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### Research Article

## Exploring Students' Perception of Educational Environment in Alternative Learning System (ALS) Senior High School

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### About Article

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### ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to explore the perceptions of students in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) regarding their educational environment at Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School, Nabunturan Davao De Oro. While significant studies and researches have examined the educational environment in allied health sciences, consequently, there's a notable lack or no studies have documented pertaining to perceptions of ALS students to their educational environment. Quantitative research method was used in this study employing descriptive design. The participants were composed of 104 senior high school students enrolled in ALS program. The data were gathered through face-to-face using DREEM survey questionnaire. The responses of the participants were analyzed and treated statistically using ANOVA to identify significant differences. The results shown that ALS students have generally positive perception in their educational environment with an overall mean of 3.17 interpreted as high. Notably, it was found out that there is no significant difference in demographic profiles of students such as sex, age, marital status, and grade level in the perceptions of educational environment. However, the academic self-perception domain has significant difference among grade 11 and grade 12 students indicating that they might have different experiences or challenges in the school. Nevertheless, the overall result shown that demographic factors of the respondents do not influence their perception. The study highlighted the pivotal role of a supportive educational environment within ALS program and the need for continuous support for educators to ALS students which considered according to law, as depressed, underserved and underprivileged.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The educational world plays a vital role in shaping students' perceptions of teaching and learning. It encompasses more than just the physical space of a classroom or school; it includes students' emotional experiences, belief systems, and the tools and resources they utilize (Fraser, 2019; Sahu *et al.*, 2020). It is a place where learners can ask questions, make mistakes, and grow intellectually and personally. The impact of the educational environment is widely acknowledged, as it significantly affects students' motivation, well-being, and overall academic experience (Sahu *et al.*, 2020).

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) seeks to provide basic education to children, youth, and adults who are not currently enrolled in the formal school system. While the ALS program offers a crucial opportunity for marginalized learners, it faces several challenges related to maintaining a conducive educational environment (Abad & Galleto, 2020). A standing committee in the United Kingdom accentuated the importance of a supportive knowledge environment, stating that "an effective environment conducive to learning is significantly important to productive training" (Yeturu *et al.*, 2022). Similar sentiments are echoed in the context of non-traditional education, where the role of institutional and community support is essential for learner success.

In international contexts, a study in Egypt explored nursing students' views on educational environments, identifying various factors that influence their academic engagement (Hernandez *et al.*, 2024). A parallel study in an Indian university across five academic programs—public health, dentistry, medicine, nursing, and physical therapy—found a generally favorable perception of the educational environment (Hernandez *et al.*, 2024).

In the Philippine setting, a study in Baguio investigated perceptions of the academic environment among medical science and nursing students. While most students perceived their environment as "more positive than negative," areas for improvement, particularly in faculty student interactions, were identified (Barcelo, 2016). Likewise, another study on dental students in a Philippine university confirmed that respondents appreciated a favorable learning atmosphere (Hernandez *et al.*, 2024).

However, most existing research on educational environments focuses on health sciences. There is limited to no research addressing the perceptions of ALS learners, leaving a significant gap in literature. This study directs to fill that gap by investigating ALS students' perceptions of their educational environment. Understanding these perceptions can offer valuable insights to enhance teaching strategies and support mechanisms, ultimately promoting more successful learning outcomes for ALS learners.

### 1.1. Objectives of the study

The goal of this paper is to explore the students' perception of scholastic environment to teaching and learning in Alternative Learning System (ALS) senior high school in Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School.

Specifically, it answered the following questions.

i. What are the demographic profile of ALS students;

ii. What is the perception of ALS students towards their educational environment in terms of;

- Learning,
- Academic self,
- Teachers,
- Atmosphere,
- Social self?

iii. Is there a significant difference on the perception of ALS students in the educational environment when group according to their profile.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The educational environment includes—but is not limited to—geographic location, student-teacher relationships, peer learning, recreational resources, and sociocultural factors, all of which contribute to the attainment of students' learning objectives. It covers everything from classroom and laboratory settings to interpersonal relationships and curriculum engagement (Sahu *et al.*, 2020).

Despite efforts to expand access to basic education, key support mechanisms for ALS—such as sufficient instructional materials, adequate facilities, stable funding, and stakeholder involvement—remain inadequate (Abad & Galleto, 2020; Cartoneros, 2024). This renders ALS programs more susceptible to challenges in establishing a robust educational environment, which directly affects the quality of teaching and understanding. Aligned with the Department of Education's issuance of DepEd Order (DO) No. 031, s. 2022, titled Child Rights Policy: Adopting the Rights-Based Education (RBE) Framework in Philippine Basic Education, schools are urged to promote respect for learners' rights and to create positive, safe, and inclusive environments that enable learners to thrive academically and socially (Department of Education, 2022). Rafiq, Afzal, and Kamran (2022) emphasize that effective learning environments are those where students feel competent and valued, which fosters motivation and self-confidence.

Conversely, if the educational environment induces discomfort, confusion, or alienation, students may lose motivation or drop out of school. Sayfulloevna (2023) noted that feelings of unease or insecurity deter learners from class participation, asking questions, or engaging in academic dialogue. Additionally, Cartoneros (2024) stressed that ALS teachers often lack access to professional development tools and resources essential for adult education delivery.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Research design

This study employed a quantitative research method. Using this method, it gives the way to analyze numerical data statistically and yields an objective conclusion that leads to an in-depth understanding of the study that we are investigating. Moreover, descriptive design is a technique used in this study. The intent of descriptive study is to examine a population's characteristics, identify problems within a group, organization, or population, or examine variations in traits or behaviors among organizations or even countries (Siedlecki, 2020). The use of this design will help to accurately capture the opinions of respondents and comprehensively understand the students' perception of their



educational environment that affects teaching and learning in alternative learning systems.

### 3.2. Research respondents

The study was conducted at Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School, Nabunturan, Davao De Oro. The population of respondents were specifically senior high students under the alternative learning system program who were enrolled in the TVL track. There were 104 respondents or ALS students from the H.E and AFA strands. In selecting the respondents of the study, universal sampling was used because there was only a small population of ALS students in the school. In addition, one of the researchers was an ALS volunteer in the aforementioned school.

### 3.3. Data gathering procedure

First, the researchers formally wrote a letter addressed to the School District Superintendent through the school principal of Nabunturan Comprehensive National High School for their consent to conduct the study. Once the permit has been granted, survey questionnaires were administered to the entire ALS students of the school.

The questionnaires were then personally distributed and administered by the researchers to the respondents. Afterward, the accomplished survey questionnaires were retrieved immediately to ensure 100 percent retrieval. The collected data was analyzed and treated statistically.

### 3.4. Research instruments

Researchers used the Dundee Ready Education Environment Measure (DREEM) survey questionnaire with a Cronbach alpha of 0.955 which indicates that the questionnaire has high reliability (Singh *et al.*, 2022). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. This is the most common statistics used to describe the internal consistency reliability of a set of items. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

The DREEM questionnaire has 5 sections, which include how students see learning, how they see themselves in school, how they see teachers, how they see the setting, and how they see themselves in social situations. This questionnaire has 50 questions. Twelve of them are about how students see

the learning area, eight are about how they see themselves academically, eleven are about how students see their teachers, twelve are about the atmosphere, and seven are about how they see themselves socially. Each question has Likert scale with five points: 4 means "strongly agree", 3 means "agree", 2 means "neutral", 1 means "disagree", and 0 means "strongly disagree." The students were asked to rate how much they agreed with each question (Singh *et al.*, 2023).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic Profile		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	46	44.2%
	Female	58	55.8%
	Total	104	100%
Age	17-25	82	78.9%
	26-35	20	19.2%
	36 and above	2	1.9%
	Total	104	100%
Status	Single	95	91.3%
	Married	9	8.7%
	Total	104	100%
Grade Level	11	51	49%
	12	53	51%
	Total	104	100%

Table 1 indicates the demographic information of the ALS students at Nabunturan Comprehensive National High School. There were 44.2% men and 55.8% women who answered. 78.9% of them were between the ages of 17 and 25, while only 1.9% were 36 years old or older. Also, most of the people who answered were single (91.3%), while only 8.7% were married. This means that many of the ALS students at Nabunturan Comprehensive National High School were not yet legally married. There is, however, a close number of respondents in terms of grade level, with only a 2% difference.

**Table 2.** Level of perception of ALS students towards their educational environment

Perception of ALS students towards their educational environment	Standard Deviation	Mean	Description
Students' Perception of Learning	0.55	3.26	Very High
Students' Academic Self-Perception	0.56	3.27	Very High
Students' Perception of Teachers	0.44	3.23	High
Students' Perception of Atmosphere	0.53	3.06	High
Students' Social Self-Perception	0.63	3.03	High
Overall Mean	0.46	3.17	High



Table 2 presents the level of perception of ALS students toward their educational environment, with an overall mean score of 3.17, interpreted as high. The overall result is aligned with the study conducted by Cagang (2024) in which the implementation level of ALS in terms of learning environment is received a high rating which denotes learners are expressing satisfaction on the educational environment. Among the five domains, Students' Academic Self-Perception received the highest mean of 3.27, described as very high, closely followed by Students' Perception of Learning, which had a mean score of 3.26, also interpreted as very high. These results indicate that ALS students were highly satisfied with their learning experiences and academic progress, suggesting that they perceive themselves as capable and engaged learners. Teachers in the ALS program were perceived to have address the academic and learning problems faced by students which attributed to teachers' effort to make learning experiences more realistic, personalized and flexible. Hence, enabled learners to further increase their engagement in learning and academic activities, and exhibit a sense of self-belief which explicitly seen in the result as two highest domains in educational environment.

This finding supports the study by Bahian and Brobo (2023), who revealed that ALS learners exhibit a highly favorable attitude toward participatory learning, such as group projects, class debates, and collaborative activities. These learners preferred engagement-driven learning modalities over competitive or passive learning experiences. Despite this strong engagement in learning and academics, Students' Social Self-Perception garnered the lowest mean score of 3.03, though still interpreted as high. This suggests that while students generally feel socially supported, there may be room for improvement in fostering stronger peer connections or social integration within the ALS environment. Although social self-perception interpreted as high however, it is the lowest among the domains in educational

environment which implicitly mean students are lightly enjoy their social life. This can be associated with several factors such as, ALS program is designed outside of the formal education which the students are basically out-of-school youth and adult and mostly experiencing unique life challenges and diverse social background as compared to regular student, their classes are even once a week which hamper the ability to socialize and interact with peers and teachers, and the feeling of inferiority being as an ALS student which most of them perceived as "different" or "disadvantage" resulted to learners' low self-esteem and feeling of social isolation. Therefore, teachers must continue to amplify support system and other intervention to uplift students' social life and academic performance.

According to Ucab and Luzano (2023), teachers play a pivotal role in ALS learners, especially in monitoring their progress, since they are the first person to understand the students' situation frequently. Teachers should provide support for them to feel respected and appreciated for their hard work. In a similar vein, Mendoza *et al.* (2023) concluded that ALS students recognized the value of constant communication with teachers because by doing so, they can look for guidance, address clarifications, and get the help they need, which improves their academic performance.

The data indicate that ALS students' perception of their educational environment is generally positive, especially in the areas of learning and academic self-concept. This aligns with Yeturu's (2022) and Mahsood *et al.* (2021) assertion that a well-structured educational environment significantly enhances learners' achievement, satisfaction, success and well-being which in turn boost their performance in their chosen careers. Similarly, Aga *et al.* (2021) noted that the entire learning atmosphere—not just instructional delivery – shapes students' behaviors, attitudes, and academic development in profound and lasting ways.

**Table 3.** Significant difference on the perception of ALS students in the educational environment in terms of sex, age, status and year level

Demographic Profile	Domain	t/F value	p-value	Remarks
Sex	Students' Perception of Learning	.298	.586	Not Significant
	Students' Academic Self-Perception	2.193	.142	Not Significant
	Students' Perception of Teachers	.083	.083	Not Significant
	Students' Perception of Atmosphere	.562	.562	Not Significant
	Students' Social Self-Perception	.324	.571	Not Significant
	Overall Mean	.569	.452	Not Significant
Age	Students' Perception of Learning	.576	.564	Not Significant
	Students' Academic Self-Perception	.259	.773	Not Significant
	Students' Perception of Teachers	1.022	.364	Not Significant
	Students' Perception of Atmosphere	1.498	.228	Not Significant
	Students' Social Self-Perception	.299	.742	Not Significant
	Overall Mean	.665	.517	Not Significant





Status	Students' Perception of Learning	.302	.584	Not Significant
	Students' Academic Self-Perception	.309	.580	Not Significant
	Students' Perception of Teachers	2.703	.103	Not Significant
	Students' Perception of Atmosphere	.071	.791	Not Significant
	Students' Social Self-Perception	.393	.532	Not Significant
	Overall Mean	.006	.940	Not Significant
Year Level	Students' Perception of Learning	1.564	.214	Not Significant
	Students' Academic Self-Perception	4.492	.036	Significant
	Students' Perception of Teachers	2.595	.110	Not Significant
	Students' Perception of Atmosphere	.739	.392	Not Significant
	Students' Social Self-Perception	3.411	.068	Not Significant
	Overall Mean	3.298	.072	Not Significant

Table 3 displays how ALS students feel about their school environment based on their demographic profile. In general, the results show that ALS students of different sexes, ages, statuses, and grades do not have very different views. Also, the overall p-value for sex is .452, for age is .517, for status is .940, and for year level is .072. All of these values are higher than 0.05. So, these demographic factors of the respondents don't have a big effect on how ALS students see their school environment. But when looking at the year level in terms of how students see themselves academically, a p-value of .036 was found, which shows a big difference. This shows that students in 11th and 12th grades see their academic experiences and problems in different ways. Even though this is true, the overall interpretation for the domain is still not significant when you look at all five domains that were assessed.

The results of the analysis do not mean that differences in the demographics of the respondents automatically mean that they have different views of the educational environment. Sahu *et al.* (2020) found that there were no statistically significant differences between male and female students in the DREEM domains, except in social self-perception. Moreover, Singh *et al.* (2022) attested that both males and females were perceived similarly in the DREEM domains – learning, academic self-perception, teachers, atmosphere, and social self-perceptions. In addition, they also found out that grade level makes no significant difference to respondents' perceptions. Additionally, a related study by Hoang *et al.* (2024) found that there was no significant difference between how people felt about their school environment and their gender, age, housing situation, part-time job, involvement in social groups, or academic success.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the researcher concluded that ALS students have uniform perceptions of their learning environment, which meant that they were equally catered to regardless of their profile. All the domains in the DREEM questionnaire are reported to be high, which means that they have shown a high level of satisfaction with their educational environment, particularly in the areas of academic self-perception and learning experiences, which were rated very

high. Therefore, ALS students find more positive than negative or problematic about their educational environment.

Furthermore, the results have emphasized that current educational practices and environment in the ALS program of Nabunturan Comprehensive National High School are effective and supportive, especially in addressing the student's needs. Educators and stakeholders should be consistent in providing continuous effort, which is essential to maintain a positive perception of the learning environment and to enhance the academic success of ALS learners further. This study offers valuable insights in assessing the current educational environment of the ALS program and determining key problems faced by ALS students that affect their overall performance.

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