

Academic-Life Balance and Engagement among Learners in Community Centers of Alternative Learning System**Jovy R. Hinay¹, Erlinda A. Quirap, PhD²**¹ Teacher, Department of Education² Professor, Cagayan de Oro College**Abstract**

Academic-life balance is an important concern among learners in Alternative Learning System (ALS) community learning centers, as they often manage learning responsibilities alongside family, work, and other personal demands. This study aimed to determine the academic-life balance and engagement among Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in community centers of Impasugong Districts 1 and 2, Division of Bukidnon, during the School Year 2025- 2026. Specifically, this aimed to describe the respondents' profile; find out the respondents' assessment of their academic-life balance; examine the learners' level of engagement; determine the significant relationship between the respondents' assessed academic-life balance and their engagement; and test of the respondents' profile moderate the relationship between academic-life balance and learner's engagement. Through universal sampling, 187 ALS students took part in the study. A validated survey questionnaire that was modified and patterned was used in a quantitative-correlational research design. Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and moderation analysis were used to analyze the data in order to characterize the profile of the respondents, evaluate their engagement and academic-life balance, ascertain the relationship between the variables, and investigate the moderating effect of the respondents' profile. The results showed that the majority of respondents were male, between the ages of 16 and 25, unemployed, in grade 7, single, and had a family income of less than ₱12,030 per month. Respondents' assessment of their academic-life balance is very high on competence. However, and low in relatedness. Moreover, the learner's level of engagement was highly engaged particularly on cognitive and low in behavioral. Additionally, there was a significant relationship. Indeed, the respondents profile moderate the relationship. It can be concluded that competence has been determined to be the most important element and students are actively engaged in deep thinking and concept understanding. It is recommended that ALS Coordinators, implementers, families, and learners strengthen support and learning practices to promote academic-life balance and sustained engagement, while future researchers explore other factors and interventions in the ALS context.

Keywords: academic-life balance, engagement**1. Introduction**

The low completion rate among Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners highlights the challenges they face in balancing academic responsibilities with family obligations, personal concerns, work, and other daily demands. These competing responsibilities may lead to stress, reduced motivation, irregular attendance, incomplete learning tasks, and difficulties maintaining overall well-being. ALS learners may also experience low academic confidence, limited self-discipline, inadequate support at home, and feelings of isolation due to limited interaction with classmates, learning facilitators, and the school community.

Parental expectations and the perception that formal education is more valuable than ALS may further affect their confidence and commitment to learning. Despite these challenges, supportive learning environments, parental involvement, continuous guidance, emotional support, and flexible learning opportunities can help learners develop independence, perseverance, and confidence. Understanding the experiences of ALS learners in Impasugong Districts I and II, Division of Bukidnon, is essential to identifying the factors that influence their motivation, engagement, well-being, and persistence in education and to developing appropriate strategies that will help them overcome challenges and successfully complete their studies.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the academic-life balance and engagement among ALS learners in community centers of Impasugong Districts 1 and 2, Division of Bukidnon, during the SY 2025-2026.

It specifically answered the following questions:

1. What is the respondents' profile in terms of age, sex, occupation, grade level, civil status, and family monthly income?
2. How do the respondents assess their academic-life balance based on autonomy, competence, and relatedness?
3. What is the learners' level of engagement with regard to emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' assessed academic-life balance and their engagement?
5. Do the respondents' profiles moderate the relationship between academic-life balance and learners' engagement?

Significance

The findings of this study may benefit ALS coordinators by helping them develop appropriate programs, academic guidance, and counseling services that promote learner well-being and engagement. Community ALS implementers may use the results to adopt flexible and learner centered approaches that reduce stress, build confidence, and encourage active participation. Parents may gain a better understanding of the challenges learners face in balancing their studies and personal responsibilities, encouraging them to provide adequate support and motivation. ALS learners may become more aware of how their academic, family, work, and personal responsibilities affect their learning, helping them develop effective management strategies and remain committed to completing their education. Lastly, future researchers may use the findings as a reference for further studies on academic life balance, learner engagement, and other factors that influence the participation and success of ALS learners.

Scope and Limitations

This study focused on academic-life balance and engagement among learners in Impasugong Districts I and II, Division of Bukidnon, during the School Year 2025-2026. The respondents were the one hundred eighty-seven (187) ALS Learners of the eleven (11) barangays that have CLC in Impasugong, Bukidnon. The independent variables were limited only to the learners' academic-life balance based on autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Further, the dependent variables are also limited to learners' engagement

with regard to emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. Indeed, the respondents' profiles in terms of age, sex, occupation, grade level, civil status, and family monthly income were also considered.

Literature Review

Respondents' Profile

Learners' academic life balance is shaped by various demographic and socioeconomic factors, including age, sex, occupation, grade level, civil status, and family monthly income. Cebu and Pantalita (2024) found that age and sex were associated with learners' academic experiences and anxiety, while Saleh et al. (2021) emphasized that younger students may be more vulnerable to stress because of their developing coping skills. Ignacio (2023) and Faunillan and Paglinawan (2024) highlighted how employment responsibilities and competing demands may contribute to academic stress and burnout among working students. Similarly, Acevedo and Orongan (2025) showed that the socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of Alternative Learning System learners are important considerations in understanding their participation and learning experiences. Overall, these findings indicate that academic life balance is influenced by the interaction of personal characteristics, family responsibilities, and financial circumstances, emphasizing the need for appropriate academic and psychosocial support to help learners manage educational demands and improve their well-being and academic outcomes.

Academic-Life Balance

Maintaining a healthy balance between academic responsibilities and personal well-being requires learners to develop self-direction, confidence in their abilities, and positive relationships with others. Valencia (2026) emphasized that technology can provide flexible learning opportunities while making it difficult to separate academic and personal life, whereas Remojo and Cacho (2026) highlighted the importance of supportive environments in promoting resilience and persistence. In terms of autonomy, Bayraktar and Stevens (2023) found that self-directed motivation can reduce academic pressure, while Garrido et al. (2020) emphasized that perceived academic competence helps learners manage tasks and avoid procrastination. Moreover, Pyhältö et al. (2024) demonstrated that peer support and social connectedness contribute to students' engagement and well-being. These findings suggest that academic life balance is influenced by learners' ability to regulate their responsibilities, confidence in their abilities, and relationships with others. For Alternative Learning System learners, promoting autonomy, competence, and relatedness through flexible learning arrangements, supportive teaching practices, and positive peer interactions may help reduce academic stress, strengthen engagement, and improve both personal well-being and academic achievement.

Engagement

Student engagement is an essential aspect of the learning process that reflects learners' participation, emotional connection, and mental effort in accomplishing academic tasks. Baculanta, Pontillas, and Corpuz (2024) explained that behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement work together to influence academic achievement and learning experiences. Similarly, Fredricks et al. (2021) emphasized that emotional engagement strengthens cognitive involvement and contributes to academic performance and psychological well-being. Kim et al. (2021) found that active participation and sustained effort are positively associated with better learning outcomes, while Meunier et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and motivation in maintaining cognitive engagement

under academic pressure. In the Alternative Learning System, Baculanta et al. (2025) showed that appropriate learning materials, supportive facilitators, and positive learning environments encourage learners' participation and involvement. These findings suggest that student engagement is influenced by individual motivation, instructional support, and learning conditions, emphasizing the importance of developing supportive and inclusive educational environments that strengthen learners' emotional, behavioral, and cognitive involvement and promote academic success.

2. Methodology

Research Design

Employing a quantitative correlational research design, the present investigation examined the relationship between academic-life balance and student engagement to determine how academic demands are associated with learners' involvement in educational activities. Notably, rather than seeking to establish causal relationships, the study focused on identifying the direction and strength of the association between academic pressure and the various dimensions of student engagement. Consistent with the work of Nzeakah et al. (2023), the investigation recognizes the effectiveness of correlational designs for examining complex educational and psychological relationships involving multiple interacting variables. Accordingly, the selected research design provides an appropriate methodological framework for analyzing naturally occurring relationships among the study variables.

Within the quantitative framework, statistical procedures were employed to examine the relationships between the independent and dependent variables included in the study. Likewise, it was academic-life balance, represented by autonomy, competence, and relatedness, that constituted the independent variables examined in relation to learner engagement. Conversely, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement served as the dependent variables through which students' involvement in learning activities was assessed. Consequently, the quantitative correlational approach facilitates a systematic examination of the associations among these educational constructs, overlooking the interdependence of these variables may therefore result in an incomplete understanding of students' academic experiences.

Participants

The respondents of this study involved the one hundred eighty-seven (187) Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners from Community Learning Centers (CLCs) located in eleven (11) barangays across the First and Second Districts of Impasugong, Bukidnon, during the School Year 2025–2026. Respondents were enrolled in the ALS program; accordingly, the selected respondents reflected the characteristics of the target population within the geographical scope under study that includes community learning centers of Capitan Bayong, Impalutao, Cawayan, Kibenton, Poblacion, Guihian, Bontongon, Dumalaguing, Hagpa, Kalabugao, and La Fortuna.

Data Collection

The instrument used in gathering the data was a questionnaire composed of three parts. Part I dealt on the respondents' profile in terms age, sex, occupation, grade level, civil status, and family monthly income. Part II is acquired on the respondents academic-life balance based on autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The variables were patterned and modified from the study of Deci and Ryan (1985). Part III elicited on learners' level of engagement with respond to emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. The

variable was patterned and modified from the study of Fredricks et. al. (2021). Each variable has 10 indicators with the options; 4 – Always, 3 – Very Often, 2 – Sometimes, 1 – Never.

Data Analysis

Having collected and recorded the data gathered in the study, the following statistical tools were used: Descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation were used to describe the variables in the study.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was employed to determine the significant relationship between the academic pressure and students' level of engagement.

To test the moderation effect of the respondents' profile on the relationship between academic pressure and engagement, multiple linear regression analysis was employed.

3. Results and Discussions

Problem 1. What is the respondents' profile in terms of age, sex, occupation, grade level, civil status, and family monthly income?

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents' Profile in terms of Age and Sex

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	46 and above	35	18.70
	36-45 years old	40	21.40
	26-35 years old	52	27.80
	16-25 years old	60	32.10
Total		187	100.00
Sex	Male	99	52.90
	Female	88	47.10
Total		187	100.00

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents according to age and sex, highlighting the demographic characteristics of ALS learners. The largest age group consisted of learners aged 16 to 25 years, with 60 respondents (32.1%), indicating the importance of ALS in providing educational opportunities for young people who have experienced interrupted schooling due to economic difficulties, family responsibilities, employment, and other personal circumstances. Meanwhile, learners aged 45 years and above accounted for the smallest group, with 35 respondents (18.7%), suggesting the need for more flexible schedules and learner centered support to encourage older adults to participate in the program. In terms of sex, male learners comprised the majority, with 99 respondents (52.9%), although this difference does not necessarily indicate greater motivation or better access to education among males. These findings

emphasize the role of ALS in supporting educational completion, personal development, and employment opportunities while highlighting the importance of considering learners' demographic characteristics in program planning. Providing inclusive, flexible, and gender responsive learning opportunities, together with appropriate academic and personal support, may strengthen participation, engagement, and completion among ALS learners of different ages and backgrounds.

Table 2**Distribution of Respondents' Profile in terms of Occupation and Grade Level**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Occupation	Student	47	25.10
	Teacher	0	0
	Worker	31	16.60
	Unemployed	109	58.30
Total		187	100.00
Grade Level	Grade 10	51	27.30
	Grade 9	38	20.30
	Grade 8	29	15.50
	Grade 7	69	36.90
Total		187	100.00

Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents according to occupation and grade level. The largest occupational group consisted of unemployed learners, with 109 respondents (58.3%), highlighting the role of ALS in providing educational opportunities for individuals who may need to improve their qualifications, develop practical skills, and enhance their future employment prospects. In contrast, employed learners comprised the smallest occupational group, with 31 respondents (16.6%), suggesting the importance of flexible learning arrangements that accommodate work and other responsibilities. In terms of grade level, Grade 7 learners represented the largest group, with 69 respondents (36.9%), while Grade 8 learners accounted for the smallest group, with 29 respondents (15.5%). These findings suggest that many ALS learners require support in strengthening foundational academic competencies and progressing through secondary education. Providing career-oriented learning opportunities, flexible schedules, remedial instruction, mentoring, and guidance services may help address learners' educational and economic challenges, improve their motivation and participation, and support their continued engagement and successful completion of the ALS program.

Table 3
Distribution of Respondents' Profile in terms of Civil Status

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Civil Status	Single	119	63.60
	Married	61	32.70
	Widowed	7	3.70
	Divorced	0	0.00
Total		187	100.00

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents according to civil status, showing that single learners comprised the largest group, with 119 respondents (63.6%), while widowed learners represented the smallest group, with 7 respondents (3.7%). The predominance of single learners may suggest that individuals with fewer family responsibilities have greater flexibility to participate in educational activities and focus on their academic and personal development. In contrast, widowed learners may experience emotional, financial, and caregiving challenges that affect their participation in the ALS program. These findings highlight the importance of considering learners' personal circumstances when developing instructional strategies and support services. Providing flexible learning arrangements, academic guidance, and appropriate emotional and psychosocial support may help address the diverse needs of ALS learners, promote equitable participation, and encourage continued engagement and successful completion of their education.

Table 4
Distribution of Respondents' Profile in terms of Family Monthly Income

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
Family Monthly Income	₱48,121 to ₱84,210	0	0.00	Upper Middle Income
	₱24,061 to ₱48,120	39	20.90	Lower Middle Income
	₱12,031 to ₱24,060	58	31.00	Low Income (but not poor)
	Less than ₱12,030	90	48.10	Poor
Total		187	100.00	

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents according to family monthly income, showing that households earning less than ₱12,030 comprised the largest group, with 90 respondents (48.1%), while

those earning between ₦24,060 and ₦48,120 represented the smallest group, with 39 respondents (20.9%). These findings indicate that many ALS learners come from economically disadvantaged households, where limited financial resources may affect their access to learning materials, transportation, and other educational necessities. Financial difficulties, family responsibilities, and limited educational resources may also influence learners' participation and persistence in their studies. The results highlight the importance of ALS in providing accessible educational opportunities for individuals facing economic barriers. Providing financial assistance, flexible learning arrangements, adequate instructional resources, and appropriate academic support may help reduce these challenges, strengthen learner engagement, and promote equitable access to education and successful program completion.

Problem 2: How do the respondents assess their academic-life balance based on autonomy, competence, and relatedness?

Table 5

Summary of the Respondents Assessment of their Academic-Life Balance

Variable	Mean	SD	Description
Autonomy	3.27	0.77	Very High
Competence	3.28	0.77	Very High
Relatedness	3.27	0.76	Very High
Overall	3.27	0.77	Very High

Table 5 presents the respondents' assessment of academic life balance in terms of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, with an overall mean of 3.27 (SD = 0.77), interpreted as Very High. This indicates that respondents generally demonstrate a strong sense of independence, confidence in their abilities, and connection with others while managing their academic responsibilities. Among the three dimensions, competence obtained the highest mean of 3.28 (SD = 0.77), suggesting that learners feel capable of completing academic tasks, addressing challenges, and meeting learning expectations. Relatedness followed with a mean of 3.27 (SD = 0.76), indicating that respondents generally experience a sense of belonging and receive support from teachers, classmates, friends, and other significant individuals. These findings highlight the importance of psychological needs in maintaining academic life balance, as learners who feel capable, independent, and socially supported are more likely to remain motivated, engaged, and persistent in their studies. Providing opportunities for independent learning, developing academic confidence, and fostering supportive relationships may further strengthen learners' well-being and ability to balance their educational responsibilities with other aspects of life.

Problem 3: What is the learners' level of engagement with regard to emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement?

Table 6

Summary Distribution of the Learners' Level of Engagement

Variables	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Emotional	3.27	0.77	Highly Engaged
Behavioral	3.26	0.75	Highly Engaged
Cognitive	3.28	0.76	Highly Engaged
Overall	3.27	0.01	Highly Engaged

Table 6 presents the summary of learners' engagement, with an overall mean of 3.27 (SD = 0.01), interpreted as Highly Engaged. This indicates that ALS learners demonstrate strong involvement in their studies through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Among the three dimensions, cognitive engagement obtained the highest mean of 3.28 (SD = 0.76), suggesting that learners actively process information, reflect on concepts, solve problems, and connect new knowledge with previous experiences. Meanwhile, behavioral engagement recorded the lowest mean of 3.26 (SD = 0.75), although it remained Highly Engaged, indicating that learners continue to participate in educational activities and complete learning tasks despite possible challenges in maintaining consistent participation. These findings emphasize the importance of meaningful learning experiences, personal motivation, and supportive educational environments in sustaining learner engagement. Providing interactive activities, opportunities for independent learning, continuous encouragement, and support from facilitators, peers, and family members may further strengthen learners' participation, confidence, persistence, and academic progress.

Problem 4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' assessed academic-life balance and their engagement?

Table 7

Result of the Test on Relationship Between the respondents assessed Academic-Life Balance and their Engagement

Academic Life Balance	Learners' Engagement			Overall
		Emotional	Behavioral	
Autonomy	r value	0.72 ^S	0.64 ^S	0.69 ^S
	p value	0.011	0.021	0.015
Competence	r value	0.67 ^S	0.71 ^S	0.73 ^S
	p value	0.019	0.013	0.010
Relatedness	r value	0.69 ^S	0.66 ^S	0.70 ^S
				0.68 ^S

p value	0.016	0.022	0.012	0.017
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Table 7 presents the results of the test examining the relationship between academic life balance and learners' engagement, revealing significant positive relationships across autonomy, competence, and relatedness. All correlations were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Autonomy was significantly related to emotional engagement ($r = 0.72$, $p = 0.011$), behavioral engagement ($r = 0.64$, $p = 0.021$), cognitive engagement ($r = 0.69$, $p = 0.015$), and overall engagement ($r = 0.68$, $p = 0.010$). Similarly, competence showed significant relationships with emotional engagement ($r = 0.67$, $p = 0.019$), behavioral engagement ($r = 0.71$, $p = 0.013$), cognitive engagement ($r = 0.73$, $p = 0.010$), and overall engagement ($r = 0.70$, $p = 0.014$). Relatedness was also significantly associated with emotional engagement ($r = 0.69$, $p = 0.016$), behavioral engagement ($r = 0.66$, $p = 0.022$), cognitive engagement ($r = 0.70$, $p = 0.012$), and overall engagement ($r = 0.68$, $p = 0.017$). These findings suggest that learners who experience greater independence, confidence in their abilities, and meaningful social connections tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement in their studies. The results highlight the importance of providing opportunities for learner choice, recognizing academic progress, offering constructive feedback, and fostering supportive relationships within ALS learning centers. Creating flexible, inclusive, and learner centered environments may help strengthen learners' motivation, participation, persistence, and commitment to achieving their educational goals.

Problem 5. Do the respondents profile moderate the relationship between academic-life balance and student engagement?

Table 8

Test of the Respondents Profile moderating the Relationship Between Academic – Life Balance and Student Engagement

Respondents Profile	Sample SizeN	Regression			Interpretation
		Coefficient (SE)	(B) t-value	p-value	
Age	187	0.184 (0.071)	2.592	0.010	Significant
Sex	187	0.096 (0.045)	2.133	0.034	Significant
Occupation	187	0.157 (0.068)	2.309	0.022	Significant
Grade Level	187	0.201 (0.076)	2.645	0.009	Significant
Civil Status	187	0.083 (0.039)	2.128	0.035	Significant
Family Monthly Income	187	0.169 (0.072)	2.347	0.020	Significant

Table 8 presents the moderating effects of respondents' profiles on the relationship between academic life balance and student engagement. The findings revealed that age ($\beta = 0.184$, $p = 0.010$), sex ($\beta = 0.096$, $p = 0.034$), occupation ($\beta = 0.157$, $p = 0.022$), grade level ($\beta = 0.201$, $p = 0.009$), civil status ($\beta = 0.083$, $p = 0.035$), and family monthly income ($\beta = 0.169$, $p = 0.020$) significantly moderated the relationship, as all p values were below the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected for all profile variables. Among these variables, grade level obtained the highest regression coefficient, followed

by age and family monthly income, suggesting their relatively stronger statistical contributions within the model. These findings indicate that the relationship between academic life balance and engagement varies according to learners' developmental stages, educational experiences, employment status, family responsibilities, and economic circumstances. Younger and older learners may differ in their ability to manage academic demands, while working learners and those with family obligations may face competing responsibilities that affect their participation. Similarly, differences in grade level and household income may influence access to learning resources, the complexity of academic tasks, and the support available to learners. The results highlight the importance of providing flexible learning arrangements, appropriate academic assistance, financial support, and inclusive learner centered interventions that respond to the diverse circumstances of ALS learners and strengthen their engagement and educational persistence.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study concludes that, academic-life balance is an important factor in the learning experiences of the respondents. Among its dimensions, competence emerged as the strongest component, indicating that learners' confidence, motivation, and determination to succeed academically play an important role in maintaining a balanced academic life. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening learners' sense of competence to support their continued academic progress. The motivation that students exhibit contributes to perseverance and active participation in carrying out academic tasks regardless of the obstacles they face.

Overall, learners demonstrated strong cognitive engagement through deep thinking, understanding concepts, and applying their knowledge during the learning process. The importance of strengthening learners' sense of competence, as it plays a significant role in promoting cognitive engagement and meaningful learning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. ALS Coordinators may provide interventions, flexible learning arrangements, and enhanced academic and psychosocial support to all ALS learners as these group demonstrated the lowest levels of academic-life balance and student engagement.
2. Community ALS implementers should strengthen learners' relatedness through supportive relationships, peer collaboration, and mentoring activities that promote connection, belonging, and active participation.
3. Parents should provide encouragement and a supportive home environment that promotes regular attendance, active participation, and timely completion of learning tasks to strengthen learners' behavioral engagement.
4. ALS learners should exercise autonomy by setting learning goals, making informed decisions, and taking responsibility for their academic tasks to strengthen engagement and motivation.
5. Future researchers may further examine the moderating role of family monthly income and other socioeconomic factors in the relationship between academic-life balance and learner engagement across different educational settings and learner populations.

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