience, and coping with stress will be conducted. The aim is to achieve enhanced emotional regulation, better interpersonal relationships,

increased adaptability, and greater persistence. Success will be evaluated by the number of students participating in workshops on emotional intelligence and resilience, improvements in students' ability to cope with stress (stress management assessments or self-reports), increased adaptability and persistence (follow-up surveys or mentor feedback), and awareness and recognition of stressors (pre- and post-workshop assessments). Basic education and SCJPS representatives will be in charge. In all, these interconnected strategies aim to provide holistic support to students, addressing their academic, social-emotional, and practical needs to ensure their success.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ALS program's diverse demographics, featuring balanced gender representation and a range of ethnic backgrounds, create a unique cultural context that offers both opportunities and challenges in customizing educational content to meet students' varied needs. While students demonstrate proficiency in basic mathematical problem-solving, they struggle with computations and fundamental concepts, indicating a knowledge gap that could be addressed with targeted tutoring and simplified instructional materials. Disparities in cultural and historical awareness among students from different regions underscore the importance of programs that promote inclusivity and respect for diverse perspectives. Significant challenges in writing skills in both English and Filipino point to the need for focused writing workshops, while the emphasis on life skills development, such as adaptability and problem-solving, underscores the importance of equipping students with essential competencies for success. The study also highlights the necessity of addressing technical skill gaps in areas like computer system repair and baking through vocational training aligned with students' interests and market demands.

The ALS program can better address the different barriers faced by learners, ultimately enhancing their educational outcomes and empowering them to pursue their desired post-program opportunities through the implementation of the action plan.

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