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Navigating Alternative Learning System 2.0 implementation: Narratives on administrative challenges in SOCSARGEN

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to determine the level of implementation and extent of challenges encountered in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in SOCSARGEN, particularly in relation to educational delivery, learner support, and program implementation practices.

Methodology: The study employed an explanatory-sequential mixed methods research design involving ALS learners and implementers from South Cotabato, Sarangani, and General Santos City. Quantitative data were gathered using an adopted and modified survey questionnaire with good internal consistency, while qualitative data were collected through interviews to further explain the quantitative findings.

Results: Findings revealed that the ALS program in SOCSARGEN demonstrated a high level of implementation, particularly in the conduct of learning sessions and monitoring processes, as consistently perceived by both implementers and learners. However, the program also experienced a moderate extent of implementation challenges. Statistical analysis showed a significant moderate negative relationship between the level of implementation and the extent of challenges, indicating that stronger implementation corresponded to fewer challenges encountered. Qualitative analysis further generated five themes describing ALS implementation and four themes highlighting the challenges experienced by ALS implementers.

Conclusion: The study concludes that ALS implementation in SOCSARGEN is generally effective despite the presence of operational and administrative challenges. The findings highlight the importance of strengthened learner support, teacher capability development, resource allocation, and program monitoring to improve the delivery of non-formal education and enhance learning outcomes among ALS learners.

Keywords: *Alternative Learning System, non-formal education, program implementation, educational challenges, learner support, policy implementation*

INTRODUCTION

The right to education implies a right to lifelong learning, which is central to United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Education's (UNESCO) work and is evident in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With UNESCO in the forefront, the international development community launched the huge global education effort known as Education for All (EFA) 2015 in 1990 (Mamba et al., 2021). Countries have used several practices, strategies, and methodologies to encourage attendance in classrooms but there is still a lack of chances for the children in these areas, including those that had been passed by chances due to early marriage, work, and personal reasons. Given these situations, several countries used alternative education to cater to the needs of these children outside formal education.

Global educational trends show a move toward unconventional, creative learning frameworks intended to benefit historically underrepresented groups and lessen structural inequalities (Espinoza et al., 2020; Fernandez, 2025; Phillippi & Thomas, 2022). Alternative education programs are being implemented as equity-driven ways to reduce institutional barriers for children who are at risk of exclusion in both developed and developing regions (Espinoza et al., 2020; Bitsakos, 2021; Fernandez, 2025). Targeted interventions have effectively closed historical gaps in academic performance among children of color in US metropolitan areas, promoting grade-level advancement and increased

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employability regardless of prior socio-legal or psychiatric vulnerabilities (Phillippi & Thomas, 2022). In a similar vein, countries such as Greece and Australia are actively changing their educational systems, the latter by increasing vocational training services, in order to provide feasible secondary-equivalent pathways for the significant percentage of students who are unable to succeed in the conventional system (Espinoza et al., 2020; Bitsakos, 2021).

International frameworks for lifelong learning place a high priority on flexible delivery of instruction to re-engage people whose socioeconomic, medical, or personal circumstances prevent them from attending traditional schools (Bitsakos, 2021; Lopez-Cobar, 2022; Fernandez, 2025). According to Lopez-Cobar (2022) and Phillippi & Thomas (2022), these frameworks acknowledge that toxic institutional contexts such as bullying, mental health issues, substance abuse, and chronic absenteeism necessitate systemic flexibility rather than punitive exclusion. This is operationalized in Ontario, Canada, through Supervised Alternative Learning (SAL) programs, which offer all-encompassing, multifaceted support to help students achieve their academic goals despite complicated family, financial, or medical obstacles (Lopez-Cobar, 2022). These worldwide frameworks turn lifelong learning from a theoretical ideal into a practical safety net by separating educational advancement from the strict timetables and settings of traditional schools (Espinoza et al., 2020; Lopez-Cobar, 2022).

According to Espinoza et al. (2020) and Fernandez (2025), these worldwide models show how localized alternative learning initiatives can systematically break down long-standing barriers to gender, regional, and economic justice in underdeveloped countries. The creation of "Second Chance" schools in Zambia offers a scalable model for employing focused educational frameworks to assist young mothers in overcoming social marginalization and finishing their secondary education (Espinoza et al., 2020). Additionally, by providing flexible, modular equivalency education directly to rural populations and working young, India's National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) demonstrates how emerging economies can overcome significant structural and geographical obstacles (Fernandez, 2025). In the end, the cross-continental success of these programs suggests that funding non-formal, modular education enables developing nations to ensure socioeconomic mobility, lower recidivism, and create a workforce that is more inclusive and globally competitive (Espinoza et al., 2020; Phillippi & Thomas, 2022; Fernandez, 2025).

Although the flexibility of ALS is intended to increase educational access, research from throughout the world indicates serious structural, behavioral, and systemic flaws that jeopardize their effectiveness. These initiatives can surprisingly lead to higher learner absences, higher dropout rates, and lower graduation rates, according to research conducted in the US, UK, and Australia. As a result, alternative programs are negatively associated with acting as "dumping grounds" for children who struggle academically and behaviorally in the regular system (Lopez-Cobar, 2022). While the goal of alternative education is to give people the behavioral and intellectual support, they need to reintegrate into less restrictive environments (Groves et al., 2023), high rates of hostility and disturbance may seriously impede the actual delivery of these academic and behavioral services (Hawkins et al., 2020). Acute global structural deficiencies intensify this unstable environment since alternative schools are typically underfunded and understaffed and teachers commonly lack the needed training required to cope with disruptive students in the classroom (Stevenson et al., 2020).

However, studies carried out in the US, the UK, and Australia have shown how these programs can result in learner absences from school, dropout rates, and a decline in graduation rates. As a result, alternative programs are now negatively associated with serving as *dumping grounds* for kids who struggle academically and behaviorally in the regular system (Lopez-Cobar, 2022). According to Groves et al. (2023), the purpose of alternative education is to help individuals reintegrate into less restrictive environments by offering them intellectual and behavioral support. Nonetheless, the delivery of behavioral and academic services may be hampered by high rates of hostility and disturbance (Hawkins et al., 2020). This problem is made worse by the fact that alternative schools are usually understaffed and underfunded, and their teachers frequently lack the specific training needed to deal with disruptive learners in the classroom (Stevenson et al., 2020). Regularly exhibiting severe disruptive conduct can harm peer relationships, reduce instructional time, severely impact teacher retention, and result in poor educational achievements (Hawkins et al., 2020). Finding effective methods to control learner conduct in these situations is crucial.

The evaluation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementation in the SOCSARGEN region has far-reaching international implications since it serves as a vital testing ground for turning macro-level equitable policies into localized, resource-constrained educational successes. The Philippine model serves as a legally institutionalized, parallel basic education framework that ensures state-backed, diploma-granting pathways from kindergarten through higher education (EDCOM II, 2026). In contrast, alternative education frameworks in developed nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia often struggle with declining graduation rates, severe underfunding, and the negative stigma of becoming institutional "dumping grounds" for academic or behavioral failures (Stevenson et al., 2020; Lopez-Cobar, 2022).The system, which was established under Republic Act No. 11510, requires extensive systemic support through the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE), localized Community Learning Centers (CLCs), and rigorous teacher training to remain highly responsive to the varied needs of out-of-school children in special cases,

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youth, and adults (OSCYAs) who are prohibited from attending formal schooling because of poverty, geography, disability, social strife, or emergencies (EDCOM II, 2026). In addition to actively meeting the Philippine government's commitment to UNESCO's global EFA targets of lowering dropout rates and raising literacy rates (Cayabas et al., 2023), the region's educational design directly mirrors extensive international frameworks like the Indonesian Equivalency Program, which uses a multi-tiered package structure to re-engage excluded populations (Rosmilawati & Reid, 2020).

Across the world, alternate education was a way to treat the "negative side" of formal education, ensuring that whatever the strategy, learners are given the needed and appropriate education that they deserve. In its implementation, the Alternative Learning System has had factors that the learners and implementers consider effective and ineffective. However, since the release of the said mandate up until 2025, the implementation of Alternative Learning System was solely in accordance with the Republic Act 11510, causing ambiguity in the detailed orientation of its implementation. Additionally, there are only a few studies on the implementation of ALS, specifically in SOCSARGEN. Studies in the Philippines were conducted on the ALS teachers and implementers separately, with limited number of research focusing on implementers' experiences. Hence, the researcher initiated the conduct of this study, focusing on the level of implementation of ALS to determine the parts of implementation process that need to be enhanced or improved and the extent of challenges to identify implementation parts that may be mended. Additionally, this study also reveals the implementer's description of ALS implementation, as well as their challenging experiences in the implementation of the program.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Alternative Learning System

Republic Act No. 11510, also known as the Alternative Learning System Act, defines ALS as a parallel learning system that provides a viable alternative to the existing formal education instruction. Moreover, the same Republic Act emphasized the objectives of ALS which include guaranteeing equitable access for all learners, including those who reside in the unreached, underserved, conflict-affected communities, and communities in emergency situations to avail of systematic, flexible, and appropriate alternative basic education programs outside of the formal educational system.

Alternative and non-formal education frameworks are globally conceptualized as dialectical instruments designed to mend the structural failures of traditional schooling and establish equitable, second-chance access for marginalized populations. On a global scale, legislative bodies manipulate structural parameters to enforce educational participation, as demonstrated by Ontario's Education Amendment Act, which raised the mandatory school attendance age from 16 to 18 years to compel high school completion or secondary diploma acquisition. Concurrently, developing nations leverage non-formal structures like the Philippine Alternative Learning System (ALS) to fulfill sweeping international mandates, including the Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000) EFA declarations, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Decade for Literacy, thereby expanding their skilled labor pool and mitigating localized literacy and dropout rates. However, research shows that explicit job-seeking and occupational opportunities are the primary motivators for ALS participants to finish their education, so these broad national goals find alignment at the user level through immediate socioeconomic benefit. The fundamental difficulty for modern alternative systems is striking a balance between these macro-policy demands and the immediate socioeconomic survival requirements of its students, all the while trying to develop advanced cognitive abilities.

Theoretical design and practical execution at the ground level exhibit a sharp contrast when these plans are compared. Although non-traditional curricula, progressive pedagogies, and inclusive school designs are theoretically intended to empower at-risk learners (De Silva et al., 2020; Lopez-Cobar, 2022), instructors and administrators often stigmatize and disregard alternative education spaces as "warehouses" and "dumping grounds" that transform challenging children into "second-class citizens" within the educational community (Miller, 2020). Additionally, there is a significant autonomy-volatility paradox: although the ALS project's hallmark is a flexible environment that allows people to learn "whenever and wherever" it best suits their needs (Pascual et al., 2022), empirical data indicates that this lack of structure results in significant operational volatility. Due to a total lack of set learning locations, delayed travel reimbursements, the absence of community-based teaching resources, and severely limited classroom hours, mobile teachers experience extreme psychological and educational strain (Francisco & Buri, 2024).

Divergent study target areas, context-driven approaches, and underlying analytical assumptions are the main causes of the variation in findings across the studied literature. Policy-driven macro-analyses, on the one hand, concentrate on standardized, indicator-based tracking—for example, breaking down ALS implementation into five linear dimensions: learning assessment, learning material utilization, learning session conduct, monitoring and supervision, and recording and reporting (Salendab & Cogo, 2022). The evaluation of the ALS program in Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya, for example, shows an exceptionally positive profile where learning objectives are successfully met due to strong facility

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and infrastructure support (Manzon, 2023). This highly structured approach contrasts sharply with localized micro-case studies, demonstrating that aggregate macro-evaluations frequently obscure distinct pockets of local success or failure. Additionally, compared to direct pedagogical diagnostics, an outcome-based evaluation technique that depends on high-stakes criteria like the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Exam to declare graduates presents a huge blind hole (Pascual et al., 2022). Even after finishing the curriculum, A&E students still struggle to acquire fundamental reading skills including inferencing, assessing, and producing text, according to fine-grained pedagogical assessment (Labarrete, 2021). Lastly, a clinical data management methodology turns recording and reporting into an active diagnostic tool used to identify weak links and strong marks within a group's or individual's capacity (Batko, 2022), whereas standard administrative tracking defines monitoring as simply checking off activities against an action plan (Van Scherpenseel et al., 2025).

Alternative systems must be anchored on substantial, current educational ideas to be free of negative institutional labeling and elevated into genuine venues of academic transformation. First, formative assessment-as-learning frameworks must replace high-stakes, retroactive testing in alternative education. Classroom feedback is positioned as a self-developing instructional tool driven by how learners respond to feedback within their unique environments (Hidayat et al., 2023) by shifting away from traditional satisfaction surveys and toward direct learning assessments like portfolios, reflections, and direct observations (Cant & Levett-Jones, 2021). Second, instructional design must go beyond fragmented remediation and adopt highly structured, personalized sequencing models that support reading readiness and scaffold advanced cognitive competencies like text evaluation and abstract inferencing (Labarrete, 2021; Zhong, 2022) in order to guarantee that learners become globally competitive through the acquisition of 21st-century skills (Kazu & Kurtoğlu Yalçın, 2021). Lastly, if educators are caught in a volatile environment that threatens their professional standing, they will not be able to cultivate high-level critical and inventive thinking (Baccal et al., 2021). Institutionalizing individualized, career-stage-specific administrative care is necessary to mitigate teacher burnout; strong financial, human, and material support directly improves teacher attitudes and turns remote learning environments into vibrant, highly collaborative learning communities (Munna & Kalam, 2021).

In summary, by using non-traditional methods to protect at-risk pupils, alternative education plays a crucial role in closing the structural gaps in formal education on a global scale. Republic Act No. 11510, which created the ALS as a free, parallel basic education track intended to ensure equal learning access for out-of-school children and adults, formalizes this approach in the Philippines. The five main operational features of local implementation, learning evaluations, material use, learning sessions, monitoring and supervision, and systematic reporting, are designed to meet global literacy benchmarks. Local implementations are constantly hampered by administrative obstacles, such as limited teaching venues, delayed travel allowances, and a lack of contextualized materials, although it can award secondary-equivalent qualifications. Therefore, to change these learning environments, strengthen teacher attitudes, and guarantee the high-quality delivery of non-formal education, strong evaluation systems and specialized administrative assistance are crucial.

Challenges Encountered in ALS

The non-formal educational journey is defined by a complex connection of academic objectives, severe financial hardship, and systemic structural constraints, as revealed by an integrated analysis of alternative learning systems (Mamba et al., 2021). Although research continuously confirms that these frameworks have profoundly positive impacts on participants' lives and act as a crucial catalyst for realizing their aspirations of finishing high school, they are also constrained by a fragile psychological and economic ecosystem (Batuampar & Basmayor, 2023; Mamba et al., 2021). According to Noor (2007), Catyong et al. (2023), and Tomarong & Ranoa (2024), the fundamental design of learner attrition in these programs is rarely a consequence of isolated academic failure but rather is driven by a web of competing obligations where individual agency continuously fights systemic friction. Therefore, to consider the continuing socioeconomic discussions and role conflicts that form an adult student's daily life, macro-policy expectations about learner retention and graduation turnstiles must be rigorously reevaluated (Noor, 2007; Pablo, 2021).

A comprehensive cross-analysis of the literature reveals a sharp contrast between alternative learners' severe external operating settings and their interior ideological commitment. The ambition-abrasion paradox, in which short-term survival demands take precedence over long-term life goals, dominates learners' immediate day-to-day realities, despite their exceptionally strong internal motivation and belief that the ALS will enable them to achieve their goal of completing high school (Batuampar & Basmayor, 2023; Catyong et al., 2023; Tomarong & Ranoa, 2024). Learners most often struggle to manage time and work demands at home, resulting in a tension between flexibility and overload (Batuampar & Basmayor, 2023). Although non-formal education is designed with flexible scheduling to support adult learners with multiple roles, research shows this flexibility often fails due to financial constraints, transportation challenges, health concerns, and the need for immediate income to support families (Catyong et al., 2023; Noor, 2007;

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Tomarong & Ranoa, 2024). There is also a clear gap between policy goals to build life skills and improve literacy for stable employment (Barrido, 2022) and ongoing issues such as underfunding, inadequate teacher preparation, and a lack of truly flexible learning options (Arzadon & Nato, 2015).

The variability in research findings implies significant methodological differences in how researchers measure program success and student attrition. Studies that build on perceptual scale analysis frequently claim broad, high-level alignment to program goals, indicating that students remain at the "agreed level" of resilience and value the program highly (Batuampar & Basmayor, 2023). Alternatively, studies using explicit behavioral and structural typologies explore these rosy self-reports by categorizing dropouts into distinct, actionable factors like subject difficulty, loss of interest, peer influence, and economic displacement (Tomarong & Ranoa, 2024), showing that aggregate scales often obscure the immediate, practical causes of student attrition. Contemporary researchers emphasize the importance of rigorous, empirical research to elucidate the structural reasons behind increased dropout rates, instead of depending on mere correlational measures (Pablo, 2021). Lastly, there is a clear difference between macro-level efficacy metrics that assess success using wide indicators such as high turnout rates on national tests and aggregate literacy figures (Barrido, 2022), and qualitative multi-perspective tracking that captures the persistent implementation challenges faced by learners, teachers and program implementers alike (Mamba et al., 2021).

These persistent challenges require programs to embrace contemporary and supportive pedagogical frameworks to make alternative systems work as strong spaces of retention for students. To begin with, alternative learning programs should shift from pure academic remediation as financial stress, low self-esteem, and chronic economic worry directly degrade cognitive concentration and lower test scores (Noor, 2007; Usman & Banu, 2019). Classrooms need to implement trauma-informed educational practices and socio-emotional scaffolding that actively acknowledge financial anxiety and low self-esteem as significant psychological barriers to learning (Noor, 2007). Second, to address the dual challenge of subject difficulty and extreme time poverty, alternative education must transition from inflexible, frontloaded academic requirements to highly differentiated, micro-credentialed instructional designs. Breaking down difficult content, especially in arithmetic, into smaller, digestible pieces enables students to follow their progress without feeling overwhelmed. If a student needs to pause their progress due to family obligations, health issues, or varying work schedules, they can pick up the program exactly where they left off without missing a beat (Catyong et al., 2023; Tomarong & Ranoa, 2024). Finally, academic interventions cannot succeed if the underlying educational system is underfunded and structurally weak. To resolve these issues, educational authorities must secure robust institutional funding, expand specialized teacher preparation, and implement highly flexible learning options that directly reduce the cost of attendance (Arzadon & Nato, 2015). Through blending structural funding with holistic evaluations that measure life-skill acquisition rather than test scores (Pablo, 2021; Barrido, 2022), alternative learning systems can shatter long-held barriers to access and get closer to the true global promise of lifelong education for all.

The ALS Accreditation and Equivalency (ALS A&E) program empowers students with life skills, high literacy rates, and the hope of realizing their ambitions of graduation and finding jobs, according to numerous academic endeavors. However, the educational process is still hampered by enduring operational and human difficulties from the viewpoints of students, instructors, and implementers. In addition to secondary challenges including math difficulties, transportation problems, health issues, and peer pressure, learners encounter a variety of non-academic challenges, chief among them being financial hardship and the necessity to support their families. These conflicting parental responsibilities and resource constraints frequently lead to poorer academic performance, difficulty focusing, and a sharp decline in interest, all of which contribute to high dropout rates. To better address program funding, teacher preparation, and the need for flexible learning structures, researchers stress the urgent need for the Department of Education to carry out thorough, in-depth empirical investigations into these rising dropout rates and assess the effectiveness of current intervention initiatives.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Systems Theory under the broader framework of Evaluation Theory. Originating in the natural sciences, Edmonds and Bertalanffy (1977) believed systems theory is an interdisciplinary framework that highlights the interdependence and interaction of components within a whole. Systems theory sees ALS, which seeks to offer fair educational opportunities outside of traditional schooling, as a complex system made up of stakeholders (learners, educators, and the community) and inputs (resources like funding and trained personnel), processes (curriculum delivery methods), outputs (student attendance and participation), and outcomes (educational attainment and skill development). Numerous advantages come with this strategy, including thorough analysis, dynamic change in response to feedback, and improved objective alignment amongst program elements (Senge, 1990).

However, ALS implementation faces problems such as resource restrictions, different community engagement levels, and policy inconsistencies (Patton, 2008). In order to use systems theory, one must build feedback mechanisms

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for ongoing evaluation, map out system components and their interactions, define system boundaries, and monitor program performance through outcome monitoring (Checkland, 1981). Through the use of these techniques, professionals can pinpoint crucial areas for enhancement and successfully tackle obstacles, promoting ongoing progress and accomplishing targeted learning results (Ericson, 1972).

To sum up, systems theory offers an invaluable perspective for comprehending and executing programs by emphasizing the connections and exchanges between diverse elements. This method promotes a thorough comprehension of the best ways to plan, carry out, and assess programs to ensure the intended results. Thus, systems theory provides a robust framework for understanding and enhancing the complexities involved in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System, ultimately striving for more inclusive and effective educational practices.

Conceptual Framework

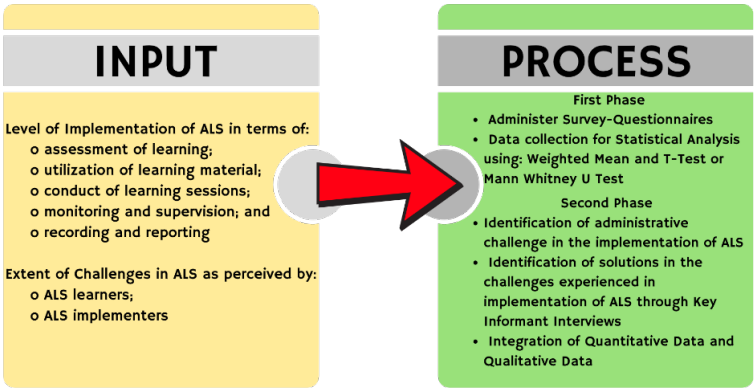

Figure 1
Conceptual framework of ALS implementation in SOCSARGEN

The conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 1. As shown in Figure 1, an illustration of the sequence of processes done in conducting the study, from input to process was presented. The IP model is utilized in this study to elaborate the goals and objectives. In these cases, using an IP framework enables them to examine the system as a whole and use a lifecycle approach to evaluate alternative proposed treatment approaches. Two stages of a system are represented by the IP model: input and process.

The study's input includes the level of implementation of ALS in terms of assessment of learning; utilization of learning material; conduct of learning sessions; monitoring and supervision; and recording and reporting. Salendab and Cogo (2022) enumerated these factors in the consideration of implementation of Alternative Learning System in the Philippines. Another input variable in this study is the extent of challenges in the implementation of ALS as perceived by ALS learners, teachers, and implementers.

The process of the study involves identification of administrative challenges in the implementation of ALS, and the identification and crafting of solutions to the challenges experienced in the implementation process of ALS. According to Cubero and Labitad's (2026) research, efficient ALS delivery necessitates stronger governmental backing, enough resources, and support structures, since current issues derive more from system limits than a lack of educator commitment. Thus, in this study, the quantitative data was gathered through the administration of the adopted and modified research instruments and identification of challenges and solutions was gathered through a qualitative approach.

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in SOCSARGEN is thoroughly examined by the Conceptual Framework of the Study using an Input-Process (IP) design. The investigation's scope is determined by the input variables, which concentrate on two primary areas: the extent of challenges in ALS as perceived by all two major stakeholder groups (learners, and implementers) and the level of implementation of ALS across five key operational indicators. The methodology guarantees a balanced assessment that evaluates the program's administrative strengths (implementation) and operational limitations (challenges) by specifying these factors early on.

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Statement of the Problem

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) serves as the Philippine government's parallel non-formal education program designed to provide educational opportunities for out-of-school children, youth, and adults who are unable to participate in formal schooling due to economic, social, geographical, and personal circumstances. Anchored on Republic Act No. 11510, ALS aims to promote inclusive and equitable access to quality basic education through flexible learning modalities and community-based instructional delivery systems.

In recent years, the implementation of ALS has expanded significantly across the country. Reports from the World Bank Group revealed a substantial increase in ALS enrollment, demonstrating the growing importance of the program in addressing educational exclusion and lifelong learning needs (Igarashi, 2018). Despite this expansion, several implementation concerns remain evident, particularly in terms of instructional delivery, monitoring systems, learner participation, assessment practices, and administrative support mechanisms.

Although Republic Act No. 11510 institutionalized ALS, the absence of fully developed implementing rules and operational guidelines has created uncertainties in program implementation across various local contexts. Existing studies have largely focused on learner experiences and program outcomes, while limited research has comprehensively examined the implementation level and administrative challenges encountered by ALS implementers and learners using a mixed methods approach.

Considering these concerns, there is a need to examine the level of implementation and extent of challenges encountered in the implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN. Specifically, the study seeks to determine how ALS is implemented across key operational indicators and how implementation challenges affect the delivery of non-formal education programs. The findings of the study may contribute to improving educational planning, instructional practices, learner support systems, and policy implementation in ALS programs.

General Objective

This study aims to determine the level of implementation and extent of challenges encountered in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in SOCSARGEN and to explore the narratives of ALS implementers regarding administrative challenges and possible solutions.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study aims to:

1. determine the level of implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN in terms of:
   a. assessment of learning;
   b. utilization of learning materials;
   c. conduct of learning sessions;
   d. monitoring and supervision; and
   e. recording and reporting;
2. identify the extent of challenges encountered in the implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN as perceived by ALS implementers and ALS learners;
3. determine whether there is a significant difference in the level of ALS implementation as perceived by ALS implementers and ALS learners;
4. determine whether there is a significant relationship between the level of implementation and extent of challenges of ALS in SOCSARGEN; and
5. explore the narratives of ALS implementers and learners regarding ALS implementation and the challenges encountered in the program.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN in terms of:
   a. assessment of learning;
   b. utilization of learning materials;
   c. conduct of learning sessions;
   d. monitoring and supervision; and
   e. recording and reporting?
2. What is the extent of challenges encountered in the implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN as perceived by:
   a. ALS implementers; and
   b. ALS learners?

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3. Is there a significant difference in the level of implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN as perceived by ALS implementers and ALS learners?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of implementation and extent of challenges encountered in ALS implementation in SOCSARGEN?
5. How do ALS implementers and learners describe the implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN?
6. What implementation challenges are encountered by ALS implementers in SOCSARGEN?

Hypotheses

H_{o1}: There is no significant difference in the level of implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN as perceived by ALS implementers and ALS learners.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation and extent of challenges encountered in the implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative types of research, specifically, the explanatory sequential research design. This research design consists of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help elaborate the quantitative results (Clark, 2019). Additionally, to produce nuanced and thorough conclusions, mixed method research intentionally combines the perspectives, approaches, data forms, and analyses associated with quantitative and qualitative research (Clark, 2019). Explanatory sequential design prioritizes the quantitative phase, which is followed by the qualitative phase. The qualitative phase's goal is frequently to provide an explanation for the findings from the quantitative phase, as well as occasionally to explain outliers that don't fully match the data that was gathered. The term *explanatory* is employed because the outcomes of the quantitative phase are explained through the study of qualitative data. (Toyon, 2021).

This method was utilized in this study to first quantitatively measure the broad operational landscape of ALS before using qualitative narratives to understand the participants' experience behind the numbers. In this study, the quantitative phase was done to systematically assess the general level of ALS implementation and the extent of administrative challenges across SOCSARGEN. Since statistical data alone cannot fully capture the complex, systematic nuances such as why certain resource constraints persist or how implementers navigate socioeconomic barriers. By following up with qualitative phase, the lived experiences and narratives of the participants are used to explain, enrich, and contextualize the statistical results, transforming numbers into a deep, comprehensive understanding of the program's real-world challenges. Studies on program implementation utilize explanatory-sequential research design to fully grasp the detailed responses from the participants.

Population, Sampling, and Other Sources of Data

The respondents of this study were the Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers and learners. A criterion for the ALS learners to respond to this study was that they are 18 years of age or above to ensure their full understanding and grasp of the concepts stated in the research instrument. Furthermore, key informants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) had been an ALS implementer for at least three years, and (2) personnel who were assigned to community learning centers for the last three years. The table below presents the distribution of respondents and participants.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents and Participants

Schools Division Office	Survey Questionnaire Respondents		KII
	Number of ALS Implementers	Number of ALS Learners	No. of ALS Implementers
General Santos City	22	69	3
Sarangani	45	111	3
South Cotabato	42	120	3
TOTAL	**109**	**300**	**9**

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This study utilized the stratified random sampling technique, indicating the application of proportional allocation. Respondents were made sure to be well-represented by each district in the division through equal distribution. A formula for proportional allocation was utilized to identify the number of respondents from each division based on the total population of ALS learners and ALS implementers. It is important to note that these districts are not the same as one another in terms of geography, culture, and religious groups, which makes it considerable for the researcher to ensure representative from various types of indicators and factors in the field.

Parsons (2017) mentioned that a probability sampling technique used in sample surveys is called stratified sampling. The components of the target population are separated into discrete groupings, or strata, where the components of each stratum are comparable to one another in terms of specific attributes that are significant to the survey. Moreover, stratification can improve sample design's efficiency in terms of survey expenses and estimate accuracy. Nguyen et al. (2019) also mentioned that one popular sampling method for approximating query processing is stratified random sampling (SRS).

Research Instruments

The instrument utilized in this study was adopted and modified by the researcher with the guidance of her adviser and the panel members. The modification of the questionnaire was done to cater the specific geographic and cultural orientation of the respondents. There were two parts for this instrument: (1) the assessment of level of implementation of ALS in Region XII which is subdivided into five sub-indicators namely assessment of learning, utilization of learning materials, conduct of learning sessions, monitoring and supervision, and recording and reporting modified from the instrument of Salendab and Cogo (2022); and (2) the assessment of extent of challenges of the ALS program modified from the research of Batuampar and Basmayor (2023).

The questionnaire is composed of 40 questions, 20 from each of the two parts. The instrument has undergone content and face validation by five (5) experts in the field of Alternative Learning System from the region using the validation tool by Acedo and Robles (2019). These validators are part of the higher position personnel from the Schools Division Offices (SDO) and Regional Office. The validation tool criteria were: (1) appropriateness of scale, (2) suitability of items, (3) relevance of items, (4) clarity of direction, (5) adequateness of items, (6) organization, (7) objectivity, (8) comprehensiveness, (9) data generation, and (10) attainment of purpose. The validation tool has a 5-point Likert scale from not valid to very highly valid. Validation results were computed at 4.50, indicating that the instrument is very highly valid as it provides unbiased data allowing 0.5% error. A reliability test was also done with 30 sample respondents from Koronadal City Division prior to the actual utilization of the instrument. Results indicated that the instrument is reliable with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.814 indicated good internal consistency. Cronbach Alpha is used to determine the internal consistency of research instruments, in this case was the modified questionnaire.

Moreover, the source of data from the qualitative part of the research was from the semi-structured interview guide questions comprehensively arranged by the researcher. Additionally, these questions were coined from the results of the quantitative part, consolidated and analyzed. The semi-structured interview guide questions were also validated by PhD Professors of the University utilizing the same validation tool.

Data Collection Procedure

At the start of this study, the researcher secured permission from the Regional Director and Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of SDOs involved. The actual data gathering took place after permissions were granted. The administration of the questionnaires took place in the CLCs of the ALS in the districts. The respondents then proceeded to sign the consent form as their intention to take part in this study. Respondents were given the time to decide whether they want to continue to be respondents or not, upon the laying out of their rights, responsibilities, and contributions in this study. After the data gathering, the quantitative data were consolidated, interpreted, and analyzed. Statistical tools were used for consolidation and treatment, and interpretation. After the consolidation and interpretation, the drafting, finalization, and validation of the semi-structured interview guide questions took place.

Once the participants for one-on-one interviews were identified, the researcher asked for their permission to agree to take part in this phase of the study, informing them of their rights. The identified key informants from each division were invited for a one-on-one in-person interview with regards to the administrative challenges encountered by these personnel upon the implementation of ALS in their division. During the interview, the researcher employed a voice recording to record the conversations that took place and later use the recording to transcribe and analyze the data. The data were then gathered and analyzed.

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Treatment of Data

The data gathered was analyzed using various statistical tools for quantitative data and electronic tools for qualitative data gathered. The data relating to the level of implementation and extent of challenges was presented and analyzed using a weighted mean and standard deviation. The scale below was utilized to interpret the data gathered from the implementation of the Alternative Learning System program.

Table 2

Range and Interpretation of Level of Implementation of ALS

Range	Level of Implementation
4.50 – 5.00	Very High level of implementation
3.50 – 4.49	High level of implementation
2.50 – 3.49	Moderate level of implementation
1.50 – 2.49	Low level of implementation
1.00 – 1.49	Very Low level of implementation

The table below was utilized to interpret the data gathered from the extent of challenges in the ALS implementation.

Table 3

Range and Interpretation of Extent of Challenges in the implementation of ALS

Range	Extent of Challenges
4.50 – 5.00	Very Great Extent of Challenges
3.50 – 4.49	Great Extent of Challenges
2.50 – 3.49	Moderate Extent of Challenge
1.50 – 2.49	Low Extent of Challenge
1.00 – 1.49	Very Low Extent of Challenge

To determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the opinions of the two separate, independent groups, the learners and the implementers, the Mann-Whitney U Test was utilized. When data is ordinal or unevenly distributed, the Mann-Whitney U test compares the medians of two unrelated populations as a reliable, distribution-free substitute for the independent samples t-test.

In this study, a non-parametric statistical tool called Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation (Rho) was used to assess the degree of administrative difficulties and the degree of ALS implementation. The strong normality assumptions needed for parametric tests like Pearson's R are rarely met by data collected from field surveys on implementation levels and organizational challenges since they usually rely on ordinal Likert scales. Spearman's Rho is the mathematically correct option to empirically test and demonstrate the relationship of variables in the study, that is, the ALS implementation and extent of challenges because it is specifically designed for such ranked, non-normally distributed data. All tests were done at 0.05 level of significance.

The researchers used Quirkos, a specialist qualitative data analysis program made to methodically manage, code, and combine textual data, to examine the qualitative data collected from the participants' tales. The researcher was able to clearly draw the relationship between the perceived level of ALS implementation and the associated degree of administrative issues by using this digital platform to visually categorize participant replies. The qualitative data was subjected to a rigorous analysis workflow that included structured topic creation, a methodical thematic analysis technique, coding, and careful adherence to trustworthiness protocols.

Under the guidance of Braun and Clarke's six-phase Reflexive Thematic Analysis framework, these initial codes were iteratively sorted, reviewed, and refined. The process started with importing verbatim transcripts into the software for deep data immersion and line-by-line reading, during which meaningful narrative segments were tagged with dynamic conceptual labels called "quirks." The researcher was able to effectively understand the systemic realities of the program by abstracting smaller, overlapping codes, such as delivery bottlenecks and resource limits, and synthesizing them into complete sub-themes and overarching major themes.

The study closely followed Lincoln and Guba's evaluative criteria for qualitative trustworthiness to guarantee the academic rigor of these generated themes. Peer debriefing was used to prevent personal bias, and member checking, returning transcripts to participants for validation, was used to build credibility. Additionally, by giving detailed

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accounts of the distinctive socio-educational environment of SOCSARGEN, the study attained transferability. Lastly, maintaining a transparent, documented audit trail within the Quirkos project files and engaging in continuous reflexivity ensured that all final insights accurately reflected the lived experiences of participants rather than the researcher's preconceived biases.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations were followed to avoid engaging in practices that may implicitly or explicitly abuse or exploit the respondents and participants.

Potential research volunteers were thoroughly informed about the procedures, goals, and benefits of the study to the extent that it is feasible within the confines of the study. To verify that the respondents' participation was voluntary, a written consent was signed. The informed consent form that the participants signed highlights that they are offering their free and informed consent to participate in the research. As a result, after going over the objectives and benefits of the study, the participant's rights to add to the body of knowledge were properly considered and anticipated. Moreover, in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which protects people's fundamental right to privacy, the respondents' right to privacy should not be violated without consent. Their identities, as well as their responses, were therefore kept confidential for security purposes. Gender sensitivity is also an important ethical factor in research that highlights the necessity of identifying and addressing the possible impact of gender on various facets of the research procedure. To promote the principles of justice and respect for humans in all undertakings, this commitment requires inclusive language, equitable treatment, and careful design to prevent perpetuating negative stereotypes or marginalizing any gender group. Furthermore, researchers must be conscious of the cultural context in which their work is conducted to respect the values, beliefs, and practices of the populations they are studying.

This study was approved and cleared by the Mindanao State University – General Santos Institutional Ethics Review Committee on October 4, 2024.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the results of the study based on research questions. Findings are interpreted in relation to learning theory and relevant empirical studies to explain observed outcomes.

Table 4

Summary of the Level of Implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Assessment of Learning	4.48	0.51	High
Utilization of Learning Material	4.24	0.77	High
Conduct of Learning Session	4.60	0.47	Very High
Monitoring and Supervision	4.43	0.63	High
Recording and Reporting	4.47	0.50	High
Overall Mean	**4.45**	**0.43**	**High**

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) program in SOCSARGEN demonstrates exceptional structural maturity, achieving a high overall implementation rating (M=4.45) that highlights its ability to deliver non-traditional education with great fidelity (Albert et al., 2024). As shown in Table 4, the defining strength of the program lies in the actual conduct of learning sessions, which received the highest instructional rating (M=4.60). This pedagogical success confirms that ALS implementers deftly capitalize on curriculum flexibility by optimizing the program's inherent structural adaptability. Rather than relying on rigid, traditional delivery methods, the instructional framework thrives on innovation, skillfully integrating several modalities, stimulating group discussion, and introducing practical skills training to effectively capture and sustain the interest of adult learners (Albert et al., 2024).

The teaching-learning process is firmly anchored in learner-centered pedagogy, as demonstrated by the exceptionally high execution rating for classroom sessions (Albert et al., 2024). Teachers abandon one-size-fits-all approaches and adopt instructional differentiation by focusing education on the distinct characteristics of adult and out-of-school populations. To ensure that access leads to valuable educational opportunities, this is accomplished by combining focused motivating tactics with customized, practical training catered to the immediate needs of the student cohort (Albert et al., 2024). The high rating for the use of learning materials (M=4.24), which reflects the careful

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attention to detail and excellent organization of ALS teachers as they create their teaching resources to match the pacing and readiness levels of their learners, further supports this student-focused approach (Salendab & Cogo, 2022).

The regional framework maintains a high level of implementation regarding learning evaluation (M=4.48) in order to prevent academic flexibility from compromising structural rigor (Albert et al., 2024). This excellent performance demonstrates how well ALS teachers assess students' learning to make sure they gain functional literacy, relevant skills, and actual educational equivalency, establishing high assessment validity within a non-formal ecosystem (Salendab & Cogo, 2022). This legitimate, well-rounded strategy guarantees that alternative pathways are confirming genuine academic integrity and mastery of fundamental curriculum abilities rather than just getting students through the system (Salendab & Cogo, 2022; Albert et al., 2024).

Strong educational leadership and stringent administrative accountability are critical to the program's overall success. High aggregate markers in the program's logistical back-end, particularly in monitoring and supervision (M=4.43) and recording and reporting (M=4.47), demonstrate this operational stability. This excellent monitoring, reporting, and assessment performance shows a sophisticated, incredibly well-managed, and highly successful educational project administered by highly structured leadership teams.

The comprehensive analysis of the SOCSARGEN model has significant implications for field practice and macro-level educational policy. The results demonstrate how well-organized regional execution can systematically reduce and mitigate several common problems related to non-traditional education, boosting the probability of effective learner outcomes and retention (Albert et al., 2024). In the end, the primary significance for policy and practice is that making significant investments in teacher organization, organized reporting, and adaptable material design guarantees a reliable parallel track where increasing educational access directly translates into valuable, life-changing opportunities for adults and adolescents who are not in school (Salendab & Cogo, 2022; Albert et al., 2024).

Table 5

Summary of the Extent of Challenges in the Implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Perceived by ALS Implementers	2.89	0.89	Moderate Extent
Perceived by ALS Learners	2.88	1.00	Moderate Extent
Overall Mean	**2.89**	**0.97**	**Moderate Extent**

An integrated investigation of alternative learning systems are not isolated individual experiences, but rather part of a larger operational ecology that affects teachers as well as learners. As presented in Table 5, the overall challenge results of ALS implementers (M=2.89) and ALS learners (M=2.88) in the SOCSARGEN region exhibit remarkable alignment, indicating that both groups have a highly synchronized grasp of the structural and contextual barriers at work (Albert et al., 2024). The program benefits greatly from this perceptual congruence, which creates a cohesive basis for focused problem-solving and avoids the administrative blind spots that frequently arise when school administrators underestimate the difficulties faced by students or vice versa (Albert et al., 2024). This common viewpoint, however, also demonstrates the system's ongoing sub-optimality and considerable systemic friction. This persistent, moderate level of difficulty does not point to a systemic failure; rather, it shows that human and material resources are continuously being pushed to their limits, making the program susceptible to widespread teacher burnout and learner discontent if left unchecked.

A comparison of the data reveals an internal conflict between the program's high execution criteria and its persistent operational risks. Previous assessments have praised the program's outstanding instructional delivery, mature leadership, and structural excellence (Salendab & Cogo, 2022; Albert et al., 2024). However, the ongoing, moderate level of difficulties reveals a weak institutional core where long-term viability is continually in jeopardy (Labarrete, 2021). Such tension leads to an obvious discrepancy: although the system is largely effective, well-rounded, and functional, it is still heavily burdened by a persistent layer of obstacles that could jeopardize its significant pedagogical achievements if high-impact issues are disregarded (Albert et al., 2024). As a result, the data presents a parallel reality in which stretched resources coexist with high organizational integrity, suggesting that stakeholder resilience rather than a lack of operational obstacles is sustaining the program's remarkable results.

These findings provide valuable insights into different methodological approaches used by researchers to assess program health and pedagogical problems. This study offers a balanced, multi-perspective evaluation that goes beyond top-down administrative reporting by using paired composite averages to incorporate the viewpoints of both implementers and participants (Albert et al., 2024). This approach contrasts with conventional, single-cohort surveys

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that focus on topics pertaining to teachers or students separately, failing to fully capture the interconnectedness of their classroom experiences. Additionally, it shows an elaborate approach to educational data analysis to read a "moderate" level as a sign of persistent, systemic tension rather than an acceptable or "safe" baseline. This analytical lens accurately recognizes a moderate rating as a sign of ongoing mediocrity that necessitates long-term, strategic intervention rather than institutional complacency, rather than validating it as an indication of trouble-free functioning (Labarrete, 2021).

The program must abandon the provision of generic resources and adopt a focused, intervention-driven pedagogical framework to ensure the alternative learning track's long-term viability and safeguard its high instructional standards. Although the program's basic structure and instructional objectives are excellent, in order to avoid stakeholder burnout, localized pain regions must be addressed with tailored interventions and appropriate resource allocation (Albert et al., 2024). To co-design contextualized support systems and make sure that resources, both human and material, are precisely focused on high-impact problem areas, educational leaders must leverage the strong congruence between teacher and student perspectives as a collaborative tool (Albert et al., 2024). Administrators can protect classroom sessions from systemic strain by proactively addressing these friction points. This will ensure that the alternative path is fully realized for disenfranchised kids and adults and transform recorded obstacles into opportunities for targeted progress.

The comprehensive evaluation of the SOCSARGEN case has important ramifications for both field practice and educational policy at the macro level. The results provide policymakers with a clear direction that good implementation scores should never promote administrative complacency since, if unchecked, structural friction can subtly undermine classroom performance from within (Labarrete, 2021; Albert et al., 2024). By actively reducing the ongoing demands that push local learning centers to their limitations, policy frameworks must change to create flexible, well-funded resource models that prioritize teacher wellness and student retention (Labarrete, 2021).

Table 6

Difference in the Level of Implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN as Perceived by ALS Implementers and ALS Learners

Variables	Mean	Mann-Whitney U Test Value	p-value	Remarks
Perceived by ALS Implementers	4.49			Not
Perceived by ALS Learners	4.43	15732.50	0.5619	Significant

Building a single, cohesive operational reality between those who deliver the curriculum and those who receive it is essential for successful non-formal education frameworks, as an integrated analysis of alternative learning systems shows. In the SOCSARGEN region, this shared reality is statistically confirmed by the total lack of a significant variance between how learners and implementers of alternative learning systems (ALS) perceive the overall level of program execution (U=15732.50, p=0.5619) as shown in Table 6. With a p-value significantly higher than the conventional alpha threshold, this null hypothesis conclusion suggests a strong structural alignment within the educational environment (Albert et al., 2024). This high degree of consistency demonstrates that the program's fundamental blueprint is robust enough to fully overcome the common perceptual gaps that often separate service providers and recipients in conventional educational institutions (Casingal, 2025). Both groups encounter the essential components of delivery, from active classroom sessions to administrative monitoring and reporting, in a similar, highly synchronized manner, as opposed to fragmented or contradicting versions of the program (Albert et al., 2024).

A comparative analysis of these data reveals an interesting link between individual experiences at the micro level and structural consistency at the macro level. On the one hand, previous research shows that stakeholders encounter varied levels of daily friction, pointing out that personal difficulties such as time limitations at home or financial worry are experienced differently based on one's function (Labarrete, 2021; Albert et al., 2024). However, Table 6's statistical consistency demonstrates that the program's overall operational health is not compromised or distorted by these specific challenges. This highlights a special institutional dynamic: everyone understands, accepts, and affirms the program's overall functioning health, even while individual issues may be seen with varying degrees of personal intensity. Despite the presence of various external stakeholder demands, this deep alignment acts as a potent unifying factor, demonstrating that high implementation fidelity may successfully provide a steady, dependable educational experience.

The analysis's conclusions draw attention to important methodological decisions made in current research on educational evaluation. This study offers a very strong mathematical validation of program consistency by comparing

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the independent perceptions of implementers and learners using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. This rigorous statistical technique stands in contrast to solely qualitative or descriptive evaluations, which may overemphasize outlier concerns or isolate individual group input without validating if such differences are statistically important. Methodologically, verifying that there is no perceptual gap supports the reliability of the data gathering methods in the area (Labarrete, 2021). It demonstrates that evaluative assessments in the future can rely on feedback from either cohort with confidence, knowing that input from both teachers and students will produce highly consistent, compatible findings regarding the operational strengths and weaknesses of the program (Labarrete, 2021).

Educational leaders must switch from a style of passive compliance to one of active, collaborative innovation in order to fully capitalize on this high degree of stakeholder alignment. This confirmed perceptual unity offers a unique and extremely reliable basis for applying sophisticated, data-driven decision-making in the educational setting. Administrators may avoid the usual friction of administrative resistance and instantly involve both teachers and students in collaborative efforts toward future changes since they have a clear, unified understanding of classroom realities. Progressive, learner-centered approaches, such co-designed instructional materials and flexible scheduling adjustments, can be quickly implemented in this collaborative environment. This guarantees that a dynamic, adaptable classroom environment consistently matches the program's structural legitimacy.

The SOCSARGEN model's structural consistency has important ramifications for both field-level practice and macro-level educational policy. The results offer policymakers a clear guide that demonstrates how an alternative education track can attain the same systemic legitimacy and operational dependability as conventional school frameworks (Casingal, 2025). Because it dispels the unfavorable notion that non-formal education is intrinsically disjointed or unorganized, this institutional consistency serves as a compelling argument for obtaining increased public financing and wider legislative support. This common understanding makes it much easier to adopt focused quality-control measures in day-to-day field practice. Local learning centers can easily implement cooperative strategic interventions because all stakeholders are operating from a common operational baseline. This guarantees that every resource optimization directly results in increased learner retention and long-term academic success (Albert et al., 2024).

Table 7

Relationship between the Level of Implementation and Extent of Challenges of ALS in SOCSARGEN

Variables	Mean	r_s value	Degree of Relationship	p-value	Remarks
Level of Implementation of ALS	4.46	-0.4128	Moderate Negative	0.0000	Significant
Extent of Challenges of ALS	2.89				

Within the non-formal educational landscape, operational quality and systemic problems constitute a dynamic, interdependent interaction, as demonstrated by an integrated analysis of alternative learning systems. A significant, somewhat negative association between the total level of program execution and the degree of obstacles encountered (ρ = -0.4128, p = 0.0000) in the SOCSARGEN region empirically validates this interaction from the presented data in Table 7. This statistical reality suggests that the program's operational challenges become less severe as the fidelity and quality of alternative learning system (ALS) implementation rise. In this concept, instructional effort and institutional commitment serve as proactive, protective barriers against systemic friction. Strategic excellence is a direct remedy for the operational weaknesses that have historically jeopardized non-formal tracks, as demonstrated by the prompt intervention of high-quality execution that actively lessens the impact of both structural and external difficulties (Albert et al., 2024).

A critical conceptual barrier between controllable interior pedagogies and uncompromising exterior socio-economic realities is highlighted by a comparative cross-examination of these facts. On the one hand, the negative correlation demonstrates that when learning sessions, administrative monitoring, and reporting mechanisms are structurally optimized, internal operational problems, like persistent resource inadequacy or the difficulties associated with modular instruction, become considerably less severe (Casingal, 2025). However, the correlation's moderate strength indicates an internal contradiction: deep-rooted external obstacles like severe poverty, family responsibilities, and time constraints at home cannot be eliminated or overcome by even the most dedicated, excellent implementation (Labarrete, 2021). Strong, non-pedagogical barriers actively prohibit a perfect negative correlation, creating an educational boundary line. As a result, even if teachers can effectively address internal systemic issues through superior

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program delivery, they are nonetheless structurally constrained by larger socioeconomic factors that are completely outside the classroom's control.

Critical methodological changes in how researchers assess program health and educational linkages are highlighted by the insights obtained from this investigation. This study goes beyond basic descriptive statistics or isolated, one-sided satisfaction surveys by using a non-parametric correlation analysis to explicitly link implementation accuracy with operational problems. Compared to previous research that treat implementation quality and structural hurdles as distinct, unrelated variables, this correlational methodology offers a far deeper systemic picture by providing reliable mathematical proof that program execution directly effects issue mitigation. From a methodological perspective, this approach demonstrates that a moderate negative correlation is a correct diagnostic mapping rather than an inadequate statistical result. Before encountering the non-pedagogical constraints imposed by a learner's external environment, it isolates the precise impact that internal teaching quality can have (Labarrete, 2021).

Alternative learning programs must shift from simple administrative compliance to a deliberate, protected pedagogical framework to optimize the impact of this inverse relationship. Teachers are actively protecting vulnerable students from attrition and a loss of motivation when they successfully integrate flexible instructional modalities, incorporate thorough training in practical skills, and keep extremely thorough progress records (So & Despi, 2025). Innovative classroom management is positioned as a direct tool for student retention by this protective framing. Teachers can systematically reduce classroom friction and turn high-fidelity instruction into a scalable mechanism that prevents students from dropping out due to personal or academic difficulties by continuously optimizing delivery methods and customizing learning spaces to the immediate profiles of non-traditional students.

There are significant implications for both issues and educational policy at the macro level when this detrimental association is documented. The research offers policymakers clear empirical evidence for the idea that making significant investments in the execution of high-quality programs is the best way to deal with ongoing operational challenges. However, these findings provide a clear directive that direct educational funding must be paired with a comprehensive policy strategy that delivers structural assistance outside of the immediate classroom realm because excellent teaching cannot fully resolve deep-seated external poverty or family crises (Labarrete, 2021). This necessitates creating official networks that link local government support and foreign socioeconomic help with rigorous execution standards. According to Albert et al. (2024), in terms of field practice, the results are a potent validation of teacher effort and institutional loyalty, demonstrating that ongoing program delivery improvements are the key to minimizing, if not eliminating, the everyday difficulties faced by alternative learners.

However, this finding contrasts with the work of Mehra et al. (2021) who evaluated ALS programs for at-risk youth in urban violence contexts and found that even well-implemented ALS initiatives continued to face persistent structural and socioeconomic challenges, including high dropout rates and limited literacy gains. Their study emphasized that program implementation alone does not guarantee reduced challenges, as external factors such as poverty, community instability, and learner attrition remain significant barriers. Similarly, Espinoza et al. (2019) examined alternative education programs in Chile and reported that despite strong implementation frameworks, systemic inequities and institutional stigma continued to undermine learner retention and program credibility. These studies highlight that while local data in SOCSARGEN suggest implementation strength reduces challenges, broader evidence indicates that external socioeconomic and institutional factors may persistently hinder ALS effectiveness regardless of implementation quality.

Table 8

Thematic Analysis of Informants' Description of ALS

Theme	Sub-themes	Representative Quote
1. Utilization of various assessments	Standardized Assessments (FLT)	"…FLT or Functional Literacy Test. So, that test is given every enrollment. So, at whatever level you want to go, you really have to undergo that to see what your level is…" *Informant 8*
	Portfolio-based Assessments	"Our best practices will be presented in the portfolio presentation…" *Informant 7*
	Performance-based Assessment	"…at the same time is a performance-based because we as ALS implementers see to it that the learners are doing this project or… or performance." *Informant 8*
2. Use of different modalities	Face-to-face as a Preferred Modalities of Teachers	"Actually, we already have modalities in ALS, similar to formal education, with face-to-face, computer-based, and more. We have independent learning and many others." *Informant 4*

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individually or together	Modular and Online Modalities for Working Students	"…modular is better for them in terms of where they can access their education…" *Informant 6*
	Blended Learning Strategies	"Actually, we're really blended now. After our face-to-face class, we'll give them a module to answer, and then we'll see you next week to discuss the next lessons." *Informant 9*
3. Consistency of compilation of assessment results	Working Portfolio as Output Collection Bank	"…when the lesson is carried out, there will be a pre-test and a post-test, and they will put it in their clear book. So they call it a working portfolio." *Informant 8* "…we have the portfolio to ensure the progress of the students which is the portfolio contains of the compilation of their outputs from start to finish…" *Informant 9*
	Consistent Pre-test and Post-test Comparison	". And then, when the lesson is carried out, there will be a pre-test and a post-test." *Informant 8*
4. Need for skills training for teachers	Lack of teachers' skills training	"Maybe, if we need anything, it's skills training." *Informant 3*
	Teachers as leaders of Livelihood programs	"We are hoping for projects focused on ALS, especially more on livelihood programs. Because that's also one of the ways we encourage ALS learners towards livelihood." *Informant 1*
5. Need for budget of the program	Partnership with Stakeholders	"because here in the school, we also have stakeholders. So, we are connected to the, you know, the officials. So, if we have any needs, at least, they are hands-on too" *Informant 5*
	No ALS MOOE	"We don't have a MOOE. Oh, so where do we get it [the budget]? We didn't go to school either. Where do we get the [money]? *Informant 7*

A thorough thematic analysis of informants' descriptions of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program is shown in Table 8. The first three themes center on the educational and structural elements of the program's tracking and delivery systems. Under the theme *utilization of various assessments*, the program primarily uses portfolio and performance-based assessments in conjunction with regular entry evaluations such as the Functional Literacy Test (FLT) to capture comprehensive learner growth. This is in line with the theme *consistency of compilation of assessment results*, where informants observe that pre-tests, post-tests, and working portfolios that function as a thorough output collection bank from beginning to end are used to closely monitor student progress. Additionally, the second theme highlights the program's operational flexibility by showcasing a variety of instructional delivery methods, from traditional face-to-face classes to independent modular and online modalities, that are specifically tailored to support working students' scheduling constraints. The implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines has been consistently characterized by its reliance on portfolio and performance-based assessments, including the Functional Literacy Test (FLT), to capture learner progress (Department of Education, 2023). These tools provide a comprehensive record of student growth through pre-tests, post-tests, and working portfolios, aligning with DepEd's Presentation Portfolio Assessment guidelines. Studies further affirm that portfolio-based assessment enhances learner motivation and supports differentiated instruction, with implementers reporting high efficiency and consistency in its use.

On the other hand, the last two themes move the emphasis from baseline program operations to important systemic deficiencies and professional requirements. The fourth theme highlights a clear *need for skills training for teachers*, which reveals that implementers have pedagogical constraints and need specialized training, especially to take on leadership positions in livelihood programs that engage and reward adult learners. The financial vulnerabilities described in Theme 5, which highlights an urgent *need for budget of the program*, significantly worsen this professional gap. Informants specifically point out that there is a severe lack of a dedicated Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) allocation for ALS, forcing centers to rely almost entirely on the goodwill and hands-on support of local officials and community stakeholders to keep the program running.

From the results in the quantitative findings, it may be inferred that the responses from the participants confirmed the level of implementation of ALS in SOCSARGEN. The themes revealed that there is still room for improvement in the implementation of ALS, highlighting important factors such as budget and skill training. These results also indicate that the ALS implementation in SOCSARGEN operates on the assumption that they are open for additional input. However, despite these strengths, systemic challenges persist. A process evaluation conducted by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PDIS) revealed that ALS receives only 0.1% of DepEd's budget while serving 0.8% of learners, resulting in overcrowded classes, inadequate facilities, and limited instructional materials.

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Moreover, ALS implementers face significant pedagogical constraints due to insufficient professional development opportunities, particularly in livelihood programs designed for adult learners (Albert et al., 2024). These findings underscore that while ALS demonstrates operational flexibility and effective assessment practices, its sustainability is undermined by financial vulnerabilities and teacher training gaps.

Table 9
Thematic Analysis on the Challenges of ALS Implementation as Encountered by the Informants

Theme	Sub-Theme	Representative Quotes
1. Non-completion of ALS Learners	Personal Reasons and Family Problems Causing Frequent Absences	"Then second is family problem. Because that's where the real problems arise. And then, usually, former roommates also feel embarrassed because they are already older." Informant 4
	Financial Barriers	"The only problem is not the financial problem with us, but the financial problem with their family." Informant 7 "Number one because of that, based only on my learners, is the financial problem…" Informant 4
	Work and House Responsibilities	"in those instances, they can't enter or they can't finish some modules because they're too tired from work.." Informant 7
2. Validity of Performance Tasks in Modular Modalities	Relying on Gadgets and Internet	"Because sometimes, their answers are such that you can't really tell if it's really them. Sometimes they Google it. They copy that. They just copy from Google. They can just Google it. They're really good at Googling. That's the challenge there. We really can't do anything about it" Informant 2
	Answers in the Modules are Copied	"Sometimes, they copy the answer key in the module and their performance is not assessed because we do not see each other every now and then." Informant 1
	Answers were not checked	"You don't know if they were the ones who did it. You'll only be given the module. And then when you get back, he has an answer, but you don't know if they're the ones answering themselves.: Informant 8
3. Communication between Learners and Implementers	Lack of Communication	"…you really can't contact them, that's what's difficult. Because some of them, for example, want to study, but there are times when they just don't want to anymore." Informant 5
	No device to communicate with	"They can no longer be contacted. They don't have a cellphone." Informant 6
4. Learning Comprehension of Learners	Struggle to Read	"Especially their reading comprehension. How can they understand what we gave them when they don't understand it?" Informant 4
	Lack of Explanation to Learners' Modules	"So, their problem is that they are only modular, and there is a lack of explanation in what they are reading or what they are being taught." Informant 7

A thematic analysis of the informants' experiences with ALS implementation is shown in Table 9, emphasizing the structural and socioeconomic barriers to student advancement. The first and third themes highlight the important obstacles to student-teacher engagement and learner retention. According to informants, in the theme *non-completion of ALS Learners*, personal issues, family issues, age-related embarrassment, severe family financial barriers, and the weariness of juggling modules with inevitable work and household responsibilities are the main causes of student dropouts and frequent absences. Theme 3, *communication between learners and implementers*, highlights a clear gap in the instructional feedback loop, which further worsens this lack of consistency.

Studies confirm that financial hardship, family responsibilities, and age-related embarrassment are primary causes of non-completion among ALS learners, with many struggling to balance modular requirements alongside work and household duties (Tomarong & Rañoa, 2024). Similarly, irregular participation and structural constraints weaken the instructional feedback loop, further exacerbating disengagement between learners and implementers (Estiban et al., 2026). These findings align with concerns over the validity of performance tasks in modular modalities, where plagiarism and academic dishonesty undermine authentic evaluation.

On the other hand, the second and fourth themes refocus attention on issues related to academic, institutional, and instructional integrity within the program's existing modalities. The second theme, *validity of performance tasks in*

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modular modalities, highlights a significant problem with authentic learning evaluation. Informants express intense frustration over academic dishonesty and plagiarism, pointing out that students frequently use technology to directly copy text from the internet, replicate verbatim answers from the module keys, or turn in work that has been completed by someone else. This issue is exacerbated by asynchronous setups, in which teachers and students seldom interact to confirm output ownership. This systemic problem is closely related to Theme 4, *learning comprehension of learners,* as informants report that many students have severe difficulties reading or understanding basic instructions. The overall quality and pedagogical efficacy of the ALS implementation are seriously compromised because learners are left to handle complex reading components totally on their own due to the modular approach's absence of teacher-led instruction and real-time, in-depth explanation.

However, other research highlights the adaptability of ALS through multi-modal assessment practices, suggesting that portfolio and performance-based approaches can mitigate issues of authenticity and learner dropout (Labarrete & Gillo, 2023). Moreover, while teacher training gaps remain a challenge, evidence indicates that ALS implementers demonstrate substantial competencies in differentiated instruction and collaborative learning, which strengthen learner engagement despite systemic constraints (Casingal, 2025). Taken together, these studies underscore both the persistent challenges and the adaptive strengths of ALS, reflecting a moderate extent of difficulty in implementation that is consistent with quantitative findings.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in SOCSARGEN demonstrated a generally high level of implementation, particularly in the conduct of learning sessions, assessment practices, monitoring, and reporting systems. This indicates that ALS implementers have established effective instructional and administrative practices that support non-formal education delivery.
2. ALS learners and implementers experienced a moderate extent of implementation challenges, particularly in learner retention, communication, assessment validity in modular modalities, and learning comprehension. These challenges highlight the need for strengthened learner support mechanisms and improved instructional strategies for diverse learners.
3. There was no significant difference between the perceptions of ALS implementers and learners regarding the level of implementation of ALS, suggesting consistency in the delivery and experience of the program across stakeholder groups.
4. A significant moderate negative relationship existed between the level of implementation and extent of challenges, indicating that stronger program implementation contributes to reduced operational and instructional difficulties in ALS delivery.
5. The qualitative findings revealed that flexible learning modalities, portfolio-based assessments, and blended instructional approaches contribute positively to ALS implementation. However, financial constraints, communication barriers, limited teacher training opportunities, and learners' reading comprehension difficulties continue to affect program effectiveness.
6. The study contributes to educational research by providing evidence on the implementation realities of non-formal education programs and highlighting the importance of instructional flexibility, teacher capability development, learner-centered support systems, and educational leadership in improving ALS delivery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. ALS implementation practices may be continuously reviewed and enhanced to strengthen instructional delivery, learner engagement, assessment practices, and program monitoring across different learning environments.
2. Educational leaders and policymakers may develop intervention programs that address the identified implementation challenges, particularly those related to learner retention, communication barriers, financial limitations, and modular learning difficulties.
3. ALS teachers and implementers may be provided with continuous professional development and skills training programs focusing on flexible instructional strategies, learner support systems, assessment practices, and technology-assisted learning delivery.
4. Curriculum developers and educational administrators may strengthen contextualized and learner-centered instructional materials to improve learners' comprehension and participation in modular and blended learning modalities.

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5. School leaders and education policymakers may consider establishing sustainable funding and resource allocation mechanisms to support ALS programs, including instructional materials, communication resources, and community-based learning initiatives.
6. Future researchers may conduct further studies on instructional innovation, learner motivation, digital learning integration, and policy implementation in non-formal education programs to strengthen ALS delivery and educational inclusivity.

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