



Learners' Participation and Support System in Division-Initiated Programs

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the participation of junior high school learners in division-initiated programs within the Division of Sagay City for the school year 2024–2025 and examines the support systems that facilitate their engagement. Using a Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design, the research integrates quantitative data from surveys of 304 students, parents, and teachers with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews. Findings reveal that autonomy, authenticity, and efficacy significantly influence learner participation, contributing to both academic and personal growth. Despite these benefits, challenges such as limited resources, time constraints, and emotional pressures persist, though support from teachers, peers, and parents help mitigate these barriers. In addition, the study highlights the need for improved communication of program objectives to strengthen student awareness and motivation, as well as the role of supportive school environments in fostering autonomy and recognizing student achievements. Overall, the research provides insights that can guide the development of practical action plans aimed at enhancing learner engagement and strengthening support mechanisms in division-initiated programs, thereby promoting the holistic development of students.

Keywords: Learner Participation, Support Systems, Autonomy, Authenticity, Efficacy

How to Cite:

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INTRODUCTION

Schools have evolved from being only one of many learning spaces to becoming central sites where parents entrust their children's development, while valuable experiences in churches, sports teams, scouting, and workplaces remain largely categorized as extracurricular (Vander Ark et al., 2020). Over time, service learning, field trips, and community-school models have highlighted the richness of place-based learning; yet these innovations often remain at the margins of routine schooling. Against this backdrop, a growing body of research calls for environments that motivate learners and sustain engagement, emphasizing that schools must cultivate conditions where students experience autonomy, relevance, and meaningful participation (Berti et al., 2023; Sara et al., 2023). At the same time, understanding how and to what extent learners participate has become essential for improving the design and delivery of programs (Haniya & Paquette, 2020; Wang, Wang, & Liu, 2021).

The Philippine education system deploys both curricular and extracurricular programs to support the holistic development of learners. In response to persistent concerns about foundational skills, the Department of Education (DepEd) prioritized literacy and numeracy initiatives cascaded from national and regional levels to schools (Philippine News Agency, 2020; Department of Education, 2020). Complementing these policy directions, recent evidence highlights that learner motivation and engagement are closely linked to autonomy, relevance, and supportive school climates—conditions that facilitate the transformation of programs into actual participation (Huang & Wang, 2023; Sara et al., 2023; Wang, Wang, & Liu, 2021).

The Division of Sagay City implements a wide array of division-initiated activities—numeracy and literacy programs, Girl/Boy Scouts encampments, Barkada Kontra Droga, Supreme Secondary Learner Government, Three Acts of Goodness, sports, press conferences, and the Division Festival of Talents—supported by schools and external stakeholders through material and financial contributions. Yet, despite the longevity and scope of these initiatives, a critical data gap remains: the division does not maintain consolidated participation data for junior high school learners. This gap is consequential. Without reliable participation metrics, decision-makers cannot (a) target resources to under-served schools or learner groups, (b) monitor equity and access across districts and programs, (c) diagnose barriers such as time, costs, or psychosocial pressures, or (d) evaluate which support mechanisms—teacher, peer, or parental—most effectively convert opportunities into sustained engagement. In short, the absence of participation data constrains evidence-based planning, weakens program accountability, and limits timely policy adjustments at school and division levels (cf. Sara et al., 2023; Huang & Wang, 2023).

Accordingly, this study investigates the extent of junior high school learners' participation and the support systems shaping that participation in Sagay City's division-initiated programs for SY 2024–2025. By employing a Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design, the study integrates survey evidence with interview insights to: (1) describe participation along autonomy, authenticity, and efficacy; (2) surface lived experiences, motivations, and barriers; and (3) identify the support systems learners need to engage actively. The findings aim to inform a practical action plan and learning-and-development activities that strengthen participation across curricular and extracurricular programs, aligning local implementation with national priorities on learner engagement and foundational skills (Department of Education, 2020; Sara et al., 2023; Huang & Wang, 2023).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the extent of participation and support system of junior high school learners in the division-initiated programs in the Division of Sagay City for the school year 2024–2025.

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of participation of junior high school learners in division-initiated programs in terms of:
 - a. Autonomy
 - b. Authenticity
 - c. Efficacy
2. What experiences do junior high school learners have in participating in division-initiated programs?
3. What support systems do junior high school learners need to participate actively in division-initiated programs?
4. What action plan can be developed based on the findings of the study?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part discusses relevant literature that contributes to the study's development. This review uses a thematic approach, organized by the survey's key and sub-variables.

Learners' Participation in School Programs



Vongsachang et al. (2020) identified structural barriers to participation in school-based vision programs, especially consent form logistics and low parental awareness, which underscores that communication and administrative design shape participation beyond student motivation alone. This aligns with the present study's attention to how clearly programs' objectives are communicated to families and learners, an issue that emerged in your context as low clarity about purpose.

Contemporary scholarship calls for school environments that cultivate autonomy, relevance, and shared responsibility for learning (Sara et al., 2023). That perspective complements your framework by reinforcing the idea that autonomy and authenticity are not only learner traits but also outcomes of intentional design and culture.

Muller-Khun et al. (2021) reported that teachers often perceive higher participation than students report themselves, revealing a systematic perception gap. Methodologically, this supports your triangulation across students, parents, and teachers to avoid bias from any single respondent group and to capture variation in perceived participation quality.

Heinzel (2019) emphasizes generational differences that color how "participation" is interpreted in classroom discourse, while Keisu and Ahlström (2020) caution that highly visible participation can mask lower cognitive or emotional engagement (and vice versa). Schnitzler et al. (2021) empirically connect engagement patterns to teacher–student interaction during whole-class dialogue. Collectively, these studies advise the present research to examine multiple facets (autonomy/authenticity/efficacy) rather than equating participation with mere frequency of outward behaviors.

Greenwood (2019) positions participation as fundamental to personalized learning, whereas Forde et al. (2018) and Andersson (2019) show students frequently feel unheard—even in formal councils—suggesting that structures labeled participatory can still lack authentic influence. This contrast sharpens your study's use of authenticity to distinguish between tokenistic and meaningful involvement in division-initiated programs.

Synthesis Implications for the Present Study.

Across these works, participation depends on the quality of communication, school culture, and genuine decision-making power. The study extends this literature by quantifying the extent of authenticity, autonomy, and efficacy (via survey) and qualifying how participation is experienced (via interviews) in a Philippine division context—linking known global mechanisms with local program implementation in Sagay City.

Barriers to Learners' Participation in School Programs

Haniya (2019) and Haniya & Paquette (2020) identify time constraints as a pervasive barrier, reflecting tensions among school, family, and work obligations. This is directly relevant to the local accounts of time management issues and emotional pressures reported by your respondents, positioning time as both a logistical and psychosocial constraint.

Fujii et al. (2022) highlight insufficient institutional support as a barrier in higher-education settings (medical students). While the population differs from junior high schools, the mechanism—misaligned expectations and fragmented support across stakeholders—mirrors conditions that can also emerge in K–12 divisions when roles and resources are unclear. This offers a cautionary analogy for division-level program governance in Sagay City.

Evidence on physical activity participation (Ferreira & Noll, 2022; Hilger, Kolb et al., 2020; Chaabane et al., 2021) consistently indicates time, motivation, financial restrictions, and psychological barriers; Although these studies are often situated at the university level, the barrier typology is transferable: costs, competing priorities, and affective load also constrain secondary learners' participation in supplemental programs and competitions—dimensions the interviews examine in detail.

Synthesis Implications for the Present Study.

The literature converges on time, resources, and psychosocial strain as cross-context barriers. This mixed-methods design tests these barriers in a division-led ecology program, clarifying which obstacles are most salient for Sagay City junior high schools and where division-level supports (funding, scheduling flexibility, recognition) can reduce friction.

Support System Fostering Learners' Participation

In response to difficulties, some students exhibited resilience through coping strategies and a steadier psychological state, while others did not. Hence, a support system for students who struggle to deal with stress caused by various difficulties is crucial.

Mai & Huang (2021) demonstrate that social support mitigates negative effects and promotes wellness, thereby moderating stressors associated with participation demands. Burns et al. (2020) similar position peer support as a core source of emotional and practical assistance. Chang et al. (2020) emphasize the assistance of family members in managing stress and preventing



mental health issues. These studies directly inform your focus on teacher–peer–parent support systems as moderators of participation.

Lai et al. (2022) find that students with higher resilience report stronger support and less family distress, preferring peer support and phone contact—insights that correspond with feasible division actions (peer mentoring, accessible communication). Cage et al. (2020) broaden school support to include connectedness, climate, faculty interaction, services, material aid, and career counseling, offering a comprehensive menu of supports that divisions can adapt to context.

Martinot et al. (2022) and Butler et al. (2022) agree on teachers and peers being the most influential sources of support for engagement and mental well-being. Complementing this, Huang & Wang (2023) and Pedler et al. (2020) emphasize teacher support and instructional practices as proximal levers for engagement—linking directly to your efficacy dimension (confidence, recognition, sustained motivation).

Synthesis Implications for the Present Study.

The literature consistently indicates that multi-layered supports (teacher, peer, family, and institutional) enhance students’ autonomy, authenticity, and efficacy. This study localizes this insight by identifying which specific supports Sagay City learners deem most helpful and by translating those into an action plan (e.g., clearer communication, recognition systems, funding assistance, and mentoring structures) for division-initiated programs.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher used a Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design based on Creswell’s (2018) framework. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of learners’ participation and support systems in division-initiated programs. This design enabled the researcher to compare and relate statistical trends with participants lived experiences, thereby strengthening interpretation through triangulation.

Participants of the Study

A sample size of 304 participants was determined using Slovin’s Formula, representing a proportion of the 1,267 total population. The study included randomly selected junior high school learners (Grades 7–10), as well as their parents and teachers from public high schools in Districts 8, 9, and 10 of the Sagay City Division. The breakdown of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of actual respondents per district

District	Actual Number of Participants			Total sample size population
	Students	Parents	Teachers	
8	71	26	4	101
9	69	28	4	101
10	78	19	5	102
Total	218	73	13	304

To obtain deeper insights into learners lived experiences, five students were purposively selected using the following inclusion criteria: a. The student is officially enrolled in a public high school within Districts 8, 9, and 10 for SY 2024–2025.

b. The student actively participates in any division-initiated program (e.g., numeracy, literacy, BPS/GSP, SSLG, Sports, Division Festival of Talents, Three Acts of Goodness).

c. The student holds a position in an organization or has won significant awards in division-level contests in academics or sports.

d. The student has participated in division-initiated activities for at least two (2) years.

e. The student is willing to be interviewed.



In addition, five parents and five teachers were selected for interviews to provide broader perspectives and to support triangulation of the qualitative findings.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used was cluster random sampling. Public junior high schools in Sagay City were grouped into three districts (8, 9, and 10). To ensure representation, the researcher selected one small school from each district. The researcher determined the total population of the three schools to compute the sample size, which resulted in 304 participants consisting of students, parents, and teachers.

For the qualitative phase, the researcher employed purposive sampling to select student, parent, and teacher interview participants based on the inclusion criteria to ensure information-rich cases relevant to participation experiences and support systems.

Research Instrument

Junior high school learners answered an adopted and modified survey questionnaire based on Pérez-Expósito (2015), which focuses on the quality of learner participation in terms of autonomy, authenticity, and efficacy. The original instrument contained eight (8) statements; however, the modified questionnaire expanded the indicators and included detailed descriptions of each component. After expert validation, the indicators were reduced to five (5) per sub-component due to items identified as “not essential,” resulting in fifteen (15) indicators in the final survey. A five-point Likert scale was used.

For qualitative data, a semi-structured interview guide was used. It included preliminary questions about participants’ background and four (4) main questions focused on learners’ motivations, challenges, and support systems while engaging in division-initiated programs.

Table 2

Learners' Participation Frequency Scale and Interpretation

Scale	Descriptors	Interpretation
1.00 - 1.80	Never	Very Low Extent of Learners’ Participation
1.81 - 2.60	Rarely	Low Extent of Learners’ Participation
2.61 - 3.40	Sometimes	Moderate Extent of Learners’ Participation
3.41 - 4.20	Frequently	High Extent of Learners’ Participation
4.21 - 5.00	Very Frequently	Very High Extent of Learners’ Participation

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide, including preliminary questions about participants' backgrounds. It also has four (4) main or core questions focusing on the selected learners lived experiences, such as their motivations, challenges, and support systems, while engaging in division-initiated programs.

Validity

Face and content validity were established for both the survey questionnaire and interview guide through expert validation using Lawshe’s (1975) content validity tool. Nine experts rated each item as “essential,” “useful but not essential,” or “not essential.” The Content Validity Ratio (CVR) guided item retention. Results indicated that nine indicators were rated as not essential (CVR < .76), while fifteen (15) indicators were retained as essential (CVR > .76). Expert feedback was incorporated to refine the instruments.

Reliability

Reliability testing was conducted through pilot testing on 30 junior high school students, with 10 parents and five teachers from a public high school in the Division of Escalante City. Internal consistency of the survey questionnaire yielded Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.798$), indicating that the instrument was reliable.

The qualitative instrument’s trustworthiness was supported through member checking (participants reviewed transcriptions for accuracy) and triangulation by interviewing students, parents, and teachers to validate interpretations from multiple perspectives.



Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher secured permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Sagay City prior to data collection. All participants received informed consent forms (including parent consent for minors), explaining the study's purpose, procedures, rights, and responsibilities.

Quantitative data were gathered through face-to-face administration of survey questionnaires to ensure immediate retrieval of completed instruments. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with selected students, parents, and teachers. Interviews were recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim, and prepared for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean scores were used to determine the extent of learners' participation in division-initiated programs in terms of autonomy, authenticity, and efficacy.

Qualitative Thematic Analysis (Coding Procedures)

Interview data were analyzed through a systematic thematic analysis process guided by Creswell's approach. To specify the procedure clearly, the researcher followed these steps:

1. Data Preparation and Familiarization

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. The researcher repeatedly read the transcripts to develop familiarity and note initial impressions.

2. Initial Coding (Open Coding)

The researcher conducted line-by-line coding to identify meaningful statements related to learner participation, challenges, motivations, and support systems. Codes were initially descriptive (e.g., "time constraints," "financial support," "teacher encouragement," "peer motivation").

3. Code Organization and Categorization

Similar codes were clustered and organized into broader categories (e.g., barriers, motivational factors, and types of support). A coding list/codebook was developed to ensure consistent application of codes across transcripts.

4. Theme Development (Axial/Thematic Coding)

Categories were examined to identify patterns and relationships. Themes were developed by grouping categories that reflected recurring ideas (e.g., "resource limitations," "recognition and motivation," "role of family and teachers," "emotional pressures").

5. Theme Refinement and Validation

Themes were refined by checking them against the raw data for accuracy and completeness. Member checking and triangulation across students, parents, and teachers were used to strengthen credibility and reduce researcher bias.

6. Reporting

Final themes were described and supported using representative participant statements, ensuring that interpretations reflected the participants' lived experiences.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

After separate analyses, integration was performed during interpretation using comparison, joint display, and narrative weaving, consistent with the convergent design:

1. Side-by-side comparison was used to examine whether qualitative themes supported, expanded, or contradicted quantitative results (e.g., if survey results showed moderate authenticity, interviews were reviewed to explain why the program's purpose was unclear).

2. A joint display matrix (quantitative results alongside qualitative themes) was created to align findings across autonomy, authenticity, and efficacy, and to identify convergence (agreement), complementarity (expansion), and divergence (differences).



3. Narrative weaving was applied in the Results and Discussion section by presenting quantitative trends first and then integrating qualitative evidence that explained the trends, clarified barriers, and described the support systems needed by learners.

Ethical Consideration

Permission was obtained from relevant authorities prior to the conduct of the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time. Informed consent ensured that participants understood the study and any potential consequences. Respondent identities were kept confidential, and all collected data were managed responsibly.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Data

This section presents the findings on the extent of junior high school learners' participation in division-initiated programs in the Division of Sagay City in terms of authenticity, autonomy, and efficacy, based on learners', parents', and teachers' responses. The quantitative trends are enriched by qualitative insights from interviews, which help explain why learners participate, what barriers they experience, and what support systems enable sustained involvement.

Extent of Participation in Division-Initiated Programs in terms of Authenticity

Table 3 presents the extent of participation among junior high school learners in terms of authenticity. The data reveal that the indicator **“Participation in division-initiated activities is encouraged to enhance knowledge and skills”** obtained the highest mean score ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.31$), interpreted as a great extent. This suggests that many learners recognize division-initiated programs as avenues for skill and knowledge development. In contrast, the indicator **“The purpose of participating in division-initiated activities is clearly known”** received the lowest mean ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.36$), interpreted as a low extent. The overall result ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.29$) indicates a moderate extent of authenticity.

Table 3

The Extent of Participation in Division-initiated Programs among Junior High School Learners in terms of Authenticity

Indicators	Statistics		Interpretation
	Mean	SD	
1. Participation in division-initiated activities is encouraged to enhance knowledge and skills.	3.52	1.31	High extent
2. Division-initiated activities are joined with a genuine belief in their ability to develop self-confidence.	3.24	1.28	Moderate extent
3. Participation in division-initiated activities is motivated by a desire to learn more.	3.48	1.20	High extent
4. It is understood that participation in division-initiated activities is for personal benefit.	3.03	1.32	Moderate extent
5. The purpose of participating in division-initiated activities is clearly known.	2.48	1.36	Low extent
Overall Result	3.14	1.29	Moderate extent

Qualitative integration. Interviews reinforce this quantitative finding. Learners' narratives suggest that participation is often driven by personal growth, recognition, and peer encouragement, but their understanding of the deeper goals of certain programs may be uneven. This helps explain why authenticity is only moderate: learners join because they see value, yet some still lack a clear picture of the program's intended outcomes.

Policy and program implications (DepEd and Division Office).

* **Division offices** may institutionalize clearer dissemination of program objectives through learner-friendly briefs, parent orientation, and teacher facilitation guides so that participation becomes more intentional and meaningful.

* **DepEd and divisions** may strengthen alignment of division initiatives with broader learning priorities (e.g., literacy/numeracy recovery and holistic development) by making expected learner outcomes explicit at school and classroom levels.

* Clear objectives also allow division leaders to track whether participation reflects true engagement or mere attendance, supporting evidence-based program improvement.



Extent of Participation in Division-Initiated Programs in terms of Autonomy

Table 4 shows that participation in terms of autonomy obtained an overall mean of ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.31$), interpreted as a great extent. Among the indicators, “Active contribution of ideas in division-initiated activities alongside teachers and peers is encouraged” recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.32$). Meanwhile, “Collaboration with other students to implement activities in ways that suit learning needs is promoted” yielded the lowest mean ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.28$), though still within the moderate extent range.

Table 4

The Extent of Participation in Division-initiated Programs among Junior High School Learners in terms of Autonomy

Indicators	Statistics		Interpretation
	Mean	SD	
6. Active contribution of ideas in division-initiated activities alongside teachers and peers is encouraged.	3.57	1.32	High extent
7. Collaboration with other students to implement activities in ways that suit learning needs is promoted.	3.34	1.28	Moderate extent
8. Participation in activities where students and teachers make joint decisions is facilitated.	3.56	1.27	High extent
9. Opinions are valued when contributing to division-initiated activities.	3.44	1.30	High extent
10. Engagement in activities is based on personal choice and supported by encouragement, not obligation.	3.39	1.39	Moderate extent
Overall Result	3.46	1.31	High extent

Qualitative integration. Interview insights support these trends. Learners’ accounts emphasize that participation is strengthened when there is peer encouragement, chances to contribute, and experiences that build belonging (e.g., school functions, leadership activities, and other division programs). At the same time, learners identified constraints such as time management demands, competing responsibilities, and resource issues, which may limit fuller collaboration and decision-making during implementation.

Policy and program implications (DepEd and Division Office).

* **Division offices** may design implementation mechanisms that intentionally expand learner participation beyond planning into execution—e.g., student committees or peer-led teams for specific activities.

* Schools may be encouraged to adopt structured collaboration strategies (peer mentoring, peer roles, or task delegation) so learners can translate autonomy into effective teamwork.

* Where schedules create barriers, division and school leaders may explore flexible academic policies and coordinated calendars to reduce conflicts during intensive participation periods.

Extent of Participation in Division-Initiated Programs in terms of Efficacy

Table 5 shows the extent of participation in terms of efficacy, with an overall mean of ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.41$), interpreted as a great extent. The highest mean was observed in “Participation in division-initiated activities positively influences behavior and attitude” ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.36$, great extent). The lowest mean appears in “Participation is believed to lead to positive recognition and support from the school” ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.39$, moderate extent).

Table 5

The Extent of Participation in Division-initiated Programs among Junior High School Learners in terms of Efficacy

Indicators	Statistics		Interpretation
	Mean	SD	
11. Participation in division-initiated activities positively influences behavior and attitude.	3.56	1.36	High extent



12. Confidence in the ability to contribute meaningfully to these activities is fostered.	3.35	1.32	Moderate extent
13. Participation is believed to lead to positive recognition and support from the school.	3.26	1.39	Moderate extent
14. A sense of accomplishment and purpose is felt when engaging in these activities.	3.45	1.46	High extent
15. Motivation and engagement are maintained when participating in division-led activities.	3.41	1.52	High extent
Overall Result	3.41	1.41	High extent

Qualitative integration. The interviews strongly illuminate this pattern. Learners described motivation anchored in recognition and rewards, personal growth, and peer encouragement. At the same time, they noted challenges such as financial limitations, time constraints, and emotional pressures. These narratives help interpret why efficacy is high overall (learners see benefits), but recognition remains moderate (not all learners consistently experience affirmation, support, or visible acknowledgment). When recognition is inconsistent, learners who already struggle with barriers may disengage over time, even if programs are beneficial.

Policy and program implications (DepEd and Division Office).

* **Division and school leaders** may formalize recognition systems that are inclusive and consistent (not only for winners but also for participation milestones, leadership roles, effort, improvement, and teamwork).

* DepEd and division offices may strengthen student support mechanisms by integrating psychosocial support and mentoring in programs that demand high time and emotional investment.

* Budget and resource constraints raised by learners point to the need for targeted resource mobilization, partnerships, and equitable distribution of support so participation does not depend on learners' financial capacity.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the extent of participation and the support systems of junior high school learners in division-initiated programs in the Division of Sagay City for SY 2024–2025 using a convergent parallel mixed methods design.

Extent of participation in terms of autonomy, authenticity, and efficacy.

The findings show that learners' participation in division-initiated programs is moderate in authenticity and high in autonomy and efficacy. Learners generally participate because they view the activities as beneficial to their development, particularly in building skills and improving behavior and attitude. However, authenticity is limited by learners' low clarity regarding the purpose of participation, indicating that while students join and value the activities, not all fully understand program objectives. In terms of autonomy, learners report a great extent of involvement, especially in contributing ideas alongside teachers and peers, reflecting opportunities for voice and involvement. In terms of efficacy, learners perceive participation as positively influencing their personal development and motivation, although perceived recognition and school support remain comparatively less strong than other efficacy indicators.

Experience of learners in participating in division-initiated programs.

Qualitative results indicate that learners' experiences are shaped by both enabling and constraining factors. Participation is commonly seen as meaningful when learners gain opportunities for personal growth, confidence building, and encouragement from peers and teachers. At the same time, learners encounter persistent challenges such as resource limitations, time management concerns, and emotional pressures, which can affect their ability to sustain involvement—particularly in activities that need extensive preparation, travel, or financial support.

Support systems needed for active participation.

The study further concludes that strong support systems from teachers, peers, parents, and the school environment are essential in sustaining learner participation. These supports help mitigate barriers by providing guidance, encouragement, and practical



assistance. The findings emphasize that strengthening school-based support mechanisms and improving communication with learners and families can help enhance engagement, particularly in addressing gaps related to authenticity and recognition.

Action plan implications.

Based on the findings, an action plan should prioritize (1) clearer communication of program objectives to improve authenticity and awareness, (2) strengthening support networks among teachers, peers, and parents, and (3) addressing resource and scheduling barriers that limit participation. These directions aim to promote learners' engagement and outcomes in division-initiated programs and support the holistic development of learners.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited to junior high school learners and selected schools within Districts 8, 9, and 10 of the Division of Sagay City for SY 2024–2025; therefore, findings may not fully represent other districts, grade levels, or divisions. In addition, quantitative findings relied on self-report survey responses, which may be influenced by differences in perception among learners, parents, and teachers.

Future research may (1) include a wider sample across more schools and districts, (2) examine participation patterns over multiple school years to track changes over time, and (3) evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed action plan by assessing whether strengthened support systems and improved communication lead to measurable improvements in authenticity, autonomy, efficacy, and overall participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance junior high school learners' participation and strengthen support systems in division-initiated programs in the Division of Sagay City:

A. School-Level Recommendations

1. Strengthen communication of program objectives and expectations.

Based on the finding that: authenticity was moderate, and the indicator on clarity of purpose was the lowest (learners reported low clarity regarding the purpose of participating).

Recommendation: Schools may conduct learner and parent-friendly orientations (e.g., brief program guides, orientation sessions, classroom announcements) to ensure students understand the objectives, benefits, and expectations of division-initiated programs, thereby improving authenticity and motivation.

2. Provide better access to equipment, materials, and financial support.

Based on the findings, learners experienced resource limitations and financial barriers that hindered participation.

Recommendation: Schools may allocate or mobilize resources (e.g., equipment loans, training materials, transportation support, and participation-related expenses) to reduce financial and logistical barriers that prevent learners from joining or sustaining involvement.

3. Implement consistent and inclusive recognition mechanisms.

Based on the findings that efficacy was generally high, but recognition and school support were only moderate, qualitative results showed that recognition and encouragement influence motivation and participation.

Recommendation: Schools are encouraged to strengthen recognition systems (e.g., certificates, commendations, participation milestones, acknowledgments during assemblies) to sustain learners' confidence, efficacy, and continued engagement—not only for winners but also for active participants and learners showing improvement.

4. Adopt flexible academic support measures for learners in intensive activities.

Based on the findings, learners encountered time management issues and participation demands that can affect academic responsibilities.



Recommendation: Schools may implement coordinated scheduling and flexible academic support (e.g., make-up activities, guided catch-up plans, structured remediation) to help learners balance academic and intensive division-initiated participation.

B. Teacher-Level Recommendations

5. Strengthening mentorship, guidance, and encouragement practices.

Based on the finding that: support from teachers was identified as a strong enabling factor, helping learners persist despite challenges.

Recommendation: Teachers are encouraged to provide structured mentoring and coaching (e.g., regular progress check-ins, skills development sessions, goal-setting support) to guide learners' participation and reinforce autonomy and efficacy.

6. Integrate basic psychosocial support strategies to help learners manage emotional pressures.

Based on the finding that: learners experienced emotional pressures and participation-related stress, which can hinder sustained engagement.

Recommendation: Teachers may include supportive practices such as regular check-ins, stress-management guidance, and appropriate referrals to school support personnel to help learners cope with participation demands and sustain motivation.

C. Division-Level Recommendations

7. Increase division support for resource mobilization and equitable participation.

Based on the finding that: resource limitations and financial barriers persist and affect learner participation.

Recommendation: The Division Office may strengthen funding support and partnerships (LGUs, NGOs, alumni, stakeholders) to ensure equitable access to division-initiated programs, particularly for schools and learners with limited resources.

8. Standardize and strengthen division-wide communication and implementation guides.

Based on the finding that: learners reported low clarity of program purpose, affecting authenticity and awareness.

Recommendation: The Division Office may develop standardized learner-friendly program briefs and school implementation guides that clearly state objectives, expected outcomes, schedules, and support requirements to ensure consistent understanding across schools.

9. Coordinate program calendars and provide supportive policies to reduce time-related barriers.

Based on the findings that: learners experienced time management issues and competing responsibilities that affect participation.

Recommendation: The Division Office may coordinate division calendars and provide guidelines that help schools plan scheduling, reduce conflicts with academic requirements, and support learners participating in intensive events.

10. Provide capacity-building opportunities aligned with division-initiated programs.

Based on the finding that: participation supports academic and personal growth, and learners benefit when programs are strengthened through preparation and support.

Recommendation: The Division Office may offer coaching, training, and workshops (for learners and teacher-coaches) to strengthen readiness, enhance participation quality, and sustain program outcomes.

Conflict of Interest

This article was authored by a member of the journal's editorial/review team. An independent editor handled the manuscript, and external reviewers evaluated it to ensure transparency and avoid conflict of interest.

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