

Barriers in Learning Araling Panlipunan and Academic Performance among Junior High School Learners

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ABSTRACT

Araling Panlipunan is central to developing learners' understanding of society, culture, and citizenship, yet many Junior High School students still encounter obstacles that may impede their learning and performance. This study aimed to determine the barriers in learning Araling Panlipunan and their relationship to academic performance among Grade 10 learners in the Division of Bukidnon, school year 2023–2024. Specifically, it sought to describe the respondents' characteristics, assess the extent of barriers (language, motivational, social and cultural, lack of learning materials, and emotional), and examine their academic performance in Araling Panlipunan. A quantitative descriptive–correlational design was used, involving 401 Grade 10 learners selected through stratified sampling. Data were gathered using a validated questionnaire on barriers, patterned and modified from Palaming (2020), and learners' General Weighted Average in Araling Panlipunan for SY 2023–2024. Content validity was established through expert review, and pilot testing yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.80 for all subscales, indicating good reliability. Results showed that learners perceived barriers only to a “little extent,” with language and emotional factors emerging as the most notable, particularly in relation to technical and subject-specific vocabulary. Learners' academic performance was “very satisfactory.” A significant relationship was found between the extent of barriers and academic performance, while no significant differences in performance were noted across learner characteristics, except for sex. The study concludes that although Araling Panlipunan is manageable, specific linguistic and emotional challenges still affect achievement and recommends structured group discussions, learner-centered strategies, and strengthened material and socio-emotional support to enhance learning outcomes.

Keywords: Barriers in Learning Araling Panlipunan, Academic, Performance

INTRODUCTION

Being aware of the barriers in learning Araling Panlipunan is essential to the learner's understanding to enhance academic performance. An investigation that revealed the different challenges faced by the learners on receiving knowledge. Among these challenges, there are three main obstacles that emerged: information about how things happened in the past, trainers and teachers not being trained by specialized trainers and lack of good learning materials. We need to see the underlying problems to address certain issues so that learners can perform better in school. Learners learn better in Araling Panlipunan when the right strategies are employed by the teachers to understand the topics. Yanela (2023) shows that knowing and solving challenges related to teaching approaches, lack of learning materials, and socio-cultural differences gives educators an idea to recreate certain strategies to use in teaching the subject.

Laingo and Mirailles (2023) state that the correlation between strong performance in this subject and improved civic engagement, social awareness, and economic opportunities are indispensable for community ownership. With the present situation where connectivity around the world is highlighted, and the need to be more active

and informed citizens is a must, learners must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to connect to the community. This subject serves as a driving force for the learners to learn those skills and acquire the said knowledge for them to be better individuals while becoming the future of the nation. Their high performance in this subject pertains to overall school performance, higher retention rates, enhanced academic reputation, and improved learner engagement. Educational institutions that promote excellence in Araling Panlipunan are in adherence with national goals for learning to lead a nurturing generation of well-rounded and socially responsible citizens.

Understanding the gaps of the barriers in teaching this subject is essential for developing strategies that address educational inequities. Studies conducted by Serafico-Reyes et al. (2019), underscore the need to identify specific barriers like language difficulties, inadequate teacher training, and limited access to learning materials, which disproportionately affect certain learners. Addressing these obstacles with the right support ensures that all learners, no matter where they come from or what their situation is, can avail a fair chance to learn. Through implementing practical solutions in place, teachers and educational policymakers can close these gaps, making education more equitable and helping learners do well in school, especially in Araling Panlipunan. This way, educators and policymakers can help learners succeed, as highlighted by Sturges and Odendahl (2020) and Davidson and Goldberg (2021)

Statement Of the Problem

The study examined the effect of barriers to learning towards the academic performance in Araling Panlipunan among Junior High School learners in the province of Bukidnon during the school year 2023-2024. Specifically, the study endeavored to answer the following questions:

1. How are the respondents distributed in terms of sex, home-school distance, daily allowance, and parents' highest educational attainment?
2. How do the respondents assess on the extent of barriers in learning Araling Panlipunan based on language, motivation, social and cultural, lack of learning materials, and emotional factors?
3. What is the respondents' level of academic performance in Araling Panlipunan during the school year 2023-2024?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' assessment on the extent of barriers in learning Araling Panlipunan and their academic performances in Araling Panlipunan during the school year 2023-2024?
5. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' academic performance in Araling Panlipunan when grouped according to their characteristics?

Hypothesis

Problem 1, 2 and 3 were hypotheses free. On the basis of Problem 4 and 5, the null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

H01: There is no significant relationship between the respondents' assessment of barriers in learning Araling Panlipunan and their academic performance in Araling Panlipunan during the school year 2023-2024?

H02: There is no significant difference in the respondents' academic performance in Araling Panlipunan when grouped according to their characteristics.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to describe barriers to learning Araling Panlipunan and examine their relationship with Grade 10 learners' academic performance. Data were collected

from ten large public secondary schools in the Schools Division of Bukidnon, a culturally diverse, predominantly agricultural province in Northern Mindanao, Philippines, encompassing both urban and rural communities.

The sample consisted of 401 officially enrolled Grade 10 learners in school year 2023–2024, drawn from a population of 4,735 using Slovin’s formula and stratified sampling to ensure proportional representation by school. A researcher-developed questionnaire served as the primary instrument, organized into three parts: learner characteristics (sex, home–school distance, daily allowance, parents’ highest educational attainment), perceived barriers to learning Araling Panlipunan (language, motivational, social–cultural, lack of learning materials, emotional), and learners’ academic performance. General Weighted Averages in Araling Panlipunan were obtained from division records to complement self-reported performance data.

Content validity was established through expert review by three curriculum specialists, whose feedback led to refinement of response categories, clarification of item wording to focus on Social Studies learning, and removal of items misaligned with the study objectives. Reliability was evaluated through pilot testing with 30 comparable Grade 10 learners, and Cronbach’s alpha values between 0.817 and 0.846 indicated good internal consistency across barrier scales. Barriers were rated on a four-point Likert scale, and academic performance was categorized using standard grade descriptors.

Data collection followed formal institutional permissions and emphasized voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) summarized respondent profiles, barriers, and performance. Pearson’s *r* was used to test the association between perceived barriers and academic performance, while *t*-tests and one-way ANOVA examined differences in barrier perceptions across demographic groups. Ethical approval was obtained from an appropriate review body, and data were stored securely with restricted access to safeguard participants’ privacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I. Distribution of Respondents’ Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	142	35.3
	Female	259	64.7
	Total	401	100.0
Home-to-School Distance	4 kilometers and more	182	45.3
	3 kilometers	56	14
	2 kilometers	65	16.2
	1kilometer	49	12.3
	Less than 1 kilometer	49	12.3
	Total	401	100.0
Daily Allowance	₱51.00 and above	154	38.5
	₱41.00 - 50.99	59	14.8
	₱30.00 - 40.99	18	4.6
	₱20.00 and below	169	42.2
	Total	401	100.0
Mother’s Highest	College Graduate	79	19.70
Educational Attainment	College Level	53	13.22
	Vocational Course	6	1.50
	High School Graduate	127	31.67
	High School Level	63	15.71
	Elementary Graduate	40	9.97
	Elementary Level	33	8.23
	Total	401	100.0
Father’s Highest	College Graduate	61	15.21

Educational Attainment	College Level	45	11.23
	Vocational Course	4	0.99
	High School Graduate	105	26.18
	High School Level	62	15.46
	Elementary Graduate	61	15.21
	Elementary Level	63	15.72
	Total	401	100.0

Table 1 shows that public high schools in Bukidnon is predominantly female, with almost two-thirds of respondents identifying as girls. This means that most of the data on barriers and academic performance in Araling Panlipunan reflects female learners' perspectives, while the smaller male group may face distinct constraints that warrant further study. Findings also show that many learners live far from school, with the largest share traveling about 4 kilometers daily to attend classes. This highlights the physical and financial effort required for schooling in rural Bukidnon and underscores the need for targeted support for those from distant communities. Most respondents receive a daily allowance of 20 pesos or below, indicating that many study under tight financial constraints that can limit access to food, supplies, and transportation. Despite this, learners often show resilience, especially when supported by family, peers, and the community. Parental education is generally at the high school or vocational level, with fewer parents having completed college. This suggests limited capacity for direct academic support at home and points to the importance of school- and community-based interventions, such as tutorials and parent education programs, to strengthen learners' academic success in Araling Panlipunan.

Table II. Summary Distribution of Respondents' Assessment on the Extent of Barriers in Learning Araling Panlipunan

Variable	Mean	SD	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Language Barrier	2.38	0.71	Seldom	A Little Extent
Motivational Barrier	2.20	0.78	Seldom	A Little Extent
Social and Cultural Barriers	2.26	0.84	Seldom	A Little Extent
Lack of Learning Materials	2.13	0.80	Seldom	A Little Extent
Emotional Barrier	2.09	0.83	Seldom	A Little Extent
Overall	2.21	0.79	Seldom	A Little Extent

Table II shows the summary distribution of the respondents' assessment on the barriers in learning Araling Panlipunan. Learners' overall assessment of barriers in learning Araling Panlipunan, the composite mean of 2.21 (SD = 0.79), interpreted as "a little extent," suggests that learners do not perceive barriers as strongly hindering their learning. They find the subject manageable and engaging, which likely supports better focus on content, knowledge retention, and critical thinking. This also implies that current teaching approaches and learning materials in AP are functioning relatively well from the learners' perspective. Among the specific barriers, language recorded the highest mean at 2.38 (SD = 0.71), still within the "a little extent" range. This indicates that, while learners occasionally struggle with complex vocabulary and technical or historical terms, particularly those unfamiliar to students from Visayas and Mindanao, these difficulties are limited rather than severe. The subject remains accessible overall, especially when teachers clarify difficult terms, use visual aids, and provide contextual or bilingual explanations to bridge comprehension gaps.

In contrast, emotional barriers obtained a lower mean of 2.09 (SD = 0.83), also interpreted as "a little extent," indicating that emotions such as anxiety, boredom, or frustration rarely pose major obstacles to learning AP. Many learners appear to connect the subject to their identity as Filipinos and to culturally relevant content, helping foster interest and "love" for the subject and reducing negative emotional reactions. In supportive classroom environments that encourage collaboration and meaningful engagement, emotional barriers tend to have only a minor impact, suggesting that teachers can prioritize strengthening learners' thinking and learning

strategies while maintaining existing positive socio-emotional climates.

Table III. Distribution of Respondents' Academic performance in Araling Panlipunan during the School Year 2023-2024

Level of Academic Performance	Frequency	Percentage
Outstanding	194	48.4
Very Satisfactory	137	34.2
Satisfactory	54	13.5
Fairly Satisfactory	16	4.0
Did not Meet Expectations	0	0.0
Total	401	100.0
Mean : 88.7		
SD: 0.80		
Description: Very Satisfactory		

Table III presents the respondents' academic performance in Araling Panlipunan based on their General Weighted Average for SY 2023–2024. The overall mean grade of 88.7 (SD = 0.80), interpreted as Very Satisfactory, shows that learners performed strongly in the subject, with scores tightly clustered around this high average. The very small standard deviation suggests that most students consistently achieved high marks, indicating a generally successful cohort in AP.

Category frequencies further reinforce this picture: nearly half of the respondents (48.4%) obtained Outstanding grades (90–100), and when combined with those in the Very Satisfactory band, about 82.6% of learners are performing at the top two levels. Notably, none of the respondents fell into the “Did not meet expectations” or failing category, meaning all learners met at least the minimum achievement standards in Araling Panlipunan. This pattern supports the earlier finding that identified barriers (such as language and emotional factors) were only experienced to a little extent and did not substantially hinder learning outcomes.

Overall, the high mean, narrow spread of grades, and absence of failing marks imply that current instructional practices, learning materials, and support systems in AP are effective in helping learners overcome minor barriers and maintain strong performance. These results suggest that schools should sustain and further refine these strategies, such as participatory, inclusive teaching and supportive classroom environments, to continue promoting high achievement while gradually reducing remaining learning challenges.

Table IV. Results of the test on Relationship between the Respondents' Assessment of the Barriers to Learning and their Academic Performance in Araling Panlipunan for School Year 2023-2024

Barriers in Learning AP	Academic Achievement		
	R	p-value	Overall
Language Barrier	0.300	0.000	Significant
Motivational Barrier	0.124	0.000	Significant
Social and Cultural Barriers	0.735	0.000	Significant
Lack of learning materials	0.172	0.000	Significant
Emotional factors	0.192	0.000	Significant

Legend: Ho is rejected if Significant (S)
Ho is accepted if not significant (NS)

Table IV shows that all identified barriers language, motivation, social and cultural factors, lack of learning materials, and emotional factors have a statistically significant relationship with learners' academic performance

in Araling Panlipunan for SY 2023–2024. Even when these barriers are perceived only to a “little extent,” higher levels of barriers are still associated with lower achievement. Language barriers, particularly difficulties with technical and historical vocabulary, are strongly linked to reduced understanding and participation, while motivation also significantly, though less strongly, relates to performance. Social and cultural barriers, including economic disadvantage and indigenous background, are likewise associated with lower achievement, indicating the influence of learners’ broader contexts.

Limited and outdated learning materials show a significant negative association with performance, suggesting that resource gaps constrain review, deeper exploration, and retention of content. Emotional factors such as stress, anxiety, and low self-confidence are similarly and significantly related to performance, as learners under emotional strain tend to struggle more with challenging material. Overall, the results show that multiple, interrelated barriers shape learners’ outcomes in Araling Panlipunan.

Table V. Test Statistics on the Difference of the Respondents’ Academic Performance in Araling Panlipunan when Grouped According to their Characteristics

Characteristics	Academic Performance		
	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	-35.529	0.000	Significant
Home-to-School distance	2.223	0.085	Not Significant
Daily Allowance (peso)	0.445	0.721	Not Significant
Father's Educational Attainment	0.216	0.885	Not Significant
Mother's Educational Attainment	0.747	0.525	Not Significant
Overall	-6.380	0.443	Not Significant

Legend: Ho is rejected if Significant (S)

Ho is accepted if Not Significant (NS)

Table V shows that among the learner characteristics examined sex, home-to-school distance, daily allowance, and parents’ highest educational attainment only sex has a statistically significant effect on academic performance in Araling Panlipunan ($p = 0.000$). This indicates that girls and boys differ meaningfully in their AP outcomes, while distance, allowance, and parental education do not significantly predict grades in this sample. Female learners tend to perform better in Araling Panlipunan, which may reflect higher engagement and more consistent study habits compared to many male learners. By contrast, the non-significant effects of distance, allowance, and parental education suggest that, despite structural challenges, learners are often able to cope through school and community support, so these factors do not automatically translate into lower performance. Overall, the results point to the need to attend to gender-related patterns in motivation and engagement, rather than assuming that background characteristics alone determine achievement.

SUMMARY

This study examined the barriers affecting Junior High School learners’ academic performance in Araling Panlipunan in ten large public schools in the Division of Bukidnon. It focused on key barriers language, motivational, socio-cultural, lack of learning materials, and emotional that may hinder learners’ engagement and achievement, to provide evidence-based insights for educators and policymakers to improve outcomes in this critical subject. Using a descriptive correlational design, the research involved Grade 10 learners from several municipalities (Dangcagan, Don Carlos, Pangantucan, Kalilangan, Quezon, and Maramag), representing diverse ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This heterogeneous sample offers a realistic picture of the conditions and learning experiences of students across the province.

Findings show that learners perceive barriers in Araling Panlipunan, particularly language and emotional factors, only to a minimal extent. Emotional barriers display a weak negative correlation with academic performance, indicating a slight but meaningful influence. Despite these challenges, most learners attained high levels of achievement, with many earning Very Satisfactory or Outstanding grades, underscoring their resilience and the relative effectiveness of current teaching practices in supporting success. Overall, the study highlights which barriers are most closely linked to performance and stresses that addressing emotional and related challenges can further enhance learning experiences and outcomes. It underscores the need to refine teaching strategies and implement targeted interventions to ensure more equitable, high-quality Araling Panlipunan education for all learners in Bukidnon.

CONCLUSIONS

As per the result of the study, the respondents overall rated the barriers to learning Araling Panlipunan on language I am challenged to understand difficult words as having a moderate impact on their academic performance, while the characteristic sex of the respondents was found to be significantly associated with the academic performance of the respondents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are hereby proposed:

Schools may provide training to help parents, especially those who did not finish school, so that they can still guide their children's learning at home to ensure academic support from them.

Teachers should encourage learners to participate in group discussions to develop teamwork and communication skills to prevent them from boredom.

Teachers may employ strategies in teaching Araling Panlipunan, like integrating ICT, outdoor activities, etc., to make their learning meaningful and productive.

Teachers should develop lessons that are more engaging, interactive, relevant, and connected to the lived experiences of the learners.

Teachers should implement gender responsiveness strategies and provide targeted interventions that address performance gaps.

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