

Opportunities and Challenges of Als Teachers and Implementers in Teaching Junior High School Mathematics

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Abstract: This study examined the opportunities and challenges experienced by Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers and implementers in teaching Mathematics and explored the relationship between these challenges and opportunities. The study was conducted among ALS teachers in Subic, San Marcelino, and Castillejos under the Department of Education, Division of Zambales, during the School Year 2023–2024. A descriptive quantitative research design was employed using a survey questionnaire as the primary research instrument. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were utilized to analyze the collected data. The findings indicated that ALS teachers generally agreed that they encountered challenges related to topic implementation, monitoring of learning, and evaluation of learning. They also agreed that opportunities existed in terms of job satisfaction and reinforcement, while they disagreed regarding benefits. Analysis of significant differences showed no variations in the identified challenges and opportunities when respondents were grouped according to age, sex, educational attainment, major, position, and years of teaching experience. However, significant differences were observed based on location. Pearson-r analysis further revealed a significant but low negative relationship between challenges and opportunities. Consequently, a targeted program plan was developed to mitigate challenges and enhance teacher performance, ensuring more effective Mathematics delivery in the Alternative Learning System.

Keywords: *Alternative Learning System, Opportunities, Challenges, Mathematics Education.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mathematics education continues to face challenges related to instructional delivery, learner diversity, assessment practices, teacher preparedness, and access to educational resources, particularly in non-traditional and flexible learning environments. Recent studies reveal that mathematics teachers experience difficulties in adapting instruction to learners with varying competencies, maintaining learner engagement, and implementing effective assessment practices. For instance, Bosica (2022) found that mathematics teaching anxiety significantly affects teacher efficacy and instructional confidence, influencing classroom teaching practices and learner outcomes. Similarly, Schwartz et al. (2023) emphasized that mathematics teachers encounter challenges in professional development, particularly in contextualizing instructional approaches and adapting teaching strategies to learners' diverse

needs. Furthermore, Aga (2023) reported that teachers transitioning to active learning environments faced challenges related to student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom interaction, highlighting the need for continuous institutional support. Likewise, Ochoa et al. (2023) emphasized that teacher preparedness and technological integration remain critical concerns in mathematics education, particularly in flexible and alternative teaching modalities. These findings indicate that teaching mathematics remains a complex process that requires adaptive teaching strategies, adequate instructional support, and continuous professional development.

In the Philippine context, the enactment of Republic Act No. 11510, otherwise known as the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Act, institutionalized a parallel learning system intended for out-of-school youth and adult learners by providing equitable opportunities to complete basic education.

Despite its significance, mathematics instruction within ALS remains challenging due to varied learner backgrounds, inconsistent attendance, limited instructional resources, and differences in academic readiness. Previous local studies found that ALS teachers frequently encounter difficulties related to learning resources, learner absenteeism, multi-level instruction, and the integration of learning competencies in mathematics instruction (Flores, 2022; Campilla & Lopez, 2019). In Zone IV, Division of Zambales, particularly in the districts of Subic, San Marcelino, and Castillejos, ALS teachers and implementors continue to navigate challenges involving topic implementation, learner monitoring, and assessment while also experiencing opportunities for professional growth and job satisfaction.

This study aimed to determine the opportunities and challenges encountered by ALS teachers and Community ALS Implementors in teaching Junior High School mathematics in Zone IV, Division of Zambales. Specifically, it examined challenges related to implementation of topics, monitoring of learning, and evaluation of learning, as well as opportunities in terms of benefits, job satisfaction, and reinforcement. The study was anchored on constructivist and developmental learning perspectives, which emphasize that mathematical learning is enhanced through learner-centered instruction, contextualized teaching approaches, and responsive educational support systems that address learners' diverse educational experiences and needs.

The findings may serve as a basis for improving instructional practices, strengthening administrative and policy support, enhancing teacher qualifications and professional development, and ensuring quality learning experiences for ALS learners. Moreover, the study provides valuable insights for ALS coordinators, supervisors, policymakers, and future researchers in developing interventions and policies that promote effective ALS program implementation.

II. METHODOLOGY

➤ *Research Design*

This study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design to examine the opportunities and challenges encountered by Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers and Community ALS Implementors in teaching Junior High School Learning Strand 3: Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills. A quantitative approach was deemed appropriate because the study aimed to systematically collect measurable data and analyze relationships, differences, and trends among identified variables. Descriptive research was utilized to determine the respondents' perceptions regarding challenges in topic implementation, monitoring of learning, and evaluation of learning, as well as opportunities in terms of benefits, job satisfaction, and reinforcement

➤ *Respondents and Location*

The respondents of the study consisted of thirty-nine (39) ALS teachers and Community ALS Implementors from Zone IV, Division of Zambales, specifically from the districts of Subic, Castillejos, and San Marcelino. A total population sampling technique was utilized since all identified ALS teachers and implementors in the three districts were included in the study to ensure comprehensive representation of the target population. The respondents comprised permanent ALS teachers and contractual implementors funded by local school boards.

The study was conducted in the Central Schools that implement ALS programs in the three identified districts: Subic Elementary School, Castillejos Elementary School, and San Marcelino Elementary School. These locations served as learning centers for ALS learners under Zone IV, Schools Division Office of Zambales.

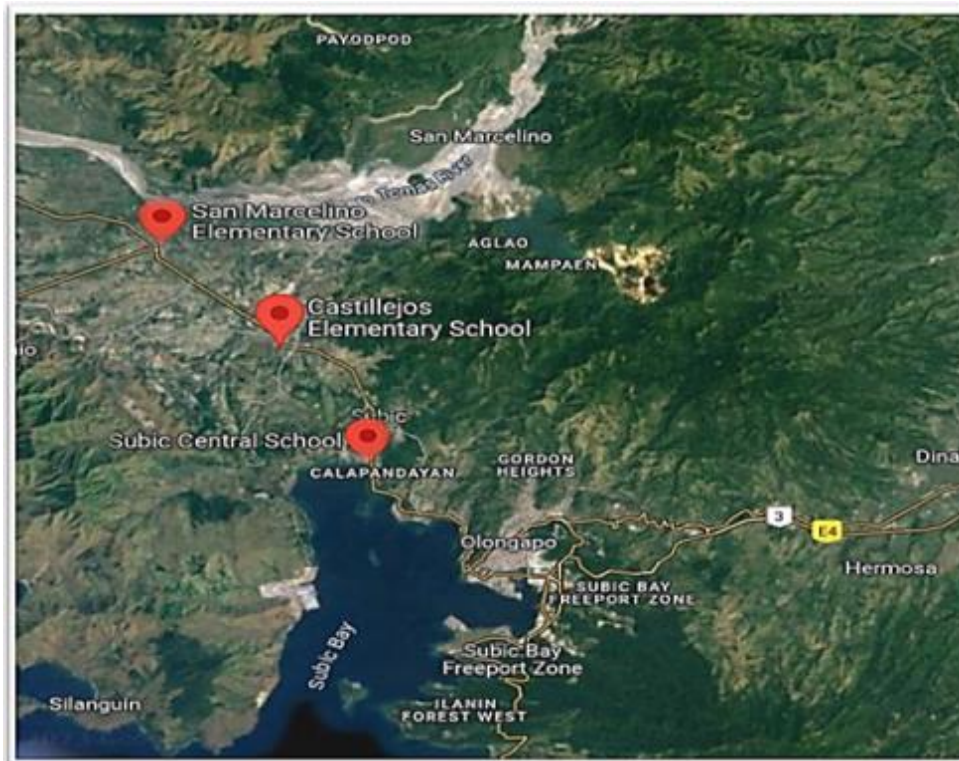


Fig 1 Map of Zambales showing the Location of Central Schools that cater ALS in Zone 4, DepEd, Division of Zambales

➤ *Instrument*

Data was gathered using a researcher-made survey questionnaire consisting of three parts. The first part collected the respondents' demographic profile, including age, sex, location, educational attainment, major, position/designation, and years in teaching. The second part measured the challenges encountered in teaching Junior High School Mathematics in terms of implementation of the topic, monitoring of learning, and evaluation of learning. The third part assessed the opportunities encountered in terms of benefits, job satisfaction, and reinforcement.

The instrument utilized a four-point Likert scale with corresponding verbal interpretations ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire underwent expert validation and reliability testing through Cronbach's Alpha after pilot testing.

➤ *Data Collection*

Prior to data gathering, approval to conduct the study was secured from the Schools Division Office of Zambales through a formal communication letter endorsed by the researcher,

adviser, and graduate school authorities. Upon approval, the survey questionnaire was administered to the identified respondents from the three ALS districts. The researcher personally distributed and retrieved the questionnaires to ensure completeness and accuracy of responses while maintaining ethical standards throughout the data collection process.

➤ *Data Analysis*

Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were employed to analyze the gathered data. Frequency count and percentage were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean was utilized to determine the perceived challenges and opportunities encountered by ALS teachers and implementors in teaching Junior High School Mathematics. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine significant differences in challenges and opportunities when respondents were grouped according to profile variables. Furthermore, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (Pearson-r) was used to determine the relationship between the opportunities and challenges encountered by the respondents. Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Profile of the Respondents

	Profile	Frequency	Percent
Age Mean = 34.09 years old	46- 55 years old	6	15.38
	36 - 45 years old	10	25.64
	26 - 35 years old	13	33.33
	25 years old and below	10	25.64
	Total	39	100.00
Sex	Female	26	66.67
	Male	13	33.33
	Total	39	100.00
Location	Castillejos	12	30.77
	San Marcelino	13	33.33
	Subic	14	35.90
	Total	39	100.00
Major	Agriculture	1	2.56
	CPE units- Social Studies	2	5.13
	Elem- General Ed	16	41.03
	English	1	2.56
	Filipino	5	12.82
	HRM	1	2.56
	MAPEH	2	5.13
	Science	1	2.56
	Social Studies	7	17.95
	TLE	3	7.69
	Total	39	100.00
Educational Attainment	Master's Degree with Doctorate units	1	2.56
	Master's Degree	2	5.13
	Bachelors' degree with units in master's degree	3	7.69
	Bachelor's Degree	33	84.62
	Total	39	100.00
Position	ALS Implementor	29	74.36
	ALS Teacher III	1	2.56
	ALS Teacher II	1	2.56
	ALS Teacher I	8	20.51
	Total	39	100.00
Years in Teaching Mean = 5.24 years	16-20 years	2	5.13
	11-15 years	2	5.13
	6- 10 years	10	25.64
	5 years and below	25	64.10
	Total	39	100.00

Table 1 presents the demographic and professional profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, location, major, educational attainment, position, and years in teaching. Findings revealed that the respondents were predominantly within the 26–35 years old age bracket, with a mean age of 34.09 years, indicating that most were in early to middle adulthood, a stage associated with professional productivity and career development. Female respondents comprised most of the sample, reflecting the continued predominance of women in the teaching profession, particularly in learner-centered educational contexts (UNESCO, 2022). The respondents were proportionately distributed across the districts of Subic, San Marcelino, and Castillejos, which ensured adequate representation of the study locale.

With respect to educational and professional characteristics, most respondents were Elementary Education majors, Bachelor's degree holders, and employed as ALS Implementors. The findings further revealed that a substantial proportion had five years and below teaching experience, with a mean teaching experience of 5.24 years, indicating a relatively novice teaching workforce. This profile suggests that while respondents possess the minimum educational qualifications necessary for instruction, limited specialization and professional experience may influence their capacity to address instructional challenges in teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills. Previous studies have emphasized that teacher qualification, specialization, and teaching experience are significant factors influencing instructional effectiveness and learner outcomes (OECD, 2023; Xie & Cai, 2021).

Table 2 Perception on Challenges Faced by Respondents in Teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills

	AWM	Descriptive Rating	Rank
Implementation of the Topic	2.78	Agree	3
Monitoring of Learning	2.89	Agree	2
Evaluation of Learning	2.92	Agree	1
Overall Weighted Mean	2.86	Agree	

Table 2 presents the summary of respondents' perceptions regarding the opportunities encountered in teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills in ALS. Findings revealed that respondents generally agreed that opportunities existed in mathematics instruction, particularly in job satisfaction and reinforcement, while opportunities in terms of benefits were perceived less favorably. This suggested that despite instructional and institutional difficulties, ALS teachers and implementors continued to derive fulfillment from meaningful learner engagement and professional recognition.

The findings implied that intrinsic motivation, learner appreciation, and collegial support contributed positively to teachers' professional experiences despite limitations in welfare benefits and career advancement opportunities. Recent studies found that meaningful teacher-student relationships and supportive professional environments significantly contributed to teacher motivation and resilience, particularly in alternative and flexible learning systems (Aga, 2023; Castro et al., 2023). Furthermore, Ochoa et al. (2023) emphasized that teachers' instructional commitment was strengthened when institutions provided opportunities for professional growth, recognition, and collaborative engagement.

Table 3 Perception on Opportunities Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills

	AWM	Descriptive Rating	Rank
Benefits	2.36	Disagree	3
Job Satisfaction	3.15	Agree	1
Reinforcements	2.95	Agree	2
Overall Weighted Mean	2.82	Agree	

Table 3 presents the test of significant difference in respondents' perception of challenges encountered in teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills in terms of implementation of the topic when grouped according to profile variables. Findings revealed that no significant differences existed in respondents' perceptions when grouped according to age, sex, educational attainment, major, position, and years in teaching, while location showed a significant difference. This indicated that respondents generally experienced similar instructional challenges regardless of demographic characteristics; however, contextual differences among districts may have influenced the extent of challenges encountered.

The findings suggested that instructional concerns in mathematics teaching within ALS were more likely to be shaped by environmental and institutional factors rather than personal teacher characteristics. Recent studies emphasized that access to learning materials, administrative support, and contextual teaching conditions significantly influenced mathematics instruction in flexible learning settings (Ochoa et al., 2023; Schwartz et al., 2023). Likewise, Aga (2023) emphasized that contextual learning environments affected teachers' capacity to adapt instructional approaches and manage classroom challenges effectively.

Table 4 Test of Significant Difference in Perception on Challenges Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills in terms of Implementation of the Topic When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Source of Variations		df	F	Sig.	Decision/ Interpretation
Age	Between Groups	3	0.75	0.53	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Sex	Between Groups	1	0.00	1.00	Not Significant
	Within Groups	37			
	Total	38			
Location	Between Groups	2	12.09	0.00	Significant
	Within Groups	36			
	Total	38			
Educational Attainment	Between Groups	3	1.29	0.29	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Major	Between Groups	9	1.70	0.13	Not Significant
	Within Groups	29			
	Total	38			
Position	Between Groups	3	1.81	0.16	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Years in teaching	Between Groups	3	1.71	0.18	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			

Table 4 presents the test of significant difference in respondents' perception of challenges encountered in teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills in terms of implementation of the topic when grouped according to profile variables. Findings revealed that no significant differences existed in respondents' perceptions when grouped according to age, sex, educational attainment, major, position, and years in teaching, while location showed a significant difference. This indicated that respondents generally experienced similar instructional challenges regardless of demographic characteristics; however, contextual differences among districts may have influenced the extent of challenges encountered.

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Table 5 Test of Significant Difference in Perception on Challenges Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills in terms of Monitoring of Learning When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Source of Variations		df	F	Sig.	Decision/ Interpretation
Age	Between Groups	3	1.81	0.16	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Sex	Between Groups	1	1.43	0.24	Not Significant
	Within Groups	37			
	Total	38			
Location	Between Groups	2	4.76	0.01	Significant
	Within Groups	36			
	Total	38			
Educational Attainment	Between Groups	3	1.62	0.20	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Major	Between Groups	9	1.83	0.10	Not Significant
	Within Groups	29			
	Total	38			
Position	Between Groups	3	2.11	0.12	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Years in teaching	Between Groups	3	0.46	0.71	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			

Table 5 presents the test of significant difference in respondents' perceptions regarding challenges encountered in monitoring learning when grouped according to profile variables. Findings revealed no significant differences across most profile variables, suggesting that respondents generally encountered similar monitoring-related challenges regardless of demographic characteristics. However, location demonstrated significant variation, implying that differences in district conditions and learner accessibility influenced teachers' monitoring experiences.

This finding suggested that challenges in monitoring learner progress may have been influenced by contextual factors such as learner absenteeism, technological accessibility, and administrative support rather than teacher demographics alone. Recent studies found that monitoring student progress in alternative and flexible educational settings remained difficult due to inconsistent learner participation and limited access to digital resources (Bosica, 2022; Ochoa et al., 2023). Furthermore, teacher preparedness and institutional support had been recognized as important contributors to effective monitoring practices in mathematics instruction (Schwartz et al., 2023).

Table 6 Test of Significant Difference in Perception on Challenges Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills in terms of Evaluation of Learning When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Source of Variations		df	F	Sig.	Decision/ Interpretation
Age	Between Groups	3	2.35	0.09	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Sex	Between Groups	1	0.08	0.78	Not Significant
	Within Groups	37			
	Total	38			
Location	Between Groups	2	8.30	0.00	Significant
	Within Groups	36			
	Total	38			
Educational Attainment	Between Groups	3	1.21	0.32	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Major	Between Groups	9	2.90	0.01	Significant
	Within Groups	29			
	Total	38			
Position	Between Groups	3	2.05	0.12	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Years in teaching	Between Groups	3	1.19	0.33	Not Significant

Table 6 presents the test of significant difference in respondents' perceptions regarding challenges encountered in evaluation of learning when grouped according to profile variables. Findings revealed no significant differences across most demographic categories, while location showed significant variation. This indicated that respondents generally shared similar perceptions regarding evaluation challenges regardless of personal characteristics, although environmental differences across districts affected assessment experiences.

The findings suggested that difficulties in learner evaluation were influenced more by instructional context than teacher profile. Recent literature emphasized that mathematics teachers in alternative educational settings often encountered challenges in developing fair, individualized, and contextualized assessment strategies due to learner diversity and inconsistent participation (Aga, 2023; Ochoa et al., 2023). Likewise, contextualized professional development had been identified as essential in strengthening teachers' assessment competence and instructional confidence (Schwartz et al., 2023).

Table 7 Test of Significant Difference in Perception on the Opportunities Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills in Terms of Benefits When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Source of Variations		df	F	Sig.	Decision/ Interpretation
Age	Between Groups	3	3.71	0.02	Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Sex	Between Groups	1	0.29	0.60	Not Significant
	Within Groups	37			
	Total	38			
Location	Between Groups	2	8.22	0.00	Significant
	Within Groups	36			
	Total	38			
Educational Attainment	Between Groups	3	1.33	0.28	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Major	Between Groups	9	1.00	0.46	Not Significant
	Within Groups	29			
	Total	38			
Position	Between Groups	3	3.04	0.04	Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Years in teaching	Between Groups	3	1.46	0.24	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			

Table 7 presents the test of significant differences in respondents' perceptions regarding opportunities encountered in terms of benefits when grouped according to profile variables. Findings revealed no significant differences across age, sex, educational attainment, major, position, and years in teaching, while location demonstrated significant variation. This indicated that respondents generally perceived similar concerns regarding benefits, although workplace context may have influenced opportunities related to welfare support, promotion, and employment security.

Recent studies emphasized that teacher motivation and instructional effectiveness were strongly associated with institutional support systems, employment stability, and access to professional benefits (Castro et al., 2023; Schwartz et al., 2023). In alternative learning environments, teacher welfare and organizational support remain important factors influencing professional commitment and instructional quality.

Table 8 Test of Significant Difference in Perception on Opportunities Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Mathematical and Problem -Solving Skills in terms of Students Achievements When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Source of Variations		df	F	Sig.	Decision/ Interpretation
Age	Between Groups	3	0.28	0.84	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Sex	Between Groups	1	0.82	0.37	Not Significant
	Within Groups	37			
	Total	38			
Location	Between Groups	2	0.35	0.70	Not Significant
	Within Groups	36			
	Total	38			
Educational Attainment	Between Groups	3	4.29	0.01	Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Major	Between Groups	9	2.15	0.06	Not Significant
	Within Groups	29			
	Total	38			
Position	Between Groups	3	0.29	0.83	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Years in teaching	Between Groups	3	0.68	0.57	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			

Table 8 presents the test of significant difference in respondents' perceptions regarding opportunities encountered in terms of job satisfaction when grouped according to profile variables. Findings revealed no significant differences across demographic categories except for location, indicating that respondents generally experienced similar levels of job satisfaction regardless of profile characteristics.

This finding suggested that professional fulfillment among ALS teachers and implementors had been consistently experienced despite variations in age, sex, and teaching experience. Recent studies emphasized that meaningful learner interaction, collegial support, and professional engagement contributed positively to teacher job satisfaction in flexible educational settings (Aga, 2023; Castro et al., 2023). These factors may have contributed to respondents' positive perceptions despite institutional limitations.

Table 9 Test of Significant Difference in Perception on Opportunities Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills in Terms of Reinforcements When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Source of Variations		df	F	Sig.	Decision/ Interpretation
Age	Between Groups	3	1.07	0.37	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Sex	Between Groups	1	0.21	0.65	Not Significant
	Within Groups	37			
	Total	38			
Location	Between Groups	2	3.90	0.03	Significant
	Within Groups	36			
	Total	38			
Educational Attainment	Between Groups	3	1.02	0.40	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Major	Between Groups	9	0.65	0.75	Not Significant
	Within Groups	29			
	Total	38			
Position	Between Groups	3	0.70	0.56	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			
Years in teaching	Between Groups	3	0.24	0.87	Not Significant
	Within Groups	35			
	Total	38			

Table 9 presents the test of significant difference in respondents’ perceptions regarding opportunities encountered in terms of reinforcements when grouped according to profile variables. Findings revealed no significant differences across most demographic categories, while location showed significant variation. This indicated that respondents generally experienced comparable levels of recognition and reinforcement regardless of profile variables.

The findings implied that positive feedback, appreciation, and recognition remained important motivational factors among ALS teachers and implementors. Recent literature emphasized that supportive professional environments and institutional recognition positively influenced teacher morale, instructional confidence, and professional resilience in alternative learning settings (Bosica, 2022; Aga, 2023).

Table 10 Test of Significant Relationship between Perception on the Challenges and Opportunities Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills

Source of Correlations		Opportunities	Decision/ Interpretation
Challenges	Pearson Correlation	-0.407*	Low Relationship Reject Ho Significant
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.010	
	N	39	
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Table 10 presents the test of significant relationship between respondents’ perceptions regarding challenges and opportunities encountered in teaching Mathematical and Problem-Solving Skills. Findings revealed a significant but low

negative relationship, implying that as opportunities increased, challenges tended to decrease, although the relationship remained weak.

The findings suggested that increased professional support, reinforcement, and job satisfaction may have contributed to minimizing instructional difficulties encountered by ALS teachers and implementors. Recent studies emphasized that supportive workplace conditions, teacher efficacy, and meaningful professional engagement positively influenced instructional performance and reduced work-related stress among mathematics educators (Bosica, 2022; Aga, 2023). Thus, strengthening institutional support systems may help reduce challenges experienced in ALS mathematics instruction.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that ALS teachers and Community ALS Implementors in Zone IV, Division of Zambales generally encountered challenges in teaching Junior High School Mathematics, particularly in the evaluation of learning, monitoring of learning, and implementation of topics. Difficulties were primarily associated with learner diversity, absenteeism, limited instructional materials, and challenges in designing appropriate assessment strategies for multi-level learners. Despite these concerns, respondents reported positive opportunities in terms of job satisfaction and reinforcement, although institutional benefits such as promotion opportunities, security of tenure, and welfare support were perceived as inadequate.

Moreover, findings revealed that demographic variables generally did not significantly influence the challenges and opportunities encountered by respondents, except for location, suggesting that contextual factors affect instructional experiences in ALS settings. The significant but low negative relationship between opportunities and challenges further implies that enhanced institutional support, professional development, and teacher recognition may help reduce instructional difficulties. Thus, strengthening teacher support systems, contextualized mathematics training, and learner-centered assessment strategies is essential to improve the quality of mathematics instruction within the Alternative Learning System.

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