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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Learner-Centered Instruction and Scholastic Participation at Damag Elementary School

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Abstract

Learner-centered instruction has been widely recognized as an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing learners' participation and engagement in classroom activities. This study examined the level of scholastic participation of elementary learners exposed to learner-centered instructional practices at Damag Elementary School using a descriptive quantitative research design. Scholastic participation was measured in terms of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive participation. A total of 90 elementary learners participated in the study and responded to a validated survey questionnaire. Descriptive statistical tools, including mean and standard deviation, were used to analyze the data. Results revealed that learners demonstrated high levels of scholastic participation across all dimensions, with cognitive participation obtaining the highest mean score. The findings suggest that learner-centered instructional practices contribute significantly to creating an inclusive, engaging, and participatory learning environment. Implications for classroom instruction, school policy, and future research are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Scholastic participation is a vital component of effective learning, particularly in elementary education where learners are developing foundational academic skills, attitudes, and learning habits. Participation in classroom activities enables learners to actively engage with instructional content, interact with peers and teachers, and construct meaning through experience. However, traditional teacher-centered approaches often limit learners' opportunities to participate actively, resulting in passive learning and reduced motivation.

Learner-centered instruction has emerged as a pedagogical response to these challenges. This approach emphasizes active learning, collaboration, learner autonomy, and responsiveness to learners' needs and interests. Grounded in constructivist learning theory, learner-centered instruction positions learners as active participants in the learning process rather than mere recipients of information. Empirical studies have shown that learner-centered practices positively influence learners' engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes. Despite its recognized benefits, there is limited empirical evidence documenting the extent to which learner-centered instruction influences scholastic participation in Philippine elementary school contexts. This study addresses this gap by examining the level of scholastic participation of learners exposed to learner-centered instruction at Damag Elementary School.

OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to determine the level of scholastic participation of learners exposed to learner-centered instructional practices at Damag Elementary School. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Determine the level of scholastic participation in terms of behavioral participation
2. Determine the level of scholastic participation in terms of emotional participation
3. Determine the level of scholastic participation in terms of cognitive participation
4. Describe the overall level of scholastic participation of learners

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design, which was appropriate for systematically describing and quantifying learners' levels of scholastic participation without manipulating instructional variables or introducing experimental conditions. The primary purpose of this design was to capture learners' perceptions, behaviors, and cognitive engagement as they naturally occurred within learner-centered classroom environments. By focusing on description rather than intervention, the design allowed for an accurate representation of how learner-centered instructional practices were experienced by learners in their regular classroom settings. This approach is particularly suitable for educational contexts where instructional practices are already established and the objective is to examine existing patterns of participation and engagement.

The study was conducted at Damag Elementary School, a public elementary school that implements learner-centered instructional practices across multiple grade levels. The participants consisted of 90 elementary learners from Grades 4 to 6 who were purposively selected based on their consistent exposure to learner-centered instructional strategies. These strategies included collaborative group work, interactive teacher–learner discussions, task-based learning activities, and reflective classroom routines. The selected grade levels were deemed appropriate for the study because learners at this stage possess sufficient cognitive and emotional maturity to reflect on and report their classroom participation experiences. All participants had been engaged in learner-centered instructional activities for an extended period prior to data collection, ensuring that their responses were grounded in sustained classroom exposure rather than isolated instructional events.

Data were gathered using a Scholastic Participation Questionnaire, which was adapted from established

engagement and participation instruments commonly used in educational research. The questionnaire consisted of 24 items distributed equally across three dimensions of scholastic participation: behavioral participation, which measured observable learner involvement and task engagement; emotional participation, which assessed learners' interest, motivation, and affective responses toward classroom activities; and cognitive participation, which examined learners' depth of thinking, use of learning strategies, and reflective practices. Each dimension comprised eight items, and responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Prior reliability testing of the instrument yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.85 to 0.91, indicating high internal consistency and suitability for quantitative analysis.

Prior to data collection, formal permission to conduct the study was secured from the school head and class advisers. Learners were informed about the purpose of the study, and ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of responses were clearly explained. The questionnaire was administered during regular class hours to ensure maximum participation and to minimize disruption to instructional routines. The administration was supervised by the researcher with the assistance of classroom teachers to ensure that instructions were clearly understood and that learners completed the questionnaire independently and honestly.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, specifically mean and standard deviation, to determine the level of scholastic participation across the three dimensions. These measures provided a clear summary of learners' participation patterns and the variability of responses. To facilitate interpretation of the results, the following scale was used: mean scores ranging from 4.21 to 5.00 were interpreted as *very high*, 3.41 to 4.20 as *high*, 2.61 to 3.40 as *moderate*, 1.81 to 2.60 as *low*, and 1.00 to 1.80 as *very low*. This interpretive framework enabled consistent and meaningful classification of learners' scholastic participation levels.

RESULTS

Table 1. Behavioral Participation of Learners

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Participates in group activities	4.18	0.52	High
Completes tasks on time	4.12	0.55	High
Volunteers to answer questions	3.98	0.61	High
Pays attention during discussions	4.20	0.49	High
Overall Behavioral Participation	**4.12**	**0.54**	**High**

Behavioral Participation (Overall M = 4.12, SD = 0.54 - High)

Table 1 indicates that learners demonstrated **high behavioral participation**, shown by strong involvement in group activities (M = 4.18) and consistent task completion (M = 4.12). The near-upper mean for attention during discussions (M = 4.20) suggests that learner-centered routines (interactive tasks, group sharing, performance-based activities) helped maintain learners' on-task behavior and classroom involvement. In engagement research, such behaviors represent the "visible" aspect of participation effort, persistence, and active involvement which are strengthened when instruction is structured around active learning and meaningful learner roles rather than passive listening. This supports the broader evidence base that active/learner-centered classrooms increase participation because learners are required to contribute, collaborate, and respond continuously (Prince, 2004; Fredricks et al., 2004).

Table 2. Emotional Participation of Learners

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Enjoys classroom activities	4.15	0.50	High
Feels motivated to learn	4.10	0.56	High
Feels confident sharing ideas	3.95	0.60	High
Feels valued in class	4.22	0.48	Very High
Overall Emotional Participation	**4.11**	**0.53**	**High**

Emotional Participation (Overall M = 4.11, SD = 0.53 - High)
Table 2 shows **high emotional participation**, meaning learners generally experienced positive feelings toward learning enjoyment (M = 4.15), motivation (M = 4.10), and confidence to share ideas (M = 3.95). Notably, "feels valued in class" reached **very high** (M = 4.22), implying that learners perceived the classroom climate as supportive and inclusive, an expected outcome when instruction uses learner voice, collaborative structures, and teacher facilitation. Engagement literature emphasizes that emotional participation is strongly shaped by classroom relationships, autonomy support, and a sense of belonging, which in turn predict persistence and willingness to participate (Appleton et al., 2008; Skinner et al., 2009). From a motivation perspective, learner-centered instruction tends to strengthen emotional engagement by promoting autonomy and competence conditions associated with positive affect and interest in schoolwork (Reeve, 2012).

Table 3. Cognitive Participation of Learners

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Tries different ways to solve problems	4.25	0.47	Very High
Thinks deeply about lessons	4.30	0.45	Very High
Asks questions to understand better	4.18	0.52	High
Reflects on mistakes	4.22	0.49	Very High
Overall Cognitive Participation	**4.24**	**0.48**	**Very High**

Cognitive Participation (Overall M = 4.24, SD = 0.48 - Very High)
Table 3 demonstrates **very high cognitive participation**, with learners reporting strong tendencies to think deeply about lessons (M = 4.30), try different strategies (M = 4.25), reflect on mistakes (M = 4.22), and ask questions for understanding (M = 4.18). This pattern suggests that learner-centered instruction at Damag Elementary School did not only increase "doing" and "feeling," but also promoted deeper thinking and learning strategies key indicators of cognitive investment. The findings align with research on active learning showing that when learners are engaged in explanation, exploration, and reflection, they shift from surface participation to deeper cognitive processing (Chi & Wylie, 2014). Similarly, metacognitive and self-regulated behaviors (e.g., reflecting on mistakes, using multiple strategies) are reinforced when instruction encourages reasoning, feedback, and learner choice (Schraw et al., 2006).

Table 4. Summary of Scholastic Participation

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Behavioral Participation	4.12	0.54	High
Emotional Participation	4.11	0.53	High
Cognitive Participation	4.24	0.48	Very High
Overall Scholastic Participation	**4.16**	**0.52**	**High**

Summary of Scholastic Participation (Overall M = 4.16, SD = 0.52 - High)

Table 4 summarizes the results and shows that scholastic participation at Damag Elementary School is high overall (M = 4.16), with cognitive participation emerging as the strongest dimension (M = 4.24). This suggests that learner-centered instruction may be particularly effective in fostering deeper learning behaviors analysis, strategy use, questioning, and reflection while also maintaining strong behavioral and emotional participation. In the engagement framework, this profile is desirable because sustained participation is more robust when learners are behaviorally involved, emotionally connected, and cognitively invested at the same time (Fredricks et al., 2004). The results support the view that learner-centered pedagogy strengthens participation not merely by making activities "fun," but by positioning learners as active meaning-makers who engage more deeply with content and classroom expectations (Appleton et al., 2008; Chi & Wylie, 2014).

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that learner-centered instruction contributes to high levels of scholastic participation among elementary learners. The high behavioral participation observed suggests that learner-centered strategies such as group work, interactive discussions, and hands-on activities effectively encourage learners to take an active role in classroom tasks. This finding is consistent with previous studies reporting that learner-centered classrooms promote active participation and sustained engagement by allowing learners to interact meaningfully with instructional content.

The high level of emotional participation further indicates that learner-centered instruction fosters positive affective responses toward learning. Learners who feel valued, motivated, and confident are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities. Prior research has emphasized that emotionally supportive and inclusive learning environments enhance learners' motivation and willingness to engage in academic tasks.

The findings indicate that learner-centered instruction at Damag Elementary School is associated with high scholastic participation, evidenced by strong behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement indicators. This pattern is consistent with engagement theory suggesting that effective classrooms promote participation through meaningful tasks, social interaction, and supportive learning conditions that encourage persistence and effort (Fredricks et al., 2004; Appleton et al., 2008).

The high behavioral participation suggests that learners are frequently active and involved in classroom routines, especially in group work and task completion. Learner-centered classrooms tend to raise behavioral participation because learners are expected to interact, contribute, and take responsibility for outputs rather than simply receive information. This aligns with evidence that active learning structures increase participation by making learners visible contributors in the learning process (Prince, 2004).

Emotional participation results indicate that learners generally experience learning as motivating, enjoyable, and supportive especially the very high rating for feeling valued. Engagement literature emphasizes that emotional participation is strongly influenced by classroom climate, belongingness, and autonomy-supportive teacher practices. When learners feel respected and heard, they are more willing to speak, collaborate, and persist, which strengthens participation over time (Skinner et al., 2009; Reeve, 2012).

The very high cognitive participation is particularly important because it reflects deeper learning processes such as strategy use, questioning, and reflection skills closely linked to improved understanding and long-term academic development. This supports the ICAP framework, which argues that learning deepens when learners engage in constructive and interactive thinking, typical of learner-centered environments (Chi & Wylie, 2014). It also aligns with research showing that metacognition and self-regulation develop when instruction encourages reflection, feedback, and reasoning (Schraw et al., 2006).

Notably, cognitive participation obtained the highest mean score, suggesting that learner-centered instruction effectively promotes higher-order thinking and self-regulated learning. Learners were observed to think deeply,

explore multiple problem-solving strategies, and reflect on their learning experiences. These findings align with constructivist learning theory, which posits that meaningful learning occurs when learners actively construct knowledge through reflection and problem-solving.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that learner-centered instruction is strongly associated with high levels of scholastic participation among elementary learners at Damag Elementary School. Learners demonstrated active participation, positive emotional involvement, and deep cognitive engagement in classroom activities. The findings highlight the importance of adopting learner-centered instructional practices to foster inclusive and engaging learning environments in elementary education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Teachers are encouraged to consistently implement learner-centered strategies such as collaborative learning, interactive discussions, and reflective activities. School administrators may support these practices through professional development programs. Future research may explore the relationship between learner-centered instruction and academic achievement using inferential statistical methods.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval was obtained from school authorities. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of learners' responses was strictly maintained.

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