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Reinforcement Behavior Strategy and Academic Performance among Learners in Alternative Learning System

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Abstract

Reinforcement behavior strategy can be used to teach new skills and ensure appropriate behavior. It is one of many effective classroom strategies that shows positive impact on learning and behavior. This study was conducted with a primary purpose of identifying the level of reinforcement behavior strategy and academic performance of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Junior High learners in the Municipality of Tagoloan for the School Year 2024-2025. Specifically, this study aims to determine: the respondents' characteristics; their level of reinforcement behavior strategy; their academic performance during the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Quarters; the significant difference on reinforcement behavior strategy and academic performance when grouped according to their characteristics; and, the significant relationship between the reinforcement behavior strategy and academic performance. Data were validated using a modified research questions and utilized a descriptive research method. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation was employed, while person r was employed to determine the relationship between reinforcement behavior strategy and academic performance among ALS learners.

The findings revealed a significant improvement in academic performance, from "Fairly Satisfactory" in the first and second quarter to "Satisfactory" in the third quarter. Additionally, it was also revealed that there was no significant difference between reinforcement behavior strategy and their characteristics and there was no significant difference on the academic performance and their characteristics. The findings also revealed that there was a significant relationship between reinforcement behavior strategy and learners' academic performance. This underscores the need for ALS educators to undergo specialized training to effectively implement reinforcement strategies tailored to learners' needs, as these strategies enhance engagement and performances. Additionally, policymakers should develop comprehensive guidelines to further improve learner engagement and motivation in ALS programs, ensuring a more structured and effective learning environment.

Keywords: Reinforcement Behavior Strategy, Academic Performance

1. Introduction

This study explores how reinforcement behavior strategies affect the academic performance of learners in the Alternative Learning System (ALS), a non-formal education program in the Philippines that caters to out-of-school youth and adults. Given the unique challenges and diverse backgrounds of ALS learners,

the research aims to determine whether tangible, social, and recreational reinforcement can improve learning outcomes. Although reinforcement strategies are widely studied in formal education, limited research exists on their use in non-formal ALS settings. The study addresses this gap by investigating how reinforcement strategies influence student motivation, participation, and academic success. It highlights issues in ALS such as low attendance, high dropout rates, and poor academic performance often linked to financial, personal, and logistical challenges. Positive reinforcement, in particular, is emphasized as a promising approach to encourage student engagement and consistency in learning behavior. Observations from local ALS implementers in Tagoloan show that low participation correlates with poor academic results. The study uses these insights, along with supporting literature, to build a case for integrating reinforcement strategies into ALS teaching practices, aiming to offer practical solutions for educators and inform future policy development.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the respondents' level of reinforcement behavior strategy and their academic performance of ALS Junior High School learners in the Municipality of Tagoloan, Division of Misamis Oriental for the School Year 2024-2025.

Particularly, this paper sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the respondents' characteristics in terms of sex, age, last grade completed, civil status, parents' occupation, family monthly income and attitudes towards reinforcement?
2. What is the respondents' level of reinforcement behavior strategies based on tangible, social and recreation and leisure?
3. What is the academic performance of ALS Junior High School learners during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Quarters?
4. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' reinforcement behavior strategy and their academic performance when grouped according to their characteristics?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' reinforcement behavior strategy and their academic performance?

Significance

The study's findings provide valuable insights into how reinforcement behavior strategies impact ALS learners' academic performance. For LGUs, it can guide the creation of educational and livelihood programs that boost learner motivation. DepEd and Division ALS Focal Persons may use the results to design training and support for ALS teachers, promoting effective and learner-responsive strategies. ALS teachers are encouraged to apply positive reinforcement to enhance student engagement, while parents can support learning through consistent encouragement at home. Learners themselves may develop greater self-motivation and responsibility. Lastly, the study offers a foundation for future research on improving non-formal education.

Scope and Limitations

The study was limited to ALS learners in the municipality of Tagoloan, Division of Misamis Oriental, School Year 2024-2025. The respondents where the one hundred seventy-eight (178) Junior High School learners. The independent variables were limited to reinforcement behavior strategies such as tangible, social and recreation and leisure. On the other hand, the moderating variables were the respondents'

characteristics in terms of sex, age, last grade completed, civil status, parents' occupation, family monthly income and attitudes towards reinforcement. Moreover, the dependent variables were limited only to academic performance of ALS Junior High School learners during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Quarters.

2. Literature Review

Respondent's Characteristics

Understanding learners' characteristics is crucial in analyzing their academic performance and response to reinforcement strategies. Various studies, including those by Mahinay et al. (2025) and Ismail (2023), highlight that factor such as sex, age, last grade completed, civil status, parents' occupation, family income, and attitudes toward reinforcement significantly influence ALS learners' outcomes. Mahinay et al. found that while more males enroll in ALS, females tend to complete the program at higher rates. Ismail emphasized that 75% of respondents viewed positive reinforcement as essential for improving classroom engagement. Additionally, Defacto (2022) reported that younger learners, particularly those aged 22 and below, perform better academically, while Caparas et al. (2023) noted age-related differences in learning attitudes. Parental occupation and family income also shape academic performance, as shown by Sha and Hussain (2021), who linked stable socioeconomic backgrounds to improved access to educational resources. Overall, the literature supports the integration of positive reinforcement strategies and targeted support to enhance ALS learners' academic achievement and long-term engagement.

Reinforcement Behavior Strategy

Positive reinforcement, rooted in Skinner's Operant Conditioning theory, is a behavioral strategy that encourages the repetition of desirable behaviors by providing immediate, favorable stimuli after those behaviors occur (Skinner, 1953). In educational contexts, this method is often employed to improve student engagement, reinforce positive conduct, and support academic achievement. Fitriati et al. (2020) emphasize the effectiveness of instructional reinforcement—such as praise, tokens, and privileges—in promoting student motivation and active participation. Unlike punitive strategies, positive reinforcement fosters a supportive classroom environment by focusing on encouragement rather than punishment. The success of this approach relies heavily on factors like the immediacy and relevance of the reward, requiring educators to adapt their strategies to meet individual student needs.

Academic Performance

Academic performance among Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners is shaped by various factors, including access to materials, motivation, and reinforcement strategies. Wayas and Dinoro (2023) revealed that learners struggle most in English, Science, and Math due to language barriers, particularly in reading comprehension, which limits their ability to understand content delivered in English. They also highlighted the lack of policy interventions to address these challenges. Complementing this, Martinez and Chang (2022) emphasized that academic success is more likely when learners receive consistent feedback, personalized instruction, and structured reinforcement. Together, these studies underscore the importance of targeted support systems and reinforcement-based learning strategies to enhance the academic performance of ALS students, especially in addressing educational gaps and promoting equitable learning opportunities.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive correlational research design since it aims to determine whether reinforcement behavior strategy has a significant relationship in Junior High School ALS Learners academic performance in the Municipality of Tagoloan, Division of Misamis Oriental. The academic performance, of the identified respondents were gathered before and after the intervention.

Participants

The respondents of this study were the one hundred seventy-eight (178) ALS Junior High School learners in the Municipality of Tagoloan, Division of Misamis Oriental, under the supervision of the researcher.

Data Collection

The researcher adapted a questionnaire from Oma-an's (2023) study, *Reinforcement Behavior Management and Learners' Academic Performance in Hinaplanan National High School*, modifying it to align with the current study's objectives. After validation, the finalized instrument was organized into three parts: Part 1 covered respondent characteristics (e.g., sex, age, education, income, and attitude toward reinforcement); Part 2 focused on reinforcement behavior strategies with 10 indicators under tangible, social, and recreational/leisure categories, rated using a Likert Scale; and Part 3 assessed academic performance based on first to third quarter grades using DepEd's Monthly Monitoring Tool (DepEd Order No. 8, s.2015).

Data Analysis

After collecting and recording data, the researcher employed purposive sampling, targeting ALS Junior High School learners enrolled for School Year 2024–2025 in the Municipality of Tagoloan. Out of 178 learners across ten Community Learning Centers, participants were selected based on their active enrollment and involvement in the ALS program. This approach was appropriate given the small population and the need for relevant, firsthand insights on reinforcement behavior strategies and academic performance, ensuring that data reflected the actual experiences of ALS learners in the area.

4. Results and Discussions

Problem 1. What are the respondents' characteristics in terms of sex, age, last grade completed, civil status, parents' occupation, family monthly income and attitudes towards reinforcement?

Table 1
Summary Distribution of the Teacher-Respondents' Level of Efficacy

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	83	46.6
	Female	**95**	**53.4**
	Total	**178**	**100.0**
Age	**60 years old and above**	**1**	**0.6**
	31 to 59 years old	13	7.3
	26 to 30 years old	18	10.1
	21 to 25 years old	53	29.8
	16 to 20 years old	**93**	**52.2**
	Total	**178**	**100.0**
Last Grade Completed	**Grade 9**	**57**	**32.0**
	Grade 8	33	18.5
	Grade 7	**44**	**24.7**
	Grade 6	**44**	**24.7**
	Total	**178**	**100.0**
Civil Status	**Single**	**151**	**84.8**
	Married	9	5.1
	Separated	**1**	**.6**
	Widow/Er	2	1.1
	Solo Parent	14	7.9
	Common Law	**1**	**.6**
	Total	**178**	**100.0**
Parent Occupation Father	Farmer	43	24.2
	Vendor	17	9.6
	Construction Worker	28	15.7
	Private Employee	28	15.7
	Government Employee	6	3.4
	Fisherman	**4**	**2.2**
	Laborer	**52**	**29.2**
	Total	**178**	**100.0**
Parent Occupation Mother	**Housewife**	**122**	**68.5**
	Vendor	13	7.3
	Laundry Woman	4	2.2
	Private Employee	14	7.9
	Government Employee	8	4.5
	Helper	14	7.9
	Beautician	**3**	**1.7**
	Total	**178**	**100.0**
Family Monthly Income	**₱51,000 And Above**	**2**	**1.1**
	₱41,000 To ₱50,999	0	0
	₱31,000 To ₱40,999	15	8.4
	₱21,000 To ₱30,999	8	4.5
	₱11,000 to ₱20,999	48	27.0
	₱10,000 and below	**105**	**59.0**
	Total	**178**	**100.0**

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of ALS learners in the Municipality of Tagoloan, reflecting their sex, age, last grade completed, civil status, parents' occupation, and family income. The data reveals that females make up a slightly higher percentage (53.4%) of the 178 respondents, suggesting that more women are opting to return to education through ALS, possibly due to its flexible setup, which accommodates those who may have left school early because of motherhood, marriage, financial struggles, or family duties. In terms of age, the majority of learners (52.2%) fall within the 16 to 20 age bracket, indicating that many young people who dropped out of the formal school system are choosing ALS to continue their education. Common reasons include poverty, early pregnancy, the need to work, or difficulties adjusting to traditional school settings. This age group tends to be more aware of alternative education opportunities due to increased exposure to social media and local information campaigns promoting ALS. Regarding civil status, most respondents are single (84.8%), implying that learners without family obligations may find it easier to focus on their studies. This highlights the importance of designing ALS programs that are inclusive of married learners by offering flexible schedules, childcare options, or financial aid to support their educational journey. Meanwhile, data on parents' occupation particularly fathers show that 29.2% are laborers, reflecting that many learners come from low-income households where parents may be physically exhausted and less able to provide academic support. The demands of manual labor may limit parental engagement, which can affect a child's motivation and educational progress. Overall, these findings emphasize the need for learner-centered, inclusive, and supportive ALS strategies that recognize the unique challenges faced by each student and ensure equitable access to quality education.

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents' Attitude towards Reinforcement

Indicator	Mean	SD	Description
I like to perform well in the class even without something in return.	3.12	0.88	Agree
I am motivated to get high scores in the examination when I hear good praises from my teachers.	3.26	0.77	Strongly Agree
I am convinced that doing well in the class is for my own future and will not need any rewards to do so.	3.32	0.75	Strongly Agree
I perform well in class when I get something that is practically beneficial to me like school supplies, etc.	2.93	0.93	Agree
Rewards, praises and peer appreciations drive me to perform with my full potentials.	3.10	0.86	Agree
Positive compliment from my parents, spouse and family drives me to give my best.	3.32	0.72	Strongly Agree
Giving my best in class is innate in me even in the absence of rewards or praises.	3.28	0.72	Strongly Agree
I give extra efforts in my academics when there is competition.	3.00	0.90	Agree
Peers praise and compliments compel me to do better in school.	3.13	0.77	Agree
Rewards are not necessary in order to do well in class	3.05	0.81	Agree
Overall	**3.15**	**0.81**	**Agree**

Table 2 reveals that ALS learners generally have a positive attitude toward reinforcement, with an overall mean of 3.15 (SD = 0.81), described as *Agree*, indicating that reinforcement strategies such as praise, rewards, and leisure activities positively influence learner motivation and engagement. The highest-rated statement, *"I am convinced that doing well in class is for my own future and will not need any reward to do so"* (M = 3.32, SD = 0.75), highlights the strong intrinsic motivation among learners, who are driven by personal goals and the desire for a better future. This finding aligns with the study of Idulsa and Luzano (2024), who found that ALS learners show high levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, positively correlating with their favorable attitudes toward reinforcement. Likewise, learners strongly agreed that *compliments from family members drive them to give their best*, emphasizing the power of emotional support as a form of reinforcement. Although the lowest-rated indicator (M = 2.93, SD = 0.93) still reflected agreement, it shows that while tangible rewards like school supplies can help, they are less impactful than personal encouragement and self-motivation. These insights underscore the importance of balancing extrinsic and intrinsic strategies while fostering a supportive environment where learners feel recognized and empowered both emotionally and academically.

Problem 2. What is the respondents' level of reinforcement behavior strategy based on tangible, social and recreation and leisure?

Table 3
Summary Distribution of Respondents' Level of Reinforcement Behavior Strategy

Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Tangible	2.39	1.12	Sometimes
Social	2.94	1.04	Most of the Time
Recreation and Leisure	2.41	1.01	Sometimes
Overall	**2.60**	**1.10**	**Sometimes**

Table 3 presents the respondents' level of reinforcement behavior strategy, with an overall mean of 2.60 (SD = 1.10), described as *Sometimes*, indicating that while ALS learners respond positively to reinforcement strategies, their effectiveness varies among individuals. The highest mean was observed in social reinforcement (M = 2.94, SD = 1.04), showing that praise, encouragement, and verbal support from teachers, family, and peers significantly motivate learners and enhance their classroom behavior. This supports the findings of Nguyen and Castro (2023), who emphasized the positive impact of teacher encouragement and social reinforcement on academic performance and student engagement. In contrast, tangible reinforcement such as school supplies and small gifts received the lowest mean (M = 2.39, SD = 1.12), suggesting that although material rewards can offer temporary motivation, they are less effective in sustaining long-term academic commitment. Wilson and Santos (2021) also noted that students relying heavily on external rewards may lose motivation once these are removed, highlighting the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation. Overall, the data supports a balanced and varied approach to reinforcement one that prioritizes social and emotional support over material incentives to better address the diverse needs and motivations of ALS learners.

Problem 3. What is the respondents' academic performance during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Quarters?

Table 4
Distribution of the Respondents' Academic Performance

Academic Performance	First Quarter		Second Quarter		Third Quarter	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Outstanding 90-100%	0	0	0	0	2	1.1
Very Satisfactory 85-89%	3	1.7	5	2.8	24	13.5
Satisfactory 80-84%	59	33.1	85	47.8	90	50.6
Fairly Satisfactory 75-79%	100	56.2	81	45.5	59	33.1
Did not Meet Expectation 74% and Below	16	9.0	7	3.9	3	1.7
Total	**178**	**100.0**	**178**	**100**	**178**	**100**

Table 4 shows a steady improvement in the academic performance of ALS Junior High School learners over three quarters, with mean scores rising from 78.56 ("Fairly Satisfactory") in the first quarter to 81.03 ("Very Satisfactory") in the third. This upward trend suggests that reinforcement behavior strategies especially social reinforcement like praise, encouragement, and positive feedback have effectively boosted learners' motivation and participation. However, increasing standard deviations highlight disparities in learner performance, reflecting varying personal challenges such as poverty, work conflicts, learning gaps, and limited parental support. According to Ryan and Deci's (2020) Self-Determination Theory, learners are more academically successful when driven by intrinsic motivation supported by autonomy and meaningful relationships. Likewise, Igarashi et al. (2020) affirmed that ALS provides second chance learners with vital opportunities for growth, though success demands strong motivation. Despite modest numbers achieving "Outstanding" ratings, these gains demonstrate the potential of reinforcement strategies when paired with flexible, learner-centered teaching and improved learning environments. Overall, consistent support, contextualized instruction, and a caring classroom atmosphere can help ALS learners overcome barriers and achieve sustained academic progress.

Problem 4. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' reinforcement behavior strategy and their academic performance when grouped according to their characteristics?

Table 5
Difference in the Respondents' Reinforcement Behavior Strategies when Grouped According to their Characteristics

Respondents' Characteristics	Reinforcement Behavior Strategy								
	Tangible			Social			Recreational and Leisure		
	f-value	p-value	Ho	f-value	p-value	Ho	f-value	p-value	Ho
Sex	3.316	0.070	NS	0.308	0.580	NS	3.923	0.049	S
Age	1.286	0.277	NS	0.280	0.891	NS	0.705	0.589	NS
Last Grade Completed	0.962	0.412	NS	3.285	0.022	S	0.571	0.635	NS
Civil Status	1.547	0.178	NS	0.418	0.836	NS	0.927	0.465	NS
Parents Occupation	1.177	0.321	NS	1.429	0.206	NS	1.228	0.294	NS
Parents Monthly Income	4.733	0.001	S	0.528	0.715	NS	4.193	0.003	S
Attitude towards Reinforcement	3.852	0.042	S	4.416	0.039	S	0.364	0.926	NS
Overall	**2.410**	**0.186**	**NS**	**1.523**	**0.470**	**NS**	**1.702**	**0.423**	**NS**

The analysis of Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the reinforcement behavior strategies of ALS learners in terms of tangible, social, and recreation and leisure rewards when grouped by characteristics such as sex, age, last grade completed, civil status, and parents' occupation, with p-values exceeding the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that these strategies are generally effective and applicable across diverse learner backgrounds, making them inclusive and practical tools for ALS facilitators. However, a significant difference was found based on parents' monthly income, particularly in the use of tangible and recreation and leisure reinforcements, suggesting that learners from lower-

income families respond more positively to material and experiential rewards. Additionally, learners with a positive attitude toward reinforcement are more likely to benefit from both tangible and social strategies, while those with a neutral or negative attitude may be less responsive. Overall, the findings highlight the value of reinforcement strategies in ALS, while emphasizing the need to consider economic background and learner attitudes to maximize their effectiveness.

Table 6
Difference in the Respondents' Academic Performance when Grouped according to their Characteristics

Respondents' Characteristics	Academic Performance		
	1st Quarter t- Value	2nd Quarter t- Value	3rd Quarter t- Value
Sex	.000	.000	.000
	S	S	S
Age	.038	.476	.579
	S	NS	NS
Last Grade Completed	.013	.023	.002
	S	S	S
Civil Status	.428	.336	.223
	NS	NS	NS
Parents Occupation	.373	.073	.031
	NS	NS	S
Family Monthly Income	.137	.202	.406
	NS	NS	NS
Attitude towards Reinforcement	.537	.965	.616
	NS	NS	NS
Overall	**0.183**	**0.290**	**0.272**
	NS	**NS**	**NS**

Table 6 reveals that most learner characteristics such as age, civil status, parents' occupation, family income, and attitude toward reinforcement do not significantly influence ALS Junior High School learners' academic performance, as p-values across all three quarters are above the 0.05 significance level, supporting the null hypothesis. However, significant differences were found when learners were grouped by sex and last grade completed. This suggests that gender plays a key role in shaping academic outcomes, highlighting the importance of gender-sensitive teaching strategies. Likewise, a learner's prior educational attainment significantly affects their academic performance, likely due to differences in foundational knowledge and preparedness. In contrast, factors such as age and civil status showed no significant impact, indicating that ALS learners regardless of age or relationship status perform similarly, possibly due to the program's flexible and inclusive approach. Additionally, family income and parental occupation did not significantly affect academic outcomes, underscoring ALS's success in providing equitable learning opportunities. Lastly, while reinforcement is commonly used, learners' attitudes toward it did not significantly influence their academic performance, emphasizing that consistent and proper application of reinforcement strategies matters more than learners' perceptions.

Problem 5. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' reinforcement behavior strategy and their academic performance?

Table 7
Result of the Test of Significant Relationship Between the Respondents' Reinforcement Behavior Strategy and their Academic Performance

Reinforcement Behavior Strategy	Academic Performance			Overall
	1st Quarter P- Value	2nd Quarter P- Value	3rd Quarter P- Value	
Tangible	.001 S	.002 S	.001 S	0.001 S
Social	.000 S	.001 S	.000 S	0.003 S
Recreation and Leisure	.003 S	.001 S	.001 S	0.002 S

Table 7 reveals a significant relationship between reinforcement behavior strategies tangible (p = 0.001), social (p = 0.003), and recreational and leisure (p = 0.002) and the academic performance of ALS Junior High School learners across all three quarters, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These findings confirm that reinforcement strategies positively impact learners' academic outcomes. Social reinforcement proved to be the most influential, showing that praise, encouragement, and recognition from teachers, family, and peers greatly enhance motivation and engagement, especially among learners who have experienced personal challenges. Tangible rewards like snacks, tokens, or school supplies also significantly boost performance, as learners become more active and participative when incentivized. Likewise, recreational and leisure-based strategies such as games and creative activities help reduce stress and increase enjoyment, leading to better academic participation. Overall, the study underscores the importance of consistent, well-applied reinforcement strategies in supporting ALS learners' academic success.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Age and last grade completed have a significant impact on learners' academic performance, with younger students and those with stronger academic backgrounds performing better. Family monthly income and attitudes towards reinforcement are significant to reinforcement behavior strategy. Learners from low-income families respond well to social reinforcement and those with positive attitudes. Among the different strategies, social reinforcement strategy such as encouragement and recognition from teachers, parents, spouse, family and peers has a strong significant relationship to learners' academic performance. It promotes more engagement and dedication in learning specially to ALS learners who are former out of school youth and adults.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following are recommended: Parents and peers should support learners through praise, small rewards like school supplies, and leisure time for good performance, while limiting monetary incentives to avoid dependence. Teachers must consistently use reinforcement strategies especially social praise, tangible rewards, and fun activities in daily lessons to boost motivation and academic results. ALS implementers are encouraged to tailor reinforcement methods based on learners'

diverse backgrounds and past schooling. Learners should value reinforcement, actively engage in class, and focus on internal motivation rather than relying solely on material rewards. Lastly, the Local Government Unit should enhance support by providing resources and community-based programs, including mentorship, recognition activities, and financial aid like school supplies and allowances.

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