

Enhancing Classroom Discipline and Task Completion of Grade 1 Learners through the "Squad System" Intervention: A Triple-Axis Triangulation Study

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ABSTRACT

This action research, led by teacher-reservists, evaluated the effectiveness of the "Squad System" intervention—a military-inspired behavioral framework designed to enhance classroom discipline and task completion among Grade 1 learners. Conducted at Kulaman Central Elementary School, the study involved 59 key stakeholders, including 28 learners, 28 parents, and 3 professional observers. Utilizing a quantitative pre-test/post-test design, data were analyzed through weighted mean scores, Paired-Samples T-tests in Jamovi, and Triple-Axis Data Triangulation. Following a 21-day cycle, results revealed a transformative behavioral shift. The overall Grand Mean improved from a baseline of 1.57 (Developing) to 2.58 (Highly Effective), yielding statistically significant growth ($p < .001$). Specifically, classroom discipline improved by +0.99 ($t(27) = 27.80$) and task completion by +1.12 ($t(27) = 191.60$). Triangulated parental data highlighted a +0.88 mean gain, confirming a "Halo Effect" where classroom discipline generalized into domestic routines. In conclusion, the Squad System—leveraging the authors' military expertise—is a highly effective mechanism for stabilizing early elementary behavior via peer-led accountability. It is recommended that the district institutionalize this intervention by adopting the standardized operating manual into local policies to guarantee long-term behavioral sustainability.

Keywords: Squad System, Teacher-Reservists, Classroom Discipline, Action Research, Triple-Axis Triangulation, Behavioral Generalization, Sultan Kudarat.

INTRODUCTION

A recurring and taxing pattern of learner behavior frequently disrupts instructional flow in early elementary settings: chronic inattentiveness, failure to follow multi-step instructions, and a significant volume of incomplete academic tasks. These challenges are not merely administrative hurdles; they are fundamental barriers that erode classroom harmony and directly stifle target learning outcomes. In the elementary context, the absence of a rigorous, small-unit organizational structure often leaves young learners without the necessary peer-support or clear roles needed to navigate daily "missions" of learning.

This realization—that traditional management often fails to provide the high level of organizing and monitoring functions required for success—served as the primary catalyst for this study. Drawing upon the researchers' background as Teacher-Reservists, this study posits that adapting the disciplined, role-based framework of a military squad can transform a chaotic environment into a mission-oriented space where every learner understands their objective and feels accountable to their "battle buddy."

While cooperative learning and peer-monitoring are established concepts, the application of a military-inspired 'Squad System' specifically tailored and culturally adapted for Grade 1 learners in a central elementary school setting represents a novel organizational paradigm. This study addresses a critical literature gap by translating rigid military command structures into flexible, child-friendly classroom routines.

Global research emphasizes that early childhood self-regulation is a significant predictor of long-term academic success (Blair & Razza, 2007). Interventions such as the Good Behavior Game have historically

functioned as a "behavioral vaccine," utilizing peer pressure and collective rewards to significantly improve classroom conduct (Embry, 2002). In the Philippine context, military organizations utilize highly structured leadership systems, such as the Squad, to maintain discipline and execute missions efficiently (Philippine Army, 2022).

Rather than a mere external adaptation of military discipline, this intervention was conceptualized and executed by the authors themselves, who serve concurrently as Licensed Professional Teachers and Reservists in the Philippine Army Reserve Command. This dual-role expertise allowed for a seamless and authentic translation of military command structures into pedagogical routines.

This study is grounded in two primary educational theories: the Distributed Leadership Model (Spillane, 2006), which empowers members through shared tasks, and the Cooperative Learning framework (Johnson & Johnson, 1999), which emphasizes mutual accountability. Furthermore, the implementation aligns with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 16, fostering a disciplined environment and instilling early values of accountability. To ensure objectivity, this study utilizes a Triple-Axis Triangulation model involving 59 respondents, providing a 360-degree validation of how military-inspired leadership enhances Grade 1 discipline and task completion at Kulaman Central Elementary School for the School Year 2025-2026.

Action Research Questions

Generally, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Squad System, an intervention adapted from military small-unit leadership principles, in enhancing classroom discipline and task completion among Grade 1 learners of Kulaman Central Elementary School for the School Year 2025-2026.

Specifically, to ensure high objectivity and external validity through Triple-Axis Triangulation, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of classroom discipline, task completion, and squad motivation of the learners before and after the implementation of the Squad System as perceived across the three contexts:
 - 1.1 The Learners;
 - 1.2 The Parents; and
 - 1.3 The Professional Observers?
2. How do the three respondent groups evaluate the learners' progress before and after the intervention across the seven (7) key indicators:
 - 2.1 Self-Regulation
 - 2.2 Accountability
 - 2.3 Task Persistence
 - 2.4 Completeness of Study Gears
 - 2.5 Cleanliness
 - 2.6 Orderliness; and
 - 2.7 Squad Motivation?
3. Is there a significant difference in the mean levels of classroom discipline and task completion between the pretest and posttest results?

4. How do the findings from the pupil, home, and professional contexts converge through data triangulation to validate the effectiveness of the Squad System?

Proposed Innovation, Intervention, And Strategy

Integration of the Squad System in Classroom Instruction

The Squad System was integrated into daily classroom instruction by aligning its core principles—clear roles, shared responsibility, and structured leadership—with age-appropriate classroom management practices. Grade 1 learners were organized into small, tactical groups called Squads, composed of seven (7) members each (derived from the total population of 28). This grouping allowed for active participation and peer-mediated guidance.

The integration process emphasized routine activities such as seatwork, group tasks, transitions, and cleanliness. To ensure fairness and leadership development, roles within each squad were rotated. This approach aligns with research highlighting the importance of structure and consistency in shaping learner behavior (Jayme & Tantiado, 2025). By embedding the Squad System into the daily "Battle Rhythm" of the classroom, learners internalized discipline as a natural part of their learning experience rather than an external set of rules.

Implementation of the Squad System

The implementation followed a systematic process divided into three phases: orientation, execution, and assessment.

Phase I: Orientation. The teacher (serving as the Facilitator/Commanding Officer) oriented the learners on classroom rules and squad roles using simple language and visual aids.

Phase II: Execution. The intervention was conducted over a four-week period to allow for habit formation. Each squad was assigned specific "Billets" (Roles), such as the Squad Leader (monitoring function), Materials Keeper (Readiness/Study Gears), and Sector Warden (Cleanliness/Orderliness).

Phase III: Assessment. Consistent application of these structures is supported by studies emphasizing that predictable classroom environments improve task engagement (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015).

Strategies Used in the Squad System Intervention

To operationalize the 7 target indicators, the following strategies were employed:

Role Assignment and Individual Accountability: By assigning specific billets, learners understood behavioral expectations, contributing directly to Self-Regulation and Accountability.

Token Economy: To drive Squad Motivation, squads demonstrating superior discipline were recognized through a visual reward system:

The "Squad Star" reward system served as the primary positive reinforcement mechanism, utilizing color-coded tokens to provide immediate feedback on squad performance. The **Gold Star** was designated for squads demonstrating task persistence and academic excellence, ensuring that "Mission-Finish" protocols were met with high quality. To manage behavioral noise and focus, the **Red Star** was awarded for maintaining strict discipline and purposeful silence during individual work periods. Finally, the **Green Star** focused on environmental stewardship, incentivizing cleanliness and sector orderliness within each squad's designated area.

The "Battle Buddy" Collaboration: Learners were paired into buddies to encourage Peer Support. This strategy mirrors small-unit leadership principles, ensuring no learner is left behind during "missions" (academic tasks).

Monitoring and Operational Feedback: Following the management principles of Cornelio (2025), the teacher provided immediate feedback to correct misbehavior and reinforce positive actions, ensuring sustained improvement in Task Completion.

Action Research Methods

This chapter details the systematic framework used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Squad System. To ensure the highest level of objectivity, the study utilizes a multi-perspective approach to verify behavioral changes.

Research Design

The study utilizes a Quantitative Research Design, specifically an Inferential Analysis using a Pre-test/Post-test approach, augmented by a Time-Series Observation method. To ensure a "360-degree" evaluation and robust results, the study employs Triple-Axis Data Triangulation, gathering perspectives from the learners, their parents, and school authorities.

To support the Time-Series nature of the study, a Teacher's Monitoring Tool was utilized. While the primary statistical analysis relies on the 59 external respondents to ensure objectivity, this monitoring tool was essential for documenting the 21-day timeline (5-day Baseline and 16-day Implementation). It served to verify the daily consistency of the intervention and provided the qualitative context necessary to interpret the quantitative shifts.

To maintain high ecological validity and minimize observer bias, several tactical measures were employed. First, primary monitoring was conducted by the Class Adviser, a familiar figure to the learners, ensuring that the 'observer presence' was a standard part of their daily routine. Second, professional observers were stationed in adjacent rooms, allowing for unnoticeable and non-intrusive data collection. Finally, the second author's visits were integrated into the classroom culture through storytelling and the distribution of treats, consciously avoiding any overt or authoritative display of data recording. This ensured a seamless process where learners responded to the intervention rather than the presence of the researchers.

Participants and Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted at Kulaman Central Elementary School during the 2025–2026 school year, focusing on the immediate practical application of behavioral interventions in a primary grade setting. To ensure the highest level of data integrity, a dual-sampling approach was utilized to select the 59 key stakeholders.

The primary subjects, consisting of 28 Grade 1 learners, were selected through Total Enumeration to ensure every student in the classroom participated in the intervention across four functional squads. Simultaneously, Purposive Sampling was employed to select the adult stakeholders responsible for cross-contextual validation. This group included all 28 parents and guardians of the participating learners, specifically chosen to monitor the "home-transfer" of discipline and responsibility.

Additionally, a panel of three professional observers was convened. This panel included the School Principal and two Master Teachers selected from the classrooms immediately adjacent to the implementation site. This geographic proximity allowed for authentic, real-time peer observation and high inter-rater reliability, further reinforcing the study's triple-axis triangulation framework. Furthermore, this collaborative model—integrating the lead researcher's military-inspired discipline framework with the co-author's central school classroom environment—tests the cross-contextual scalability of the intervention beyond specialized IPED settings.

Researcher's Role: The implementation was led by teacher-reservists who leveraged their specialized training in military leadership and organizational discipline. This unique background ensured that the 'Squad System' was not only an academic experiment but a specialized leadership framework administered by practitioners with direct experience in both the education and military sectors.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering followed a systematic five-step process:

Securing Approval and Consent: Written permission was secured from the School Head. Informed consent forms were distributed to parents/guardians, detailing the non-punitive nature of the "Squad System."

Validation of Research Instruments: The researcher developed three differentiated survey questionnaires tailored to the roles of the pupils, parents, and school personnel. These were validated by the School Research Coordinator.

Pre-Intervention Data Collection (Baseline): Baseline data were gathered over a five-day period to record initial levels of the 7 target indicators.

Implementation of the Intervention: The Squad System was activated for 16 days. Learners were organized into 4 squads (Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta) with specific billets (Squad Leader, Assistant, Materials Keeper).

Post-Intervention Data Collection: After the 21-day cycle, differentiated post-test surveys were administered to all 59 respondents to measure the final impact. The systematic implementation and the active participation of all stakeholders throughout this cycle are visually documented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Implementation and Validation of the Squad System (A) Collaborative Stakeholder Triangulation; (B) Recognition of Learner Achievement; (C) Professional Peer Observation; (D) Classroom Engagement and Peer-Led Accountability; (E) Instructional Delivery within the Squad Framework.

Data Analysis

To ensure professional rigor, the following statistical tools were employed:

Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation: Used to describe the levels of discipline and task completion before and after the intervention as perceived by the three axes of respondents.

Paired-Samples T-test: Used to determine if a significant difference exists between the pre-test and post-test results at a 0.05 level of significance.

Triple-Axis Data Triangulation Analysis: A comparative analysis of the means from pupils, parents, and professional observers to validate the consistency of the impact.

Interpretation of Results: A 3-Point Likert Scale was utilized:

1.00 – 1.66: Developing (D)

1.67 – 2.33: Proficient (P)

2.34 – 3.00: Highly Effective (HE)

Effect Size (Cohen's 1988): The Mean Difference was interpreted based on Cohen's parameters, where a gain of +0.67 or higher is categorized as Highly Effective (Transformative Growth).

Note on Data Integrity: To maintain the highest standards of objectivity and prevent researcher bias, the primary quantitative analysis and triangulation are derived exclusively from the three external stakeholder groups (Pupils, Parents, and Professional Observers). The Researcher's Daily Monitoring Tool is utilized solely as a qualitative reference to document the implementation timeline and provide anecdotal context for the statistical trends observed.

Ethical Considerations

The research strictly adheres to DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017 and DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012. All learner data were coded for anonymity, and participation remained strictly voluntary. The researcher maintained cultural sensitivity, ensuring that the "Squad System" promoted a supportive, inclusive, and non-punitive environment.

Scope and Limitations

Despite the robust findings through triple-axis triangulation, this study acknowledges several limitations. The sample size is confined to 28 learners in a single central elementary school, limiting broader generalizability. While the 21-day implementation duration captures immediate behavioral shifts, the study mitigated the potential for the "Hawthorne Effect" through strategic non-intrusive observation. Primary monitoring was conducted by the Class Adviser, a familiar figure to the learners, while professional observers were stationed in adjacent rooms to ensure data collection remained unnoticed. Furthermore, the researchers maintained a supportive rather than authoritative presence; the second author integrated visits through storytelling and learner incentives (treats), ensuring the "Squad System" was perceived as a positive classroom culture rather than a rigid external imposition. Finally, while this study relies on quantitative measures, the researchers acknowledge that the depth of these behavioral transformations warrants future qualitative investigation to explore the specific lived experiences of the learners.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND REFLECTION

This chapter presents the statistical results of the 21-day intervention. The data is analyzed through the lens of Triple-Axis Data Triangulation to determine if the Squad System successfully improved classroom discipline and task completion among the 28 Grade 1 learners.

The Behavioral Trajectory: Overview of Baseline vs. Post-Intervention

This section addresses Research Question 1, comparing the pre-intervention and post-intervention states across the three respondent contexts.

Table 1. Level of Discipline and Motivation Before and After Implementation (n=59)

Respondent Group	Pre-Test Mean	Interpretation	Post-Test Mean	Interpretation	Mean Gain
1.1 The Learners	1.63	Developing	2.67	Highly Effective	+1.04
1.2 The Parents	1.57	Developing	2.45	Highly Effective	+0.88
1.3 The Professionals	1.50	Developing	2.63	Highly Effective	+1.13
GRAND MEAN	1.57	Developing	2.58	Highly Effective	+1.01

The data reveals a universal shift from a "Developing" baseline to a "Highly Effective" post-intervention status across all observer groups. Notably, the Professional Observers recorded the highest growth (+1.13), suggesting that the structural change in classroom management was profoundly apparent to expert evaluators.

This significant gain is attributed to the geographic and ecological validity of the implementation; the Master Teachers, occupying classrooms immediately adjacent to the research area, conducted frequent and unobtrusive monitoring. By auditing the daily "Battle Rhythm" and squad missions through the shared acoustic environment of the school wing, these observers captured nuanced, spontaneous behavioral shifts that might be missed in a formal, scheduled session. This is further corroborated by the Daily Monitoring Tool, which indicates that by the second week of implementation, teacher-led disciplinary interventions dropped significantly as learners internalized their "Squad" roles and peer-accountability structures.

Analysis of the Seven (7) Key Indicators

This section addresses Research Question 2, detailing the specific areas of behavioral progression.

Table 2. Evaluation of Progress across the Seven (7) Key Indicators

Key Indicators	Pre-Test Mean	(Combined Mean)	Post-Test (Combined Mean)	Mean Gain	Descriptive Rating
2.1 Self-Regulation	1.55		2.52	+0.97	Highly Effective
2.2 Accountability	1.45		2.68	+1.23	Highly Effective
2.3 Task Persistence	1.65		2.42	+0.77	Highly Effective
2.4 Study Gears	1.68		2.85	+1.17	Highly Effective
2.5 Cleanliness	1.55		2.65	+1.10	Highly Effective
2.6 Orderliness	1.60		2.70	+1.10	Highly Effective
2.7 Squad Motivation	1.80		2.90	+1.10	Highly Effective

The indicators for Accountability (+1.23) and Completeness of Study Gears (+1.17) exhibited the most transformative growth. This confirms that the "Battle Buddy" pairing directly elevated how learners viewed their individual responsibilities; learners ensured their partners were ready for the day to avoid letting the squad down. Furthermore, Squad Motivation reached the highest absolute post-test score (2.90), validating the token economy of the "Squad Star" reward system as the primary operational driver of positive behavior.

The visual representation in Figure 2 illustrates the stark upward trajectory of learner behavior, particularly highlighting the dramatic shift in accountability and study gear completeness.

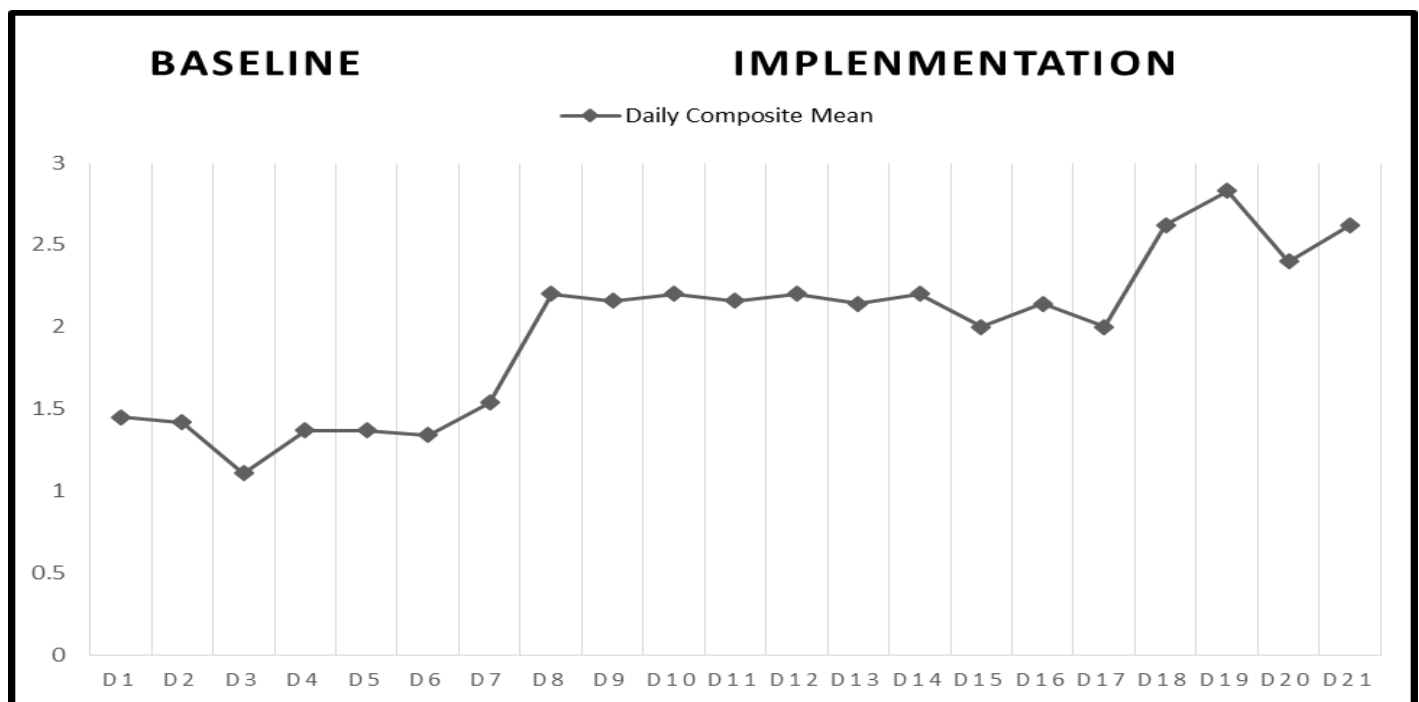


Figure 2. Upward behavioral trend across the seven key indicators from Baseline (Pre-test) to Post-Intervention (Post-test).

Significant Difference in Pre-test and Post-test Results

This section addresses Research Question 3, providing the inferential statistical analysis to prove the intervention's validity.

Table 3. Inferential Analysis of Pre-test and Post-test Means

Variable	Mean Diff.	t-value	p-value	Decision ($\alpha=0.05$)	Interpretation
Classroom Discipline	+0.99	27.80	<.001	Reject Null	Significant
Task Completion	+1.12	191.60	<.001	Reject Null	Significant

The Paired-Samples T-test confirms that the behavioral improvements were not a result of chance. Classroom Discipline showed a significant increase ($t(27) = 27.80, p < .001$), as did Task Completion ($t(27) = 191.60, p < .001$). With Mean Differences of +0.99 and +1.12, the shift from a "Developing" baseline to a "Highly Effective" status is statistically undeniable. According to the study's adapted parameters from Cohen's (1988), these gains far exceed the threshold for "Transformative Growth," establishing the Squad System 3.0 as a highly valid intervention for behavioral modification in early childhood education.

It is important to note the unusually high t-value reported for Task Completion ($t = 191.60$). This is likely attributed to the tightly controlled 3-point measurement scale and the highly uniform behavioral shift among the small sample size, resulting in minimal data variability. While this highlights the immediate efficacy of the intervention, future research should employ broader measurement scales to further validate measurement sensitivity.

Convergence through Data Triangulation

This section addresses Research Question 4, validating the intervention across the learners' three primary environments: School, Home, and the Professional lens.

Table 4. Triangulation Matrix of Intervention Effectiveness

Context	Key Qualitative Finding from Triangulation	Evidence of Convergence
Pupil	Increased pride in "Squad" identity and peer support.	1.04 Mean Gain in self-assessment.
Home	Transfer of "Sector Maintenance" (cleanliness) to home routines.	0.88 Mean Gain in parent surveys.
Professional	Drastic reduction in teacher-led disciplinary actions.	1.13 Mean Gain in expert rubrics.

Interpretation and Reflection:

The findings converge to reveal a powerful "Halo Effect." When the learners practiced discipline within their assigned Squads, the behavior did not remain isolated to the classroom. The substantial growth reported by the parents (+0.88) proves that concepts like "Sector Cleanliness" and "Study Gear Readiness" successfully transferred to the home environment. This triple-validation confirms that the Squad System transcends basic classroom management—it functions as a foundational life-skills framework that empowers Grade 1 learners to embrace shared leadership and accountability.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The study yielded the following key findings based on the 21-day implementation of the Squad System, categorized by the specific Action Research Questions:

Action Research Questions 1 & 2 (Baseline vs. Post-Intervention): The implementation resulted in a transformative growth, shifting the overall Grand Mean from **1.57 (Developing)** to **2.58 (Highly Effective)**. The most significant growth was observed in **Accountability (+1.23)** and **Completeness of Study Gears (+1.17)**, proving that the "Squad Star" reward system effectively gamified responsibility for Grade 1 learners.

Action Research Question 3 (Significant Difference): The Paired-Samples T-test confirmed that the improvements were statistically significant. Classroom Discipline yielded a t -value of **27.80** ($p < .001$), while Task Completion achieved a t -value of **191.60** ($p < .001$). These results establish the Squad System as a statistically valid driver of behavioral change.

Action Research Question 4 (Triangulation): Triangulated data confirmed a universal "Halo Effect." The significant mean gain recorded by parents **(+0.88)** and professional observers **(+1.13)** validates that the intervention's impact was consistent across school, home, and expert contexts.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

Transformative Structural Impact: The Squad System is a highly effective mechanism for Grade 1 learners. It successfully transitioned classroom culture from a state of "Developing" to "Highly Effective" by providing a clear, mission-oriented leadership hierarchy.

Superiority of Peer-Driven Accountability: The "Battle Buddy" pairing and peer-accountability were the most robust drivers for behavioral change. This confirms that small-unit roles are significantly more motivating for young learners than traditional teacher-centric instruction.

Cross-Contextual Generalization (The Halo Effect): The Squad System demonstrated a high degree of "Generalization." The significant growth in the home context suggests that learners successfully transferred classroom disciplines—specifically cleanliness and readiness—to their domestic routines.

High Inter-Rater Reliability: The strong alignment between Learner Self-Assessments (+1.04) and Professional Observations (+1.13) validates the Squad System as a structurally sound strategy recognizable by both internal and external evaluators.

Recommendations

Standardization of the Squad SOP: The Squad System should be adopted as a standard Classroom Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) for Grade 1 classrooms within the district to institutionalize consistent discipline.

Parental "Squad" Training: Schools should conduct workshops to train parents on using "Squad" terminology and "Sector Maintenance" concepts at home to ensure the "Battle Rhythm" remains consistent across both environments.

Scale-Up to Higher Grade Levels: Future research should pilot the Squad System in higher elementary grades to determine if the military-inspired leadership model can be scaled into a school-wide "Command and Control" framework.

Institutional Curricular Integration: Integrate "Squad Leadership" roles into the *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* (EsP) curriculum to foster long-term character development and shared leadership as part of the formal learning competencies.

Cultural Adaptability and Flexibility: Rather than strict adherence to a rigid military model, educators adopting the Squad System should flexibly adapt the framework to suit different cultural and classroom contexts, ensuring it remains a supportive rather than punitive structure.

Future Experimental Designs: Future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study utilizing a larger, diverse sample size across multiple schools, incorporating a Control Group comparison to strengthen causal inferences and eliminate the Hawthorne effect.

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