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An Assessment of Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippine Rural Areas

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Abstract: This study aimed to determine the challenges encountered and the coping strategies of the students of Alternative Learning System (ALS) in North II District of Iligan City. This is a qualitative research design which made use of guided open-ended questionnaire looking into the respondents' perspectives that identified their feelings, emotions and opinions about the study. The study identified six major areas in analyzing the challenges encountered by the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Learners: Answering the Learning Activity Sheets, Reading Comprehension, Allotment of time, Financial matters, Family matters and Personal matters. The researcher found out that among the 6 learning strands, the respondents had difficulty in answering the Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) in English, Science and Mathematics. One significant challenges encountered by the respondents was in reading comprehension. It was found out that majority of the respondents were still struggling in comprehending English words. Since the LAS in Science and Mathematics were in English it followed that the respondents were also performing poorly in these subjects. In addition, the researcher found out that there were no specific policies that address the challenges encountered by the learners in Alternative Learning System (ALS). This implies that there is an urgent need to address these challenges encountered by these learners. Our basic educational system must provide assurance for quality education especially to the out of school youth and adults.

Keywords: Alternative Learning System, Challenges, Coping Mechanism

1. Introduction

"Education is the key to success". It is true that education is a key that opens to a lot of opportunities in all forms. Education imparts knowledge, skills, values that makes us more confident and help us to be able to communicate in an intelligent manner with others. It is very useful in our daily survival as a human being to surpass different challenges in life that help us grow and progress further. By the power of education, the more we become aware of ourselves and the world around us, the more we know our strengths; we can easily choose the right path to be successful in our career.

However, not every Filipino has an access to this education and there was a trend in the past years that in every 10 students enrolled in grade school there are only seven (7)

who can make it to graduate. It is the same scenario in Junior high school. According to the survey of Philippine Statistic Authority (PSA) 2017, 9.1% of the 39.2 million Filipinos aged 6 to 24 years old, 3.1 million young adults aged 25-30 did not complete junior high school and are out of school, which is about 23% of those aged 15 to 30. Most common reasons cited for not attending school were marriage or family matters (37%); lack of personal interest (24.7%); and high cost of education or financial concerns (17.9%).

Despite of amplifying the access to free basic education in our country, there are still Filipino students who are struggling to finish basic education in time. Majority of the reasons are poverty related. According to Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion, chief economist at Union Bank of the Philippines said that for one, poverty keeps children from getting a good education, and, at times, children who learn to earn at an early age seem to drop out of school because they do not see the immediate value of finishing high school education or getting a degree. He also said that having an understanding the reasons for not being in school should be a key in solving the problem of increasing number of dropouts (Business world, 2018).

Poverty and illiteracy were worst and unending challenges in our country until these days. Illiteracy was noted as the biggest obstacle that hampers the economic growth of a country. Southeast Asian and African countries, most especially, have been bombarded with economic crisis brought about by poverty which links to illiteracy. Philippines was tagged as one of the countries to have the highest poverty incidence rates in Southeast Asia. Amongst everyone, the Out-of-School Children (OSC), Out-of-School Youth (OSYs), and Out-of-School Adults (OSAs) were the most affected by poverty due to lack of educational opportunities created, however, by illiteracy itself (Apao et al., 2014 as cited by Atilano et al., 2016).

Thus, the Philippine Government enacted a law known as Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 otherwise known as R.A 9155 SEC. 2. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality basic education and to make such education accessible to all by providing all Filipino children a free and compulsory education in the elementary level and free education in the high school level. Such education shall also include alternative learning systems for out-of-school youth and adult learners. It shall be the goal of basic education to provide them with the skills, knowledge and values they need to become caring, self- reliant, productive and patriotic citizens.

The Philippine Education for All (EFA 2015) has a goal and objectives to cover out of School Youth (OSY) and adults in the provision of basic learning needs, universal school participation and elimination of drop outs and repetition in firsts three grades, universal completion of full cycle of basic education schooling with satisfactory achievement levels by all at every grade or year and total community commitment to attainment of basic education competencies for all.

To alleviate the challenges of poverty and illiteracy, the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) designed a program that gave a second chance to build human capital of out of school youth and adults through the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) to provide all Filipinos the chance to access and complete the basic education that would fit their individual situations and needs. ALS enrollees who pass the accreditation and equivalency (A&E) exam receive a government credential that can facilitate access to higher education, vocational training, and overall better employment prospects.

Alternative Learning System is a parallel learning system in the Philippines that provides a practical option to the existing formal instruction. When one does not have or cannot access formal education in schools, ALS is an alternate or substitute. ALS includes both the non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills. The program covers mostly dropouts in elementary and secondary schools, out-of-school youths, non-readers,

working people and even senior citizens wanting to read and write. Students enrolled under the classroom system are barred from participating in the program. Age level, economic and personal circumstances are among the determinants in availing the program. The ALS learners would take the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Assessment and Certification that comprises exam and other appropriate assessments to measure the competencies of learners based on the ALS K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC). Completers of ALS who are passers of the A&E Test are given certificates bearing the Department of Education (DepEd) seal, the ALS logo, the Schools Division Office's logo, dry seal and designated signatories, and the school's name (if the A&E passer completed ALS under a school or an SBM School for ALS) or the Community Learning Center's name (if the A&E passer completed ALS under a CLC). This duly signed official document certifies their competencies as comparable graduates of the formal education system (Dep.Ed-Alternative Learning System). However, in the recent result of A& E exam 2018, it shows a lower registry of passers and it was announced by Sec. Briones to lower the passing rate to 60% from 75%. As they analyzed the assessment tool, they found out several factors, Language usage is one. It is stated "The language used in test questions for Math and Science were changed from Filipino in the previous tests to English in the current test. The negative impact of this was very pronounced in the elementary level examination" (Official Statement from the Department of Education, 2018).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

With the very low registry of passers as results of the Dep-ED Alternative Learning System (ALS) students in the Accreditation & Equivalency examination in 2018 along with the identification that language usage is one of the factors, it is such a phenomenon that needed to be investigated. Thus, in this paper, the researcher aimed to study the challenges encountered by the Alternative Learning System (ALS) students who are out of school youths and adults who wanted to pursue their education. By studying the challenges encountered by these students in the ALS program, proper instruction and delivery would be included in the design to address their learning needs; and, at the same time, could be bases for the assessment and improvement of the Dep-ED ALS program in general.

This study aimed to determine the challenges encountered by the students of Alternative Learning System (ALS) in learning their lessons and their coping strategies towards challenges. Specifically, this study aimed to:

1. Identify the challenges encountered by the students of ALS from the six (6) Community Learning Centers (CLCs) of North II District of Iligan City Division;
2. Determine the coping strategies of these ALS learners; and
3. Determine existing policies and their implementation that address the challenges of the ALS students.

1.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study
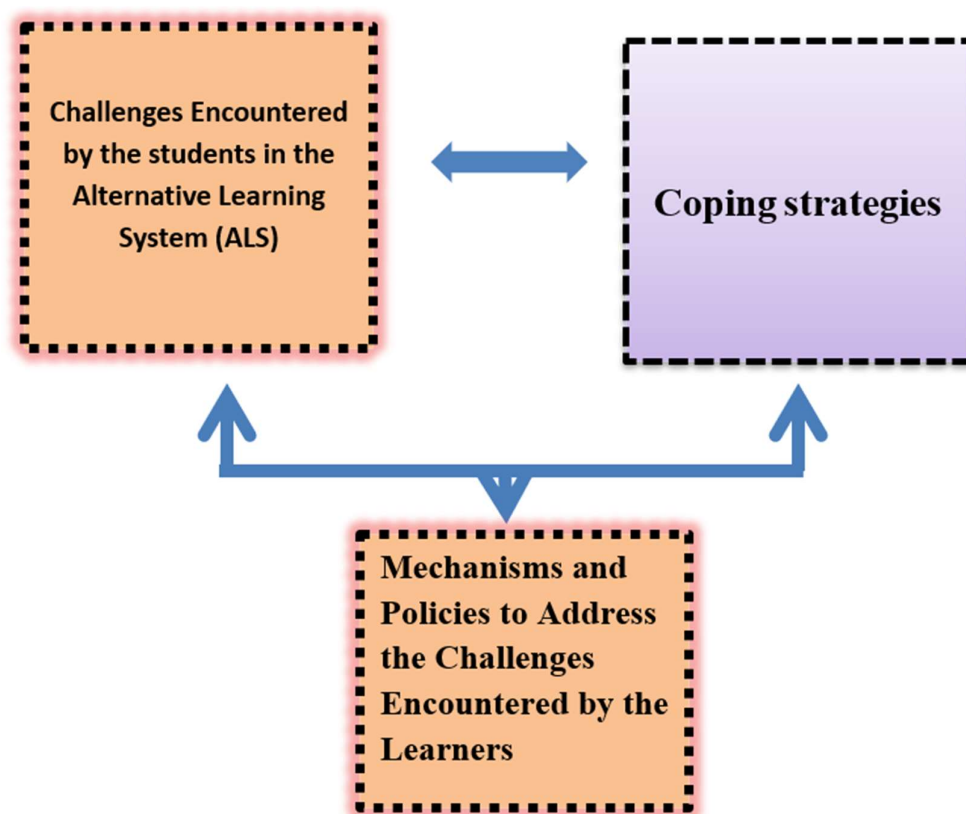
Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of the Study

1.3 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focused on the challenges encountered by the ALS learners and their coping strategies to pursue their education. The participants in this study were randomly selected as respondents being students in Alternative Learning System (ALS) Learners from 6 community learning centers in North II District, Division of Iligan City school year 2020-2021. The community learning centers (CLCs) were Acmac ES, Mainit ES, Bonbonon, San Roque, Ampucao and Kapisahan Integrated School.

2. Review of Related Literature

Alternative Learning System is a program established by the government to provide an alternative form of learning for students who wanted to complete basic education. This program targets to lower the high rate of out of school youth and adults. The main objective of ALS program is to be able to provide an education that help those Filipinos, especially from the marginalized sector, to attain a good educational background that could help boost their employment after graduation. But because of globalization, which has been a large player in the global economy, jobseekers are now required to manifest the eight 21st century skills namely: critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity and innovation, self-direction, global connections, local connections, and technological skills (Tindowen, 2017).

Some researchers have already conducted study and found out that there were many challenges in Alternative Learning System implementation such as absenteeism of the learners, provision of more learning facilitators, Community Learning Centers (CLCs), insufficient and irrelevant learning materials, lack of facilities and equipment, lack of integration of livelihood and employment opportunities, and lack of interest on the part of the out-of-school-youth (Carag, 2013 as cited by Brania, 2016).

The research conducted by Mercado (2015) as cited by Atilano et al. (2015) discussed the problems encountered by the ALS learners as well as their experiences and assessment in the program. The goals are to lessen the number of illiterate students, help them develop positive attitude, interest and proper discipline through classes, training and worthwhile activities, and to encourage the out-of-school children, youth and adults to participate in all ALS programs and projects in the area. This way, they would be more capable to assimilate themselves in their surroundings and community. The challenges and problems faced by the ALS center in Tanauan are (1) difficulty in recruiting learners especially in Basic Literacy Program (BLP) because of student shyness and indifferences, (2) absenteeism, (3) negative thoughts from parents and even barangay officials about ALS, and (4) insufficient funds to sustain the program and project.

Similarly, the study of (Arpilleda, 2018) found out that there are four problems which are common to the mobile teachers: lack of instructional materials, delayed release of allowance, absence of permanent learning center and other facilities and irregular attendance of ALS students. The mobile teachers also complained on the delay of their allowances. Some of them disclosed that they could have provided their students with sufficient number of copies (photocopies of their topics and learning activities) if their teaching allowance had been released much earlier. On the other hand, they also have problems on the availability of classrooms. They always transfer from one place to another every class session and their learning sites are not conducive for learning. Hence, this has prompted them to conduct classes even during weekends to compensate the missed sessions. Two problems got equal footing: the lack support from local officials and the class size. The study further revealed that the some LGU officials (in the barangay level) did not provide them with permanent room or venue. This aggravated their problems on the class size (number of students in the class) (Arpilleda, 2018).

Despite of the challenges encountered by the ALS students, there are still positive outputs with the implementation of the program. The study of Janssen, 2017 evaluates the effectiveness of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program, the result of his study revealed that both learners and instructional managers deemed the program effective overall. However, the learners evaluated it as moderately effective while the instructional managers consider the program highly effective.

3. Methodology

This study made use of qualitative research design. For the purpose of this study, guided open ended questionnaire was used where the data gathered were from the perspective of the respondents that identify their feelings, emotions and opinions about the study. This research was conducted to determine the challenges encountered by the students of Alternative Learning System (ALS) in learning their lesson and how they cope to pursue their education and a policy and implementation that address these challenges. The method of purposive sampling was used to develop the sample of the research. The sample members were selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationship and expertise regarding the subject of the study; they were the Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in North II District and the administrators from Division of Iligan City with sufficient and relevant experience in the field.

The researcher used an open-ended questionnaire that allowed respondents to answer in an open text format so that they could answer based on their complete knowledge, feeling and understanding. The instrument was validated by the experts in the field of qualitative research from teachers with research involvement in qualitative research. They checked the questions if these were valid and sufficient enough to use in collecting the data and information from the respondents that would answer the research objectives. The questionnaire was reviewed and validated by 5 teachers with research involvement: Omar Q. Hussien, Ph.D., Faculty of St. Peters College, Iligan City; Reynilda C. Alferez,Ph.D, Public School Division Supervisor of North II District; Delia Caryl C. Tubera, Ph.D, the School Principal of Acmac Elementary School; J-roel B. Semilla, MAEd, Faculty of MSU-IIT College of Education and Stephanie L. Colorada, MAEd, a research associate of St. Michaels College, Iligan City.

Content and thematic analyses were used to analyze the data gathered from the open-ended responses. Content analysis is a general term for a number of different strategies used to analyze text (Powers & Knapp, 2006). It is a systematic coding and categorizing approach used for exploring large amounts of textual information unobtrusively to determine trends and patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationships, and the structures and discourses of communication (Mayring, 2000; Pope et al., 2006; Gbrich, 2007 as cited by Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Thematic analysis as an independent qualitative descriptive approach is mainly described as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79).
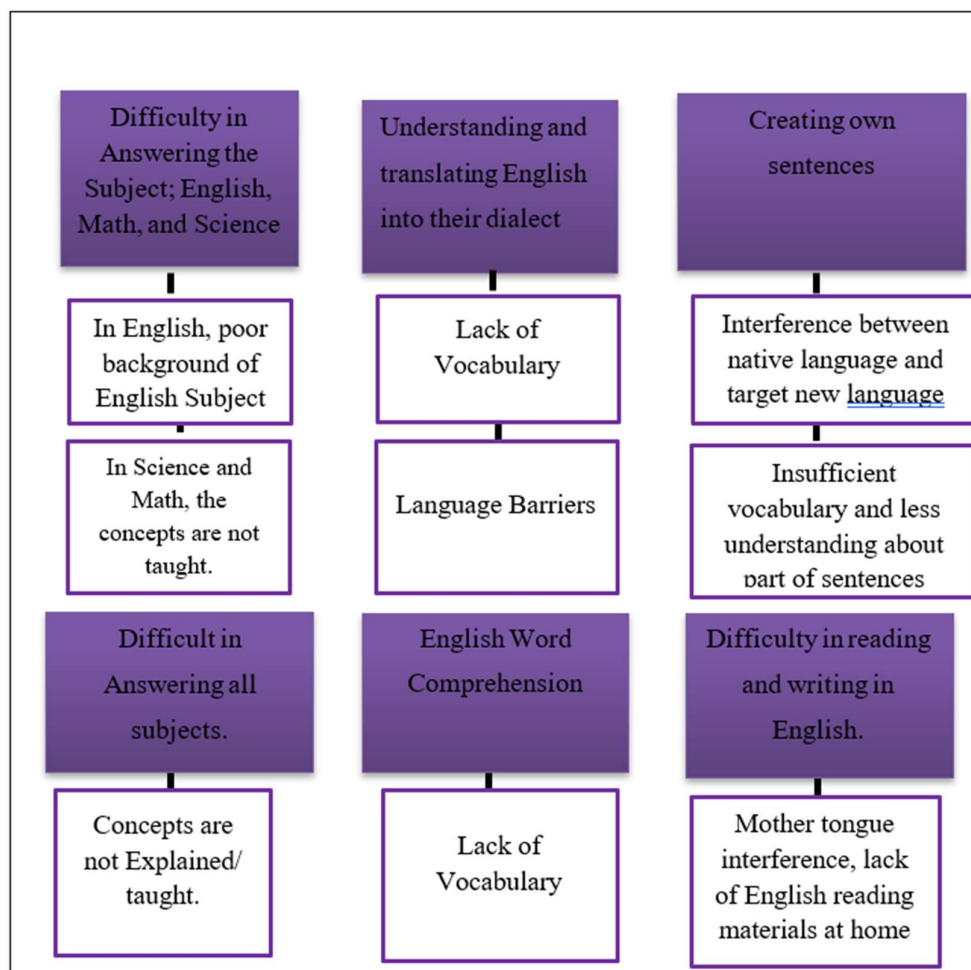
4. Results and Discussion

The challenges encountered as a student in Alternative Learning System (ALS) in learning their lessons in terms of the following major areas: Answering the Learners Activity Sheets (LAS), Reading Comprehension, Allotment of time, Financial Matters, Family and Personal matters.

Table 4.1 A shows the challenges encountered by Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in learning their lessons in terms of answering the Learning Activity Sheet (LAS). It shows the recurring themes from the responses of the learners that among six (6) Learning strands of Alternative Learning System; English, Filipino, Science, Mathematics, Life and Career, Self and Society and Digital Citizenship, majority of the learners found difficulty in the Learning Strand of English, Science and Mathematics. In English, the learners found it difficult to construct sentences on their own not only because of poor vocabulary but also the interference between native language and target new language. Moreover, they lack exposure to the English language considering that they do not speak it and they do not have printed materials at home. Therefore, respondents' lack the needed competency for their English Classes. They are struggling readers that need not only had to understand the lessons in English but also they had to understand the concepts taught in the lesson.

Table 4.1: Challenges Encountered by Alternative Learning System (ALS)
Learners

4.1 A. Answering of the Learning Activity Sheets (LAS)

Difficulty in Answering the Subject; English, Math, and Science	Understanding and translating English into their dialect	Creating own sentences
In English, poor background of English Subject	Lack of Vocabulary	Interference between native language and target new language
In Science and Math, the concepts are not taught.	Language Barriers	Insufficient vocabulary and less understanding about part of sentences
Difficult in Answering all subjects.	English Word Comprehension	Difficulty in reading and writing in English.
Concepts are not Explained/ taught.	Lack of Vocabulary	Mother tongue interference, lack of English reading materials at home

4.1 B Reading comprehension/Understanding what they read

Difficulty in understanding in English	Little Comprehension	Reading without comprehension
Ability to use proper words.	Understanding through explanations	Needing Assistance to comprehend words.
Understanding but with confusion	Doing activities by themselves	Difficulty in writing sentences is difficult.

Table 4.1 B shows the challenges encountered by Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in learning their lessons in terms of Reading comprehension. It shows that generally most of the respondents' biggest challenge was on reading comprehension. They didn't know the meaning of most of the words they were reading. Some could not even read the words well. *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix B).* These imply that they needed assistance from reading teachers and must be taught the different strategies and skills in becoming effective readers. Reading Comprehension starts from words, then phrases, clauses, sentences to text. Understanding depends on the ability of the reader to draw meaning from printed words to interpret information correctly. This understanding can include text variables, such as vocabulary, syntax, and grammar and reader variables, such as background knowledge, cognitive development, use of strategies, interests and goals (Ganie et al., 2019). The students' problems are in prior knowledge, interest, decoding, the type of text being used, vocabulary, the quality of literacy instruction, independent practice, answering question in reading, understanding the question in reading, and interested in the text, and being an active reader (Muslim, 2020). If these are taught to them then they could work on their own and need less assistance from others and eventually, become independent readers.

4.1 C Allotment of Time

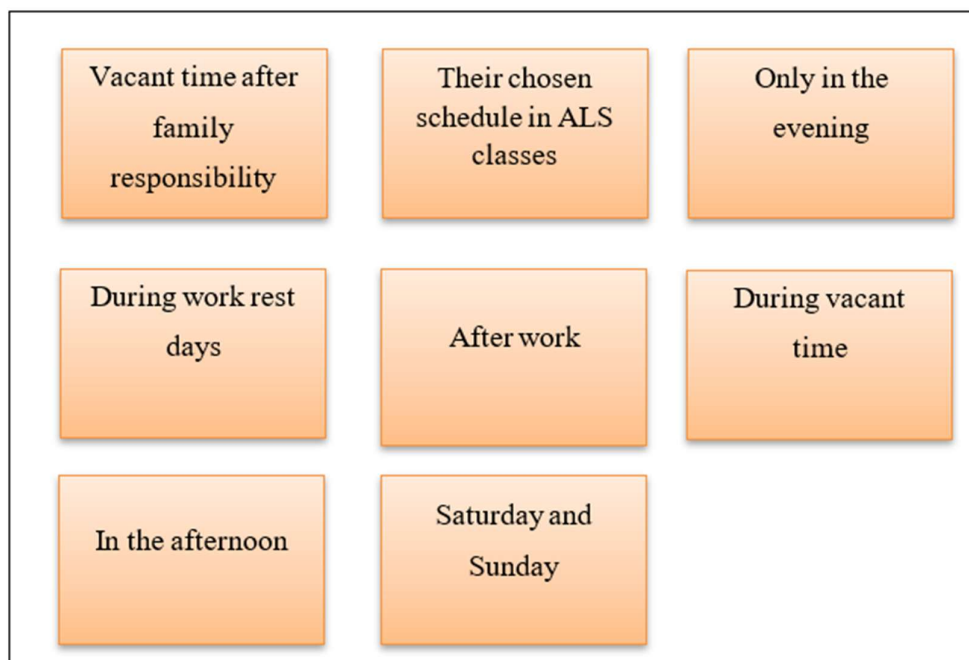| Vacant time after family responsibility	Their chosen schedule in ALS classes	Only in the evening
During work rest days	After work	During vacant time
In the afternoon	Saturday and Sunday	

Table 4.1 C shows the challenges encountered by Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in learning their lessons in terms of the allotted time. It shows the recurring themes from the responses of the learners that majority of them answer their modules during their vacant time after family responsibility, in the evening after work, during rest days, during their chosen schedule of ALS classes; during Tuesday 9-11 am, Wednesday 10-12 and Friday 3-4pm, after work, while some responded that they can answer it anytime, in the afternoon, only in the evening, during vacant time, and the rest stated that they can give time 2 hours, Saturday and Sunday and on their own convenience. The results showed that they had varied allotment of time to spend for answering the ALS LASes. Most of the respondents were working adults and housewives. Obviously, they had to prioritize their work and family matters over their studies in ALS. *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix C).*

4.1 D Financial Matters

Financially Challenged

Table 4.1 D shows the challenges encountered by Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in learning their lessons in terms of the allotted time. The study showed that the respondents in ALS in North II District were all financially challenged. The respondents experienced financial problems in various situations due to pandemic, unexpected

hospitalization, very low income to properly budget for the family, finding hard to look for work and unemployment. As a result, they could not focus on their studies as they had to prioritize putting food on the table. Therefore, poor performance in their learning could be expected. *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix D).*
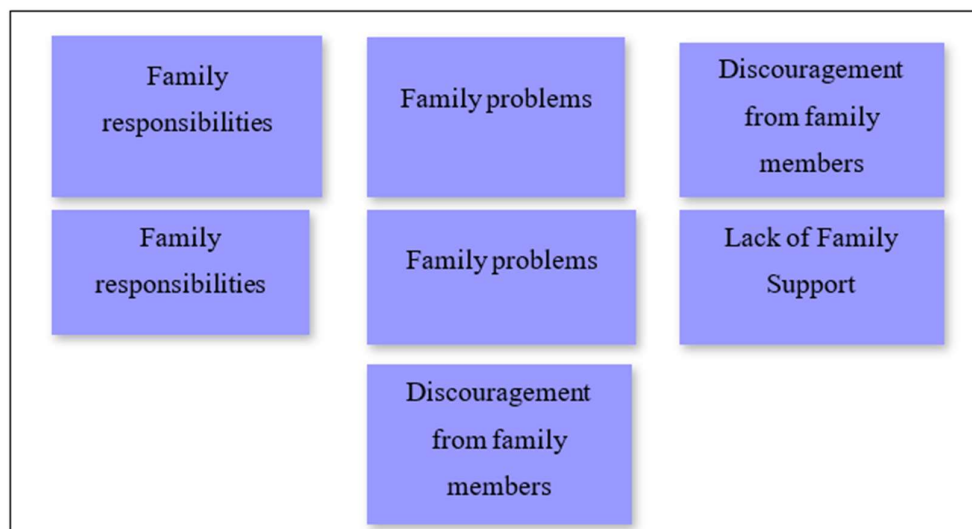
4.1 E Family Matters

Family responsibilities	Family problems	Discouragement from family members
Family responsibilities	Family problems	Lack of Family Support
	Discouragement from family members	

Table 4.1 E shows the challenges encountered by Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in learning their lessons in terms of family matters. It shows that Family responsibilities, Family Problems, Discouragement from the family members and Lack of Family Support were the recurring reasons which hindered them to perform well in their studies. The Family plays a big role in the success of its members most specifically in education. Parental participation plays a pivotal role in motivating children to improve their academic grades. For students to reap maximum benefits in an education system, the learning should not be solely left to the student–teacher relationship but should be extended to include active parental involvement among other education stakeholders (Mahuro et al., 2016). *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix E).*

4.1 F Personal matters

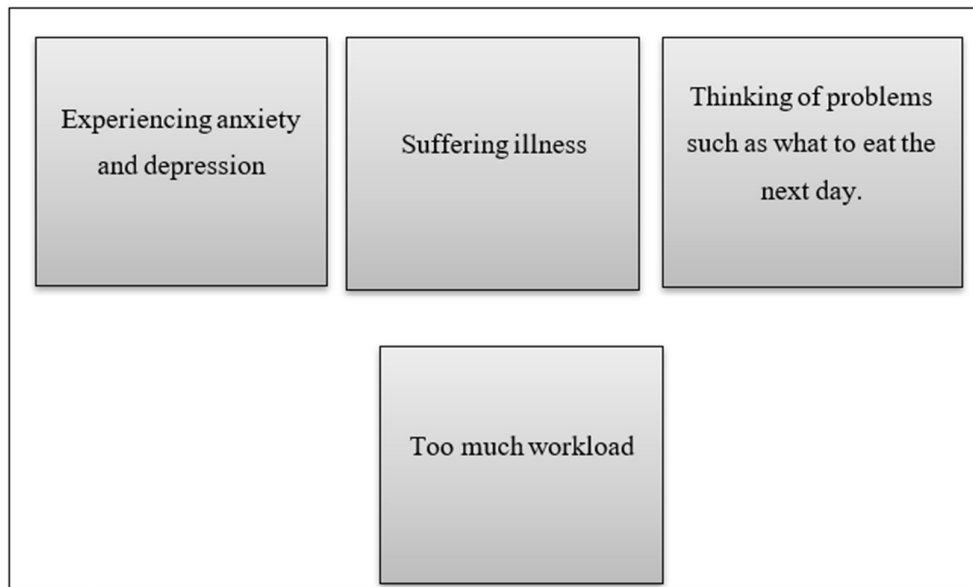|		
Experiencing anxiety and depression	Suffering illness	Thinking of problems such as what to eat the next day.

Too much workload

Table 4.1 F shows the challenges encountered by Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in learning their lessons in terms of personal matters. The study showed that some respondents were suffering from illnesses; some were experiencing anxiety and depression, too much work and problems regarding daily sustenance which affected their learning. They lost interest in their studies because their minds and their bodies would not cooperate. . Students who are facing various challenges in life may have adverse effects on their academic performance yet some school programs are not student needs-driven (Dagdag et al., 2019). According to Adeyemi et al. (2014), personal factors like students' interests, home, environment, parental support and study habits were significant predictors of students' academic achievement.*(The complete responses can be found in Appendix F).*

Table 4.2: The coping mechanisms of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Learners

4.2 A   Answering the LAS

Soliciting assistance from people who know better.	Seeking Assistance from Partners, Parents, Siblings and Friends	Managing Self and time
Asking for Teachers' Assistance	Searching through the internet	Doing activities and studying alone
Learning through examples	Having Positive mindset	

Table 4.2 A shows the coping mechanisms of the learners for challenges encountered in answering the Learning Activity Sheets (LAS). It shows that majority of the learners' coping mechanisms were through acceptance of the assistance of people close to them like their parents, partner, siblings, friends, and people who knows better than them and the solicitation of assistance from teachers while others strive independence in answering their Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) through self-direction by researching using the internet and learning through examples and by having self-motivation, faith, self-management and a positive mindset. *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix G).*

4.2 B Reading comprehension/ Understanding what they read

Reading and Re-reading	Carefully reading and understanding the sentences	Self studying
Reading with understanding	Seeking assistance from those who know better.	Seeking assistance from family members
Seeking assistance from teachers	Using translations in understanding	Seeking assistance from neighbors and friends

Table 4.2 B shows the coping mechanisms of the learners for the challenges encountered in Reading comprehension. It shows that majority of the coping mechanism of ALS learners were: Re-reading carefully; reading and understanding the sentences, self-understanding and seeking the assistance from family members, friends and teachers while some stated that they can manage to read and understand by themselves. It implies that the respondents found their different individual strategies as their coping mechanisms to comprehend their reading texts. *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix H).*

4.2 C Allotment of Time

Answering modules after doing all the task	Doing module together with kids	Making sure to prioritize food first before doing modules.
Finishing work early	Seeking assistance from those who know better	Answering modules during vacant time
Answering module with classmates	Doing the lessons in the evening when the tasks are done	Allotting at least 2 hours

Table 4.2 C shows the coping mechanisms of the learners in the challenges encountered with regard to the allotment of time. Its shows that majority of the learners were doing their module after doing their entire task at home and after their work. Some of their strategies were doing module together with their kids-that, they answer their module after answering their children's module too. Other learners answer their module together with their classmates. Some prioritize preparing food first for the family before they attend to their module. In the evening if not busy, they ask for assistance from those who know better; finish work early in order to answer module and to allot 2 hours in answering the module. It further shows that the respondent made it possible to allot time to answer their LASes which implies that they were really trying to accomplish the tasks that were given them despite their poor situation in life. *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix I).*

4.2 D Financial Matters

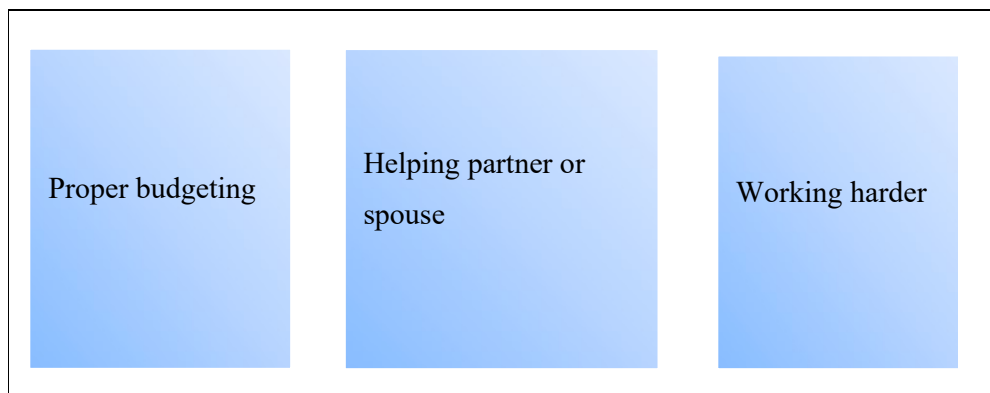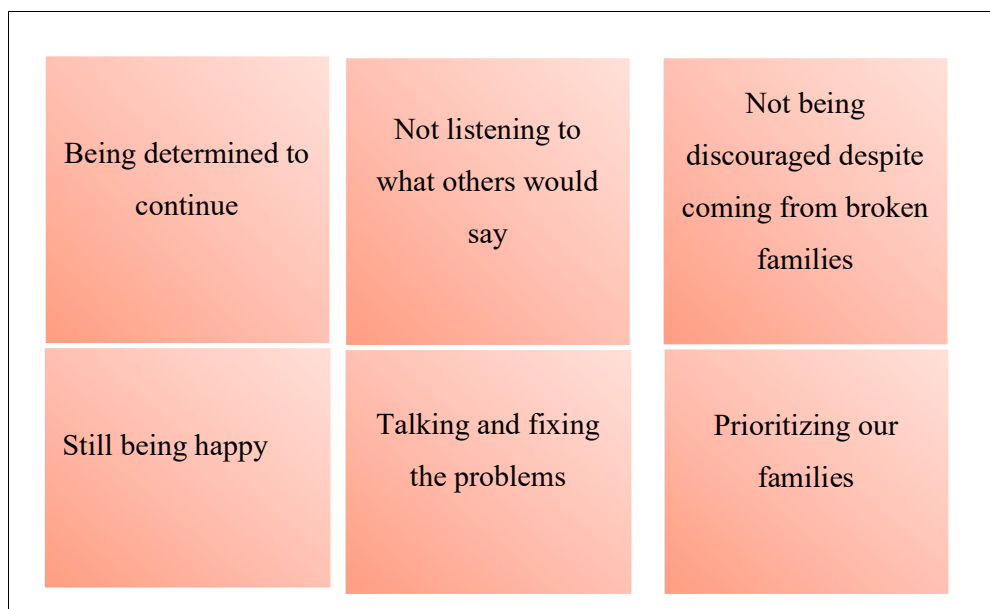| Proper budgeting	Helping partner or spouse	Working harder

Table 4.2 D shows the coping mechanisms of the learners to the challenges encountered in terms of financial matters. It shows that majority of the learners solve their financial problem through proper budgeting, working harder and trying hard everyday, earning for a living and helping the partner in life. Some stated they tried to make sure to provide basic needs for the family like three meals a day, prioritizing something to have food and basic needs before doing the modules. In other words, the respondents had to be assured first of their daily sustenance before they could attend to their modules. *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix J).*

4.2 E Family Matters

Being determined to continue	Not listening to what others would say	Not being discouraged despite coming from broken families
Still being happy	Talking and fixing the problems	Prioritizing our families

Table 4.2 E shows the coping mechanism of the learners with the challenges encountered in family matters. It shows that majority of the learners stated that they would still continue and focus in their studies while others stated that they would not listen to what others might say, having a happy disposition, accepting the fact that they come from

broken families, prioritizing the family welfare and lastly, self-determination to strive on their own. These imply that the respondents despite their difficulties In life they remain steadfast and determined to perform well in their LASes ,finish the program and eventually reach their goals in life. *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix K).*
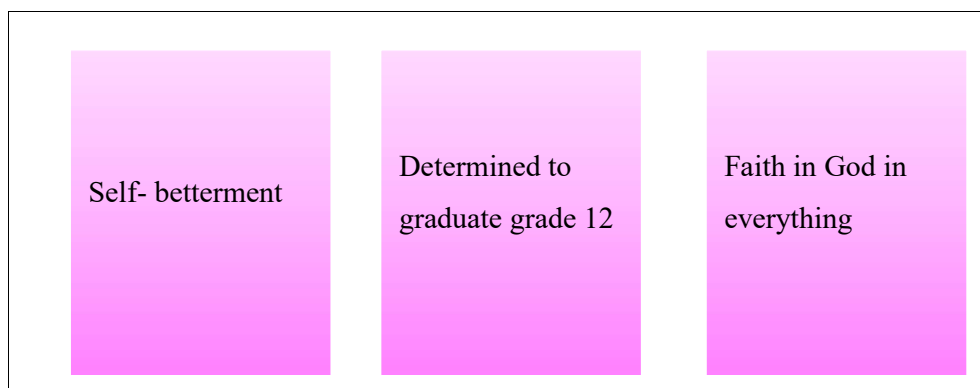
4.2 F. Personal Matters

Self- betterment	Determined to graduate grade 12	Faith in God in everything

Table 4.2 F shows the coping mechanism of the learners with the challenges encountered regarding personal matters. It shows that majority of the respondents shared that they would try harder for the betterment for themselves and being focused to graduate from grade 12. Lastly, the study showed that the respondents had expressed their faith in God to bless them in all of their undertakings. *(The complete responses can be found in Appendix L).*

Responses from Alternative Learning System (ALS) Administrator on the Challenges Encountered and their coping mechanism

According to Ruth C. Sabac, Ph. D., the Education Program Supervisor in ALS (EPSA) the only challenge that she is facing right now in general is on how to effectively implement the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program in the Division of Iligan City. The coping mechanisms she adopted were: First, constant monitoring and following up on the implementation of ALS in the 10 districts of Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Division of Iligan City and addressing the issues, concerns of each district. Second, providing the necessary action based on the identified problems. Third, initiating and following up of the funding and allowances to the instructional managers or teacher-volunteers. Lastly, designing advocacy program and materials from education stakeholders like LGU, parents and businesses in the communities to generate support for education.

The existing policies, orders and memoranda being implemented for ALS are as follows;

A. DM288s.2021

Division Memorandum No.288 s.2021 entitled "Orientation and Community Immersion of ALS advocates" dated May 28,2021.
1.
2. The activity aims to:
   1. Evaluate the needs of learners in the visited community towards provision of quality education with indigenized curriculum and instruction.
   2. Launch ALS Basic Literacy and Accreditation and Equivalency Program for Out of Youth and Adults.

Create Action Plan for program implementation, montoring and supervision.

DM317s.2021

Division Memorandum No.317s.2021 entitled "Conduct of Presentation Portfolio for ALS Elementary and Junior High School Program Completers of S.Y 2020-2021 and previous years" dated August 27, 2021.

1.Relative to the Joint memorandum DM-OUCI-2021-316 on *Presentation Portfolio for ALS Elementary and Junior High School Program Completers of S.Y 2020-2021 and previous years".* dated August 12,2021 from the Offices of the Undersecretary for Curriculum and Instruction Diosdado San Antonio and Assisstant Secretary for Alternative Learning System G.H.S Ambat, this Division shall conduct portfolio assessment for ALS Elementary and Junior High school program completers of SY 2020-2021 and previous years.

C. DM-OUCI-2021-316

Guidelines on the Conduct of Presentation Portfolio Assessment for ALS Elementary Level and Junior High School Level Program Completers of SY SY 2020-2021 and Previous Years

1. The presentation portfolio is a collection of a learner's achievements, assembled specifically for assessment. It contains formal records that document the learner's background and experience, the learning process she/he has followed, and work samples selected by the learner to show what she/he can do. It also contains records documenting the learner's prior learning and records documenting the learner's progress toward achieving stated learning goals.

2. The presentation portfolio contains formal records, completed by the learner or with the assistance of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Teacher/Community ALS Implementor/Learning Facilitator and work samples. The ALS Teacher/Community ALS Implementor/Learning Facilitator is responsible for certifying the formal records. The work samples may include a project undertaken by the learner, either individually or as a member of a group, and samples of activities undertaken by the learner that demonstrate learning accomplishments. The work samples, the formal records, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and the Assessment Records should, in total, provide evidence of the learner's achievements across all six (6) Learning Strands in the ALS K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC)

B. DM368s.2021

Division Memorandum No.368 s.2021 entitled "Reiteration of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Community-Based Implementation dated October 4, 2021.

Anent this, the Education Program Specialist II in ALS (EPSA) shall be in charge in monitoring the implementation of ALS in the 10 Districts of this Division and shall be reporting issues, concern, and updates to the Chief Education Supervisor of the Curriculum Implementation Division (CID).

C. DM 413s.2021

Division Memorandum No 413s.2021 entitled "2 Day training-Workshop on Action Research for ALS Implementer" dated October 25, 2021

1. In line with the DepEd's thrusts on intensifying research activities in the entire education system, this Office shall conduct 2-Day Training-Workshop on Action Research for ALS Implementers will be held on November 23-24, 2021 at the venue to be announced later.

2. The Activity aims to:
    a. Capacitate the participants on how to conduct action research;
    b. Orient the participants on Research Management Guidelines;
    c. Craft action research proposals for implementation and future presentation.

Participants of this training are Education Program Specialist for ALS, District ALS Coordinators, Mobile Teachers and BP-OSA Instructional Managers.

D. DM 422 s.2021

Division Memorandum No 422s.2021 entitled "Capability Enhancement Training for Literacy Instructional Managers for Alternative Learning System" dated October 4,2021

1. In line with the Department of Education's thrust of ensuring access to quality basic education for all Filipino Learners, and to strenghten the implementation of the enhanced Alternative Learning System (ALS) curriculum, this Division, through the Curriculum Implementation Division (CID) will conduct the Capability Enhancement Training for Literacy Instructional Managers for SY 2021-2022 on November11-12, 2021 and the venue will be announce later.
2. Objectives of this training are the following:
    a. Prepare the Participants in their significant role as Instructional Manager/Facilitator
    b. Update the Literacy Instructional Managers on the implementation of K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum for ALS in the new normal
    c. Orient the identified ALS literacy Instructional Managers on the Implementation of ALS programs this school year which shall strictly adhere to the prescribed minimum public health standards and community quarantine protocol.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn;

The results of the study revealed that the challenges encountered by the Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners were: Difficulty in Answering the Learning strand English, Science and Mathematics, The respondents' biggest challenge was on reading comprehension. They didn't know the meaning of most of the words they were reading. Some could not even read the words well. They would answer their module in their vacant time and after the responsibilities at home since most of the respondents were working adults and housewives and most often they only have time during the scheduled classes in ALS. The respondents in ALS in North II District were all financially challenged and they experienced financial problems in various situations due to pandemic, unexpected hospitalization, very low income to properly budget for the family, finding hard to look for work and unemployment. In Family matters, Family responsibilities, Family Problems, Discouragement from the family members and Lack of Family Support were the recurring reasons which hindered them to perform well in their studies. With personal matters, some respondents were suffering from illnesses; some were experiencing anxiety and depression, too much work and problems regarding daily sustenance which affected their learning. They lost interest in their studies because their minds and their bodies would not cooperate.

The coping mechanism of Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in answering the Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) included:

Getting an assistance from people close to them like their parents, partner, siblings, friends, and people who know better than them as well as seeking assistance from teachers while some strive for independence in doing school work.

1. In the aspect of reading comprehension, the learners utilized: Re-reading and reading carefully and understanding the sentences. They also tried their best to do the understanding of what they read by self-understanding or self-initiative.
2. In the allotment of time, their time management included: Prioritizing of things to do, allotting time for their studies after their family responsibilities and work.
3. In financial matters, their strategies were: Proper budgeting and helping their partner to earn for a living and the aim to have separate house for independence, prioritizing the basic needs and meals for the family before doing module activities.
4. With regard to family matters, they strategized to persevere-they still continue and focus on their studies and never listened to those who tried to discourage them and strive for their own.
5. Lastly, with personal matters, their coping mechanism included the self-determination to try harder and strive for themselves and to finish Grade 12.

In addition, the researcher found out that there were no specific policies that address the challenges encountered by the learners in Alternative Learning System (ALS). This implies that there is an urgent need to address these challenges encountered by these learners. Our basic educational system must provide assurance for quality education especially to the out of school youth and adults. The implications derived from this study could guide the administrators to plan and develop sustainable interventions for the learners in Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were formulated:

1. Findings in this study showed challenges of ALS learners: Difficulty in Answering the Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) in strands English, Science and Mathematics. Moreover, their biggest challenge was on reading comprehension. in terms of answering the LAS. Therefore, it is recommended to have a thorough discussions on the English learning strand, especially on vocabulary- on word meanings and to give more time in sentence construction, more activities to enhance and to practice their English as their second language. In Science and Mathematics, to provide intervention classes to fill in the gaps of learning. Also, it is recommended for the ALS administrators to provide necessary actions and intervention to support the needs of the learners as well as provide seminars and trainings for the implementers in the field.
2. The respondents in ALS in North II District were all financially challenged. To address this, livelihood trainings as extension projects could be implemented among learners since most of them were housewives.
3. With regard to family matters where they experienced lack of support and discouragement, it is recommended to conduct intervention programs for the learners and teachers in ALS on mental health and wellness.
4. It is recommended for future researchers to conduct a study on the policies and memoranda being implemented in ALS in order to address the emergent needs of the learners.
5. To future researchers, especially in the field of nonformal Education in Alternative Learning System (ALS) to conduct a parallel study on the challenges encountered by ALS learners and their coping mechanism in other districts of Iligan City and other divisions in the region under the Department of Education (DepEd), Philippines.

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