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Enablers and Barriers of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Enrolment

Ria C. Alvarez

Master of Arts in Education (Major in Administration and Supervision), Department of Education-Quirino, Graduate School, Quirino State University, Philippines

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***Corresponding Author:** Ria C. Alvarez

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Abstract **Review Article**

This study was conducted during the School Year 2025–2026 to examine the relationship between enabling factors and barriers influencing enrolment in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) among selected barangays in Diffun District I and District II, Diffun, Quirino. Identifying the factors that encourage or hinder participation in ALS is essential for improving program implementation and expanding access to alternative education. The study adopted the Input–Database–Based Decisions (IDBD) model as a framework for generating data-driven recommendations to strengthen ALS implementation in the locality. A descriptive–correlational research design was employed. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, means, t-tests, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and a four-point Likert scale. The respondents consisted of out-of-school youth (OSY) residing in selected barangays in Diffun District I and II. The study examined their demographic characteristics, motivations for enrolment, and perceived barriers to participation in the ALS program. Findings revealed that intrinsic, extrinsic, and social motivations significantly influence the participation of out-of-school youth in ALS. Among these factors, the strongest motivation identified was the desire to complete basic education, followed by the opportunity to improve employment prospects and pursue further education or skills training. Economic challenges, particularly the need to work and financial limitations, were found to moderately affect participation. However, respondents generally did not perceive geographical, family-related, personal, or institutional barriers as major obstacles to enrolment. Furthermore, demographic variables such as age, educational attainment, employment status, distance from the learning center, and previous school attendance were not found to have a significant effect on motivation levels. Overall, the findings indicate that ALS is viewed positively by participants and continues to serve as a valuable alternative pathway for completing basic education among out-of-school youth.

Keywords: Alternative Learning System, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Demographic Profile, Out-of-School Youth.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental driver of national development, enhancing social mobility and reducing poverty, yet equitable access remains a persistent challenge, particularly among marginalized populations (UNESCO, 2023). In the Philippines, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) was established to provide flexible, non-formal education for out-of-school children, youth, and

adults who face barriers to formal schooling due to socioeconomic constraints, geographic isolation, or family obligations (DepEd, 2023; Congress of the Philippines, 2020).

Despite its long-standing implementation and demonstrated benefits in literacy, numeracy, and life skills acquisition, participation and completion rates remain low in certain areas—for instance, only 32% of eligible out-of-school youth in Diffun, Quirino enrolled in 2023 (Quirino Provincial Education Office, 2023; DepEd, 2024).

Globally, similar challenges persist, with hundreds of millions of children lacking access to education, highlighting the urgency of inclusive learning programs (World Bank, 2020; Rogers et al., 2020).

Understanding the specific factors that enable or hinder ALS enrolment at the community level is therefore essential. Insights into these barriers and facilitators can guide policymakers, educators, and program implementers in enhancing program design, delivery, and learner support, ultimately expanding educational access, improving completion rates, and fostering social and economic development for marginalized populations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine demographic profiles, motivational factors, and barriers affecting enrollment in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) among out-of-school youth (OSY) in selected barangays of Diffun District I and II, Quirino. The study population consisted of 105 OSY enrolled in ALS programs during the 2025–2026 school year. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on relevant criteria, ensuring that respondents had direct experience with ALS programs. Stratification by age, sex, employment, and educational background allowed for meaningful subgroup comparisons.

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire divided into three sections: (1) demographic profile, (2) motivational factors, and (3) barriers to participation, measured on a 4-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated for content and pilot-tested, achieving Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.813 to 0.896, confirming reliability. Surveys were administered in person after securing informed consent, and participants were briefed on the study's objectives. Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test, Analysis of Variance [ANOVA]) to examine differences and relationships among variables. Ethical protocols were observed, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and secure handling of all data.

This methodology provides a systematic, evidence-based framework to understand factors influencing ALS participation and offers insights to improve program accessibility and learner engagement.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Profile of the Respondents

The findings showed that most of the 105 respondents were younger out-of-school youth, particularly aged 15–17, reflecting the common trend of early school leavers in alternative learning programs (UNESCO, 2021). The nearly equal distribution of males and females indicates reduced gender disparity in education participation (World Bank, 2020). A majority were at the junior high school level, confirmed that dropout was most prevalent during lower secondary education, where ALS served as a key intervention (Asian Development Bank, 2021). Most respondents were unemployed, consistent with evidence linking school dropout to limited employment opportunities (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023). In terms of location, many lived within a reasonable distance from ALS centers, suggesting accessibility might influence participation (Reyes & Cororaton, 2019). The high percentage with prior ALS attendance indicated that most were continuing or returning learners, aligned with studies on repeated engagement in ALS programs (DepEd, 2019.

B. Test of Significant Differences in Enabling Factors and Barriers Influencing Out-of-School Youth Participation in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program

Table 1. Summary Table on Mean Scores and Tests of Significant Differences in **Intrinsic Motivation** When Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Intrinsic Motivation	Group	Mean	SD	Description	Statistical Test	Decision
Age	15-17 years old	3.65	.41	SA	F = 0.391–2.365; p = .099–.678	Not significant
	18–20 years old	3.74	.41	SA		
	21+ years old	3.73	.41	SA		
Sex	Male	3.77	.33	SA	t = 1.578–5.661; p = .019–.212	Partially Significant*
	Female	3.62	.46	SA		
Highest Educational Attainment	Elementary Graduate	3.56	.40	SA	F = 0.267–2.945; p = .057–.766	Not Significant
	JHS Level	3.69	.42	SA		
	JHS Graduate	3.79	.33	SA		
Employment Status	Employed	3.79	.37	SA	t = 0.029–3.660; p = .059–.864	Not Significant
	Unemployed	3.66	.42	SA		
Distance from Nearest ALS Center	< 5 km	3.73	.40	SA	F = 0.342–1.421; p = .246–.711	Not Significant
	6–9 km	3.63	.42	SA		
	≥ 10 km	3.72	.40	SA		
	No	3.67	.36	SA		

Across all profile variables, respondents consistently agreed strongly that intrinsic motivation factors, such as completing basic education, personal pride, skill development, fulfillment, and enjoyment, encourage participation in ALS (grand means: 3.56–3.79). No significant differences were observed across age, educational attainment, employment status, distance, and previous ALS attendance ($p > .05$), indicating that intrinsic motivation is stable and widely shared among out-of-school youth. A partial difference appeared by sex, where only the item on feeling proud upon ALS completion showed significance ($p = .019$), suggesting slight variation in specific motivational outcomes but not in overall intrinsic motivation.

These findings supported the view that intrinsic motivation is a strong and consistent driver of engagement in alternative learning systems, regardless of demographic differences (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Howard et al., 2020; Dai et al., 2024; Idulsa & Luzano, 2024; Calo & Salvaña, 2024). Consistent with Self-Determination Theory, learners were motivated by internal factors such as autonomy, competence, and personal fulfillment, which sustained participation

across contexts (Riguiero F., 2024). Moreover, prior studies affirmed that ALS learners demonstrated high intrinsic motivation linked to resilience, self-worth, and persistence, even across variations in employment, distance, or educational background (Idulsa F. Jr. et al., 2024; Magsayo B. et al., 2024; De Leon R., 2025; Mehmet Firat et al., 2018).

Table 2. Summary Table on Mean Scores and Tests of Significant Differences in **Extrinsic Motivation** When Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Extrinsic Motivation	**Group**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Description**	**Statistical Test**	**Decision**
Age	15-17	3.56	.48	SA	F = 0.082–2.166; p = .120–.921	Not significant
	18–20	3.64	.50	SA		
	21+	3.59	.43	SA		
Sex	Male	3.70	.38	SA	t = 0.911–5.689; p = .019–.342	Partially Significant*
	Female	3.48	.52	SA		
Highest Educational Attainment	Elementary Graduate	3.51	.41	SA	F = 0.001–2.557; p = .083–.999	Not Significant
	JHS Level	3.63	.50	SA		
	JHS Graduate	3.50	.40	SA		
Employment Status	Employed	3.65	.42	SA	t = 0.068–.642; p = .425–.795	Not Significant
	Unemployed	3.56	.49	SA		
Distance from Nearest ALS Center	< 5 km	3.64	.48	SA	F = 0.183–1.564; p = .214–.833	Not Significant
	6–9 km	3.51	.47	SA		
	≥ 10 km	3.61	.46	SA		
	No	3.67	.32	SA		

Results indicated that respondents across all profile variables strongly agreed that extrinsic motivation factors, such as employment opportunities, certification, vocational training, financial incentives, and access to higher education—encourage participation in the ALS program (grand means: 3.48–3.70). No significant differences were found across age, educational attainment, employment status, distance from ALS centers, and previous attendance ($p > .05$), suggesting that extrinsic motivation is consistently influential regardless of demographic characteristics.

However, sex showed partial significance, with males reporting significantly higher agreement in selected factors such as job prospects ($p = .025$), financial incentives ($p = .042$), and opportunities for higher education ($p = .019$), indicating some variation in the intensity of extrinsic motivation. These findings supported studies emphasizing that ALS learners were strongly motivated by tangible outcomes such as employment and socio-economic advancement (Idulsa et al., 2024; Ucab. et al., 2023; Magsayo B. et al., 2025). Extrinsic motivation remains a critical driver of participation, particularly among learners facing economic challenges, as it reinforced goal-oriented engagement and persistence

(Broeck et al., 2021). Furthermore, research highlighted that external incentives and future-oriented goals sustained participation across diverse learner groups, even in varying conditions of employment, distance, and prior experience (Idulsa et al., 2024; Lalanan et al., 2025; Salcedo . et al., 2025; De Leon, 2025).

Hence, the results demonstrated that extrinsic motivation is a stable and universally significant factor in encouraging ALS participation, underscoring the importance of strengthening employment pathways, financial support, and educational opportunities within the program.

Table 3. Summary Table on Mean Scores and Tests of Significant Differences in **Social Factor** When Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Social Motivation	Group	Mean	SD	Description	Statistical Test	Decision
Age	15-17	3.49	.47	SA	Family & friend encouragement (p = .031)	Partially Significant
	18–20	3.62	.48	SA		
	21+	3.61	.48	SA		
Sex	Male	3.66	.42	SA	Family & friend encouragement (p = .005); Sense of belonging (p < .001)	Partially Significant
	Female	3.46	.50	SA		
Highest Educational Attainment	Elementary Graduate	3.47	.40	SA	None (all p > .05)	Not Significant
	JHS Level	3.59	.48	SA		
	JHS Graduate	3.51	.51	SA		
Employment Status	Employed	3.64	.44	SA	None (all p > .05)	Not Significant
	Unemployed	3.53	.49	SA		
Distance from Nearest ALS Center	< 5 km	3.63	.48	SA	Setting a good example for siblings (p = .031)	Partially Significant
	6–9 km	3.44	.49	SA		
	≥ 10 km	3.60	.42	SA		

The results revealed that out-of-school youth across all profile variables strongly agreed that social motivation factors—such as family and friend encouragement, setting a good example for siblings, gaining community respect, sense of belonging, and peer interaction—serve as key enablers for participation in the ALS program (grand means: 3.44–3.66).

In terms of age, older respondents (18–20 and 21+) showed slightly higher agreement levels, indicating that social motivation may increase with age, although only family and friend encouragement showed a significant difference (p = .031). This supports the idea that social motivation is dynamic and influenced by developmental stages, where social belonging enhances engagement (Madsen,

2019; Isaacowitz et al., 2021).

Sex differences revealed partial significance, with males reporting higher agreement in family and friend encouragement ($p = .005$) and sense of belonging ($p < .001$). This suggests that social experiences within ALS may vary by sex, particularly in perceived support and inclusion (Juyeonet al., 2024).

Further, no significant differences were found in educational attainment, employment status, or previous ALS attendance ($p > .05$), indicating that social motivation is consistent across learners' backgrounds and experiences. These findings align with studies showing that supportive environments, peer interaction, and family influence sustain engagement and persistence in ALS programs (Idulsa et al., 2024; Salcedo et al., 2025; Lalanan et al., 2025; Magsayo et al., 2025; Ucab et al., 2023; De Leon, 2025).

Distance from ALS centers showed minimal influence, with only motivation related to setting a good example for siblings differing significantly ($p = .031$), suggesting that family-related motivations may vary with proximity, while overall social support remains stable (Fidelix E. C. et al., 2022; Madsen L. S., 2019).

Generally, the findings demonstrate that social motivation is a strong and consistent enabling factor across all respondent groups, emphasizing the importance of fostering family support, peer interaction, and a sense of belonging to enhance ALS participation and retention.

Table 4. Summary Table on Mean Scores and Tests of Significant Differences in **Economic Barriers** when Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Economic Factors	Group	Mean	SD	Description	Statistical Test	Decision
Age	15-17	2.51	.92	A	Work–schedule conflict ($p = .009$)	Partially Significant
	18–20	2.78	.81	A		
	21+	2.65	.83	A		
Sex	Male	2.99	.89	A	Not tested (descriptive difference observed)	—
	Female	2.27	.70	D		
Highest Educational Attainment	Elementary Graduate	2.54	.84	A	None (all $p > .05$)	Not Significant
	JHS Level	2.61	.89	A		
	JHS Graduate	2.67	.83	A		
Employment Status	Employed	2.81	.73	A	Work–schedule conflict ($p = .044$)	Partially Significant
	Unemployed	2.54	.91	A		
Distance from Nearest ALS Center	< 5 km	2.57	.95	A	None (all $p > .05$)	Not Significant
	6–9 km	2.72	.81	A		
	≥ 10 km	2.53	.81	A		

The respondents generally agreed that economic factors served as barriers to participation in the Alternative Learning System (ALS), with grand means ranging from 2.51 to 2.99 across most profile variables. These barriers included the need to work, transportation expenses, cost of materials, schedule

conflicts, and concerns about income loss. Across age groups, economic barriers were consistently experienced; however, work–schedule conflict showed a significant difference ($p = .009$), suggesting that older respondents faced greater difficulty balancing employment and education. This supported study emphasizing that opportunity costs and poverty-related constraints hinder participation in non-formal education (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2019). In terms of sex, males reported higher agreement that economic barriers hindered participation, while females tended to disagree. This difference reflected gender-based economic roles, where males were more likely to assume financial responsibilities, limiting educational participation (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2020; World Bank, 2019). No significant differences were found across educational attainment and distance from ALS centers ($p > .05$), indicating that economic constraints are widespread and similarly experienced regardless of educational background or location. These findings reinforced that financial hardship was a universal barrier among out-of-school youth (UNESCO, 2021). Employment status revealed a significant difference in work–schedule conflict ($p = .044$), with employed respondents experiencing greater difficulty balancing work and ALS participation. Similarly, respondents with previous ALS attendance showed significant differences in work responsibility ($p = .011$) and schedule conflict ($p = .022$), indicating that prior experience increases awareness of real economic challenges. These findings aligned with Philippine studies highlighting livelihood demands and opportunity costs as major barriers to ALS engagement (DepEd, 2019; Carandang, 2018).

Hence, the results demonstrated that economic barriers were persistent and influential across all respondent groups, with employment-related constraints—particularly work obligations and schedule conflicts—emerging as the most significant factors affecting participation. This underscores the need for flexible scheduling, financial assistance, and support mechanisms to improve ALS accessibility and retention.

Table 5. Summary Table on Mean Scores and Tests of Significant Differences in **Geographical/Logistical** when Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Geographical/ Logistical	Group	Mean	SD	Description	Key Significant Findings ($p \leq .05$)	Decision
Age	15-17	2.19	.83	D	None (all $p > .05$)	Not Significant
	18–20	2.37	.80	D		
	21+	2.43	.91	D		
Sex	Male	2.49	.90	D	Distance to ALS center ($p = .013$); Weather conditions ($p = .044$); Limited ALS centers ($p = .005$)	Partially Significant
	Female	2.14	.76	D		
Highest Educational Attainment	Elementary Graduate	2.73	.80	A	Limited ALS centers ($p = .022$)	Partially Significant
	JHS Level	2.21	.77	D		

	JHS Graduate	2.35	1.05	D		
Employment Status	Employed	2.44	.79	D	None (all p > .05)	Not Significant
	Unemployed	2.25	.86	D		
Distance from Nearest ALS Center	< 5 km	2.10	.83	D	Transportation difficulty (p = .011); Poor road conditions (p = .017)	Partially Significant
	6–9 km	2.61	.77	A		
	≥ 10 km	2.22	.89	D		
	No	1.78	.79	D		

The findings revealed that respondents generally disagreed that geographical and logistical factors are major barriers to participation in the Alternative Learning System (ALS), as reflected by grand means mostly within the "Disagree" range across profile variables. These barriers include distance to ALS centers, transportation difficulties, road conditions, weather disruptions, and limited availability of programs. Across age groups, no statistically significant differences were found (p > .05), indicating that perceptions of logistical barriers were consistent regardless of age. This suggested that such barriers were experienced similarly among out-of-school youth, supporting studies that identify logistical constraints as secondary concerns (DepEd, 2019; Carandang, 2018). In terms of sex, significant differences were observed in distance (p = .013), weather conditions (p = .044), and limited ALS centers (p = .005), with males perceiving these barriers more strongly than females. This reflected gender-related differences in mobility and access, consistent with findings that males might be more sensitive to travel and accessibility constraints (World Bank, 2020; ADB, 2021; Gonzales & dela Cruz, 2018). Educational attainment showed a significant difference in the perception of limited ALS centers (p = .022), with elementary graduates expressing stronger agreement. This indicated that learners with lower educational backgrounds might face greater accessibility challenges, aligning with studies highlighting increased vulnerability in resource-limited contexts (Reyes & Cororaton, 2019; DepEd, 2019). No significant differences were found based on employment status (p > .05), suggesting that logistical barriers are similarly experienced regardless of employment condition. However, distance from ALS centers revealed significant differences in transportation (p = .011) and road conditions (p = .017), particularly affecting those living 6–9 km away, indicating that moderate distance poses the greatest logistical challenge. Previous ALS attendance also showed a significant difference in distance (p = .007), with experienced learners reporting greater awareness of accessibility issues. This supports the idea that direct exposure increases recognition of logistical constraints (DepEd, 2019; Carandang, 2018).

Overall, the results demonstrated that while geographical and logistical barriers existed, they were not the primary constraints to ALS participation, as they were generally perceived as less impactful compared to economic and livelihood-related factors. These findings reinforced the need to prioritize financial support and flexible program delivery, while still addressing targeted logistical concerns such as transportation and program accessibility.

Table 5. Summary Table on Mean Scores and Tests of Significant Differences in **Institutional Support** when Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Institutional Factors	Group	Grand Mean	SD	Description	Key Significant Findings (p ≤ .05)	Decision
Age	15-17	2.23	.75	D	None (all p > .05)	Not Significant
	18–20	2.34	.81	D		
	21+	2.28	.87	D		
Sex	Male	2.40	.94	D	Lack of enrollment information (p = .003)	Partially Significant
	Female	2.15	.62	D		
Highest Educational Attainment	Elementary Graduate	2.66	.82	A	Limited availability of teachers/facilitators (p = .014)	Partially Significant
	JHS Level	2.20	.75	D		
	JHS Graduate	2.26	.89	D		
Employment Status	Employed	2.26	.78	D	None (all p > .05)	Not Significant
	Unemployed	2.28	.81	D		
Distance from Nearest ALS Center	< 5 km	2.07	.75	D	Unclear enrollment process (p = .029); Limited teachers/facilitators (p = .018)	Partially Significant

The findings revealed that respondents generally disagreed that institutional factors strongly hinder participation in the Alternative Learning System (ALS), as reflected in grand means across most profile variables. Institutional barriers examined include lack of enrollment information, unclear processes, limited teacher availability, insufficient learning materials, and schedule conflicts. Across age groups, no statistically significant differences were found (p > .05), indicating that institutional barriers are consistently perceived regardless of age. This suggested that these challenges are systemic rather than age-specific, aligning with Philippine studies emphasizing uniform institutional constraints (DepEd, 2019; Carandang, 2018; Reyes & Cororaton, 2019). In terms of sex, a significant difference was observed only in lack of sufficient enrollment information (p = .003)**,** with males perceiving this barrier more strongly. This indicates gender variation in access to or awareness of program information, consistent with research showing that males often encounter more practical barriers such as information gaps (DepEd, 2019; Carandang, 2018). Educational attainment revealed a significant difference in limited availability of teachers or facilitators (p = .014)**.** Elementary graduates generally agreed that institutional barriers affect participation, while more educated groups disagreed. This suggested that learners with lower educational attainment experience greater institutional challenges, particularly in accessing instructional support (Reyes & Cororaton, 2019). Employment status showed no significant differences (p > .05), indicating that institutional barriers were similarly perceived regardless of employment condition, although employed respondents noted schedule conflicts descriptively. Distance from ALS centers showed significant differences in unclear enrollment process (p = .029) and limited facilitator availability (p = .018)**.**

Respondents living 6–9 km away reported higher agreement, suggesting that geographical location interacts with institutional access, particularly in terms of guidance and support services (DepEd, 2019; Domingo, 2020). Finally, previous ALS attendance did not yield statistically significant differences ($p > .05$), indicating that institutional barriers were perceived similarly regardless of prior program exposure, although those with prior attendance reported slightly higher awareness of issues such as information gaps and scheduling conflicts.

Overall, the findings suggested that while institutional barriers existed, they were generally less influential than economic or logistical constraints. However, specific issues such as information dissemination, facilitator availability, and enrollment procedures require targeted improvements. Strengthening communication systems, increasing facilitator support, and enhancing program accessibility may help improved participation in ALS programs.

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that out-of-school youth in Diffun District I and II participated in the ALS program primarily due to strong internal motivation supported by practical aspirations for employment and further education. Social support systems further enhanced engagement. Although certain economic challenges were present, these did not substantially outweigh the learners' motivation to continue their education. Other potential barriers, geographical, institutional, family, and personal were not perceived as major hindrances in the study area. Overall, the findings indicated that ALS participation is largely driven by positive motivational forces rather than by the absence of barriers.

To sustain high intrinsic motivation, ALS implementers should continue designing learner-centered and engaging instructional approaches that promote autonomy, competence, and personal growth. Given the strong emphasis on employment-related outcomes, partnerships with technical-vocational institutions and local employers should have been strengthened to clearly connect ALS completion with career opportunities. To address moderate economic constraints, flexible schedules, transportation support, and provision of essential learning materials might have been considered. Community-based recognition programs and parental engagement initiatives might have further reinforced social motivation. Continuous monitoring of institutional practices should also have been maintained to ensure that accessibility and clarity of enrolment processes remained supportive.

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