

The Influence of a Peer Support Intervention on the Academic Performance of Grade 8 Students with Academic Delays

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Abstract. This study determined the influence of a peer support intervention on the academic performance of Grade 8 students with academic delays at Inayawan National High School, Inayawan, Cebu City, Philippines. The researcher assessed the students' academic performance through pre-tests and posttests and gathered their learning experiences using survey questionnaires and focus group discussions. A mixed-method explanatory sequential design was utilized to determine the significant mean gain between the pre-test and posttest performances of the students and to validate the quantitative findings through qualitative data. The results showed a significant improvement in the students' academic performance after the implementation of the peer support intervention. Moreover, the posttest results revealed a positive mean gain compared to the pre-test, indicating the effectiveness of the intervention. The study also found that peer support improved students' understanding of lessons, confidence, motivation, participation, and peer interaction. These results proved that the peer support intervention is an effective strategy for enhancing the academic performance and learning experiences of students with academic delays. For sustainability, the proposed Enhanced Peer Support Plan should be implemented continuously to strengthen and provide inclusive and meaningful learning opportunities for struggling learners.

Keywords: Academic Delays; Academic Performance; Explanatory-Sequential Design; Grade 8 Students; Peer Support Intervention

Introduction

Academic performance is a fundamental indicator of learners' educational progress because it reflects the extent to which students acquire and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and competencies prescribed in the curriculum. In the Philippine basic education system, classroom assessment is an integral component of curriculum implementation because it enables teachers to gather evidence of learners' progress, determine the extent to which learning competencies have been achieved, and make appropriate instructional decisions (Department of Education [DepEd], 2015a). DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015, Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program, provides the policy framework for assessing learners through formative and summative assessment practices. These assessment processes are intended not only to measure learning outcomes but also to provide information that can guide teachers, learners, and parents in addressing identified learning needs (DepEd, 2015a, 2015b). The COVID-19 pandemic, however, significantly disrupted educational systems worldwide and intensified existing inequalities in access to learning opportunities. Prolonged school closures resulted in substantial changes in instructional delivery as education systems adopted various forms of distance and remote learning to maintain educational continuity (UNESCO, 2020a, 2023). Although distance learning provided an alternative means of continuing instruction, its effectiveness was influenced by students' access to technology, connectivity, appropriate learning resources, teacher support, parental or caregiver assistance, and mechanisms for monitoring learning progress (UNESCO, 2020b). These challenges were particularly consequential for learners who already experienced academic difficulties or had limited resources to support learning outside the classroom. UNESCO (2024) further emphasized that the pandemic exacerbated the pre-existing learning crisis in the Asia-Pacific region, resulting in persistent concerns regarding learning achievement, learning gaps, and the need for targeted learning recovery interventions.

The Philippine educational context similarly experienced significant disruption during the pandemic. The transition from face-to-face instruction to modular distance learning, online learning, and other alternative delivery modalities enabled schools to continue providing educational services despite the suspension of regular classroom instruction. Nevertheless, disparities in access to connectivity, devices, instructional resources, and learning support created additional challenges for learners. These circumstances underscore the importance of identifying learners' specific academic needs and implementing responsive interventions that can help address learning gaps and improve academic outcomes. Within Inayawan National (Night) High School, the academic performance of Grade 8 learners provides a particular context for examining such learning needs. School records indicate that the Grade 8 learners obtained a Mathematics Mean Percentage Score (MPS) of 47.47 during the first grading period and 45.96 during the second grading period. These results indicate a need for sustained instructional support, particularly in Mathematics, where learners are expected to progressively develop conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, problem-solving abilities, and the capacity to apply mathematical knowledge to varied situations. The situation may be further complicated by the circumstances of learners enrolled in the night school program, some of whom reportedly engage in work or other daytime responsibilities before attending evening classes. Such circumstances may constrain the time available for independent study and academic preparation. However, the extent to which these conditions influence academic performance should be examined empirically rather than assumed. One promising approach to addressing learners' academic difficulties is structured peer support. Peer-based learning approaches provide opportunities for students to interact, explain concepts, exchange feedback, practice skills, and learn collaboratively with classmates. Research syntheses have generally reported positive relationships between peer tutoring or peer instruction and academic achievement. For example, Bowman-Perrott et al. (2013) found moderate to large academic benefits associated with peer tutoring among students in Grades 1–12. Similarly, a meta-analysis by Öz (2024) reported a significant positive effect of peer instruction on academic achievement, while Leung (2019) found that structured peer tutoring could also produce academic benefits for student tutors. In Mathematics specifically, Alegre et al. (2020) reported significant improvements in students' mathematics achievement following a peer-tutoring intervention involving both primary and secondary learners. These findings suggest that peer-based interventions may provide a viable mechanism for supporting learners who experience academic difficulties.

The effectiveness of peer support, however, may depend on how systematically the intervention is designed and implemented. Informal peer assistance may occur naturally in classrooms, but structured peer support provides defined roles, learning objectives, activities, schedules, monitoring procedures, and mechanisms for feedback and evaluation. Previous research has also indicated that characteristics of peer-tutoring programs, including the structure of the intervention, the characteristics of tutors and tutees, the subject area, and the duration and organization of tutoring activities, may influence outcomes (Leung, 2019). Consequently, rather than treating peer assistance as an informal classroom practice, there is a need to examine its effectiveness when implemented through a clearly defined and contextually appropriate intervention. Despite the growing evidence supporting peer-based learning, a contextual gap remains concerning the systematic use of structured peer support to address academic delays among Grade 8 learners in a Philippine night-school setting, particularly in Mathematics. At Inayawan National (Night) High School, peer support activities may already occur as part of classroom interaction; however, these practices have not been systematically organized into a structured intervention and empirically evaluated in relation to the academic performance of learners experiencing academic delays. Addressing this gap is important because evidence from a school-based intervention can provide practical information for teachers and school administrators regarding the feasibility, effectiveness, and potential sustainability of peer support as a learning recovery strategy.

This study examines the influence of a structured peer support intervention on the academic performance of Grade 8 students with academic delays at Inayawan National (Night) High School, Division of Cebu City, during School Year 2026–2027. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether participation in the structured peer support intervention is associated with improved academic performance and to use the findings as a basis for developing an enhanced peer support plan. The proposed intervention is intended to provide an organized and evidence-informed approach to addressing learners' academic needs while offering teachers and school administrators a practical basis for strengthening learner support mechanisms within the school.

Research Questions

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a Peer Support Intervention in improving the academic performance of Grade 8 students with academic delays at Inayawan National High School during the Third Quarter of the School Year 2025–2026 as the basis for crafting an enhanced peer support plan.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions;

1. What is the pre-test performance of the respondents?
2. After the peer support program was used as an intervention, what is the post-test performance of the respondents?
3. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test performance?
4. How do learners with academic delays and peer supporters describe their experiences in participating in the peer support program and its influence on their learning in terms of;
 - 4.1 Understanding of Lessons,
 - 4.2 Confidence in Learning,
 - 4.3 Motivation and Participation, and
 - 4.4 Peer Interaction
5. Based on the findings, what enhancements can be made to better address the academic delays of Grade 8 students?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a Peer Support Intervention in improving the academic performance of Grade 8 students with academic delays at Inayawan National (Night) High School, Division of Cebu City, during the Third Quarter of the School Year 2025–2026. It focused on the implementation of peer support intervention and its influence on students' pre-test and post-test academic performance, learning experiences, and the development of an enhanced peer support plan. The study was limited to selected Grade 8 students with academic delays and their peer supporters in the identified school and did not include other grade levels, schools, or factors beyond the intervention that may influence academic performance.

Literature Review

Peer Support Program

A peer support program is an educational intervention that promotes structured collaboration among students to enhance academic achievement, improve learning engagement, and develop positive interpersonal relationships. Recent studies have demonstrated that peer-assisted learning provides struggling learners with individualized academic assistance, immediate feedback, and opportunities for collaborative problem-solving, resulting in improved academic outcomes (Elshami et al., 2020; Bell et al., 2023). Likewise, Santhanalakshmi and Naomi (2021) reported that peer-assisted learning promotes inclusive classroom practices by encouraging active participation and cooperative learning among students with diverse learning needs. More recently, Amankwah and Akwaboah (2025) found that peer-assisted learning significantly influences students' academic achievement, with students' attitudes serving as an important mediating factor. Similarly, Lin et al. (2025) emphasized that structured peer tutoring enhances academic performance by fostering collaborative learning and increasing learners' engagement and confidence.

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory explains that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and interaction with others. Students do not only learn through direct instruction but also by observing the behaviors, strategies, and performances of their peers. In peer support programs, classmates serve as models who demonstrate academic skills, problem-solving strategies, and effective learning behaviors. For students experiencing academic delays, observing successful peers can strengthen self-efficacy, or the belief that they are capable of completing academic tasks, which encourages greater participation and effort. Supporting this perspective, studies on peer-assisted learning show that students improve academically when they are given opportunities to observe, practice, and receive guidance from peers. Fuchs and Fuchs' research on Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) found that structured peer tutoring enhances reading and mathematics achievement among struggling learners by providing repeated practice, immediate feedback, and supportive interaction. These findings demonstrate that peer modeling and collaborative learning experiences can contribute significantly to improving students' academic performance.

Social Constructivism

Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory emphasizes that learning develops through social interaction and collaboration. A central concept of this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between what learners can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with the assistance of more knowledgeable individuals. In peer support programs, capable classmates serve as

learning partners who provide guidance, explanations, and scaffolding to help students overcome academic difficulties. Research indicates that peer-assisted learning supports students' understanding by allowing them to exchange ideas, receive feedback, and construct knowledge through meaningful interaction. Collins (1991) emphasized that learning becomes more effective when students observe strategies, practice skills, and receive guidance throughout the learning process. Similarly, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory explains that students become more motivated when their needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are fulfilled. Peer support addresses these needs by helping learners experience academic success, build positive relationships with classmates, and develop greater confidence in their abilities.

Social Interdependence Theory

Social Interdependence Theory, developed by David and Roger Johnson, explains that students achieve better learning outcomes when they recognize that their success is connected to the success of their peers. Positive interdependence encourages students to cooperate, share responsibilities, and support one another in achieving common academic goals. In peer support settings, students work together through assigned roles, shared tasks, and mutual assistance, creating an environment where learning becomes a collective responsibility. Research by Johnson and Johnson (1989) shows that cooperative learning improves academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, and students' attitudes toward learning. Positive interdependence allows students with academic delays to receive continuous support, practice skills repeatedly, and develop confidence through meaningful peer interaction. Therefore, peer support programs provide both academic and social benefits by transforming learning activities from individual challenges into collaborative experiences.

Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Literacy and numeracy skills remain fundamental competencies that influence students' overall academic success. Learners with academic delays often require structured interventions that provide repeated practice, immediate feedback, and individualized support. Recent evidence suggests that peer tutoring significantly improves learners' reading comprehension, mathematical reasoning, and problem-solving abilities. Gubalani et al. (2023) reported that peer tutoring effectively enhanced the reading comprehension of struggling learners through collaborative learning activities. Likewise, Macapayad et al. (2024) found that peer tutoring improved students' mathematical problem-solving performance by encouraging active participation and cooperative learning. Muitange (2024) further concluded that middle school students who participated in structured peer tutoring demonstrated higher academic achievement than those who received conventional classroom instruction.

Academic Performance

Academic performance reflects students' mastery of competencies and serves as an indicator of learning achievement. Recent empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that peer-assisted learning contributes to improved academic performance among learners experiencing academic difficulties. Arthur (2022) reported that peer-assisted learning positively influenced students' academic achievement by increasing classroom participation and collaborative engagement. Similarly, Wang et al. (2022) found that peer mentoring improved students' academic confidence and learning experiences through structured collaboration and continuous academic support. Furthermore, Ompad and Jacobe (2025) revealed that students who actively participated in peer tutoring exhibited significantly higher academic motivation in Mathematics, suggesting that peer-assisted learning positively affects both achievement and motivation. These findings were further supported by Amankwah and Akwaboah (2025), who concluded that peer-assisted learning significantly improves academic achievement when students demonstrate positive attitudes toward collaborative learning.

Inclusive Education and Policy Framework

The implementation of peer support programs aligns with the Philippine educational system's commitment to inclusive and equitable education. Republic Act No. 11650 (2022) strengthens inclusive education by ensuring that learners with disabilities and other learning needs receive appropriate educational support and services. Likewise, DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015 emphasizes continuous classroom assessment and intervention for learners experiencing academic difficulties. Recent studies also support the role of peer-assisted learning in inclusive classrooms. Santhanalakshmi (2021) concluded that peer-assisted learning effectively improves the academic achievement of students with learning disabilities by increasing engagement and providing individualized assistance. Bell et al. (2023) likewise emphasized that structured peer tutoring creates supportive learning environments that enhance both academic and social outcomes among diverse learners. The reviewed literature demonstrates that peer-assisted learning and peer tutoring are effective interventions for improving students' academic performance, literacy, numeracy, motivation, and learning engagement. Recent studies consistently report that structured peer support enhances learners'

academic achievement by providing opportunities for collaborative learning, immediate feedback, and meaningful social interaction (Elshami et al., 2020; Santhanalakshmi & Naomi, 2021; Arthur, 2022; Bell et al., 2023; Gubalani et al., 2023; Macapayad et al., 2024; Muitange, 2024; Amankwah & Akwaboah, 2025; Lin et al., 2025; Ompad & Jacobe, 2025). These studies likewise emphasize that peer support contributes not only to improved academic outcomes but also to increased confidence, motivation, classroom participation, and positive relationships among learners.

Despite these encouraging findings, there remains limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of structured peer support interventions among Grade 8 students with academic delays in Philippine public secondary schools, particularly in night high schools. Most existing studies have focused on elementary learners, higher education, or general education settings, with limited attention given to students who experience academic difficulties while simultaneously facing economic and social challenges outside the classroom. This research gap is particularly evident in the context of Inayawan National (Night) High School, where many learners come from economically disadvantaged families and are compelled to work while pursuing their education. Some students earn a living by driving electric tricycles (e-trikes), while others assist their families in collecting, sorting, and selling recyclable materials from the nearby landfill. Their earnings are often used to help meet their families' basic daily needs. Because of these responsibilities, many students arrive at school physically exhausted, emotionally stressed, or without having eaten, making it difficult for them to concentrate during lessons, participate actively in classroom activities, and perform well in academic assessments. As a result, some learners are identified as Learners at Risk of Dropping Out (LARDO), while others gradually lose interest in their studies as they prioritize work to support their families. Although previous studies have established the academic benefits of peer-assisted learning, few have examined how a structured peer support intervention can address the unique educational realities of working learners in a public night high school. Moreover, limited studies have explored both the measurable improvement in academic performance and the lived learning experiences of students with academic delays through a mixed-method explanatory sequential approach. These gaps provided the rationale for the present study. By examining the influence of a peer support intervention on the academic performance and learning experiences of Grade 8 students with academic delays at Inayawan National High School, this study seeks to generate context-specific evidence that may guide schools in developing sustainable, inclusive, and responsive intervention programs for learners facing both academic and socioeconomic challenges.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically an explanatory-sequential approach, to examine the effectiveness of a peer support program in improving students' academic engagement and learning experiences. According to Creswell and Creswell (2020), an explanatory-sequential design involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to further explain and interpret the initial findings. This approach allows researchers to determine measurable changes in students' academic performance before and after the implementation of the intervention and to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the support they received. The mixed-methods design is appropriate for this study as it provides a comprehensive understanding of both the outcomes and underlying experiences related to the peer support program. By combining statistical results with students' personal perspectives, the study aims to explain how and why peer support influences academic engagement, motivation, and adjustment in the learning environment.

Sampling Design

The study employed a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used to deliberately select respondents who met the established criteria of the study, particularly Grade 8 students identified with academic delay at Inayawan National High School. The selection was based on their previous academic performance, wherein students who obtained a general average below 75 or had failing grades in at least two subjects during the previous grading period were included as participants. A total of 50 students from the seven Grade 8 sections were selected as respondents of the study. This sampling technique was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gather data from participants who possessed the specific characteristics needed to address the objectives of the study and evaluate the effectiveness of the peer support intervention among learners experiencing academic

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Inayawan National High School (INHS), located along F. Jaca Street, Sitio Issa, Barangay Inayawan, Cebu City, Cebu, Philippines. The school offers education from Grades 7 to 12

and has a total enrollment of 1,881 learners for the School Year 2025–2026. The respondents were selected Grade 8 students identified with academic delays based on their academic performance in Mathematics. The study focused on implementing a peer support program to address students' learning difficulties and examined its influence on their academic performance, engagement, and learning experiences.

Research Participants

This study included selected Grade 8 students of Inayawan National High School during the School Year 2025–2026. The total population consisted of seven Grade 8 sections; however, only students identified as experiencing academic delay were included as respondents. Academic delay was determined based on students who obtained a general average below 75 or received failing grades in at least two subjects during the previous grading period. Using purposive sampling, a total of 50 students who met the inclusion criteria were selected to participate in the study. The respondents were distributed across seven sections, namely Rose (8), Bloom (6), Lotus (7), Lily (6), Chrysanthemum (7), Daisy (7), and Azalea (9), representing 16%, 12%, 14%, 12%, 14%, 14%, and 18% of the total respondents, respectively. Since all participants were minors, ethical procedures were strictly observed before their participation in the study. Written Informed Consent Forms were secured from the parents or legal guardians of the participants, while Assent Forms were obtained from the students themselves. The purpose of the study, research procedures, potential benefits and minimal risks, confidentiality of information, voluntary participation, and the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty were clearly explained to both the parents or guardians and the student participants before the commencement of data collection.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire, focus group discussion (FGD) guide questions, and teacher-made multiple-choice tests as research instruments. The survey and FGD guide questions were used to gather students' perceptions and experiences regarding the peer support intervention, while the teacher-made tests assessed students' academic performance before and after the implementation of the program. The test instruments were validated by the Master Teachers and Subject Coordinators of Inayawan National High School to ensure their alignment with the Revised K to 12 Curriculum. A pretest and posttest were administered to measure changes in students' learning outcomes, while selected participants joined the FGD to provide deeper insights into their experiences with the intervention. Prior to administering the research instruments, the researcher secured signed Informed Consent Forms from the parents or legal guardians and Assent Forms from the student participants. Only those who voluntarily agreed to participate and whose parents or guardians provided written consent were included in the study. The confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were maintained throughout the data collection process.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure of the study was conducted in three phases: pre-gathering, gathering, and post-gathering phases. During the pre-gathering phase, the researcher identified the research problem, formulated the research questions, selected the appropriate research design, and prepared the necessary research instruments, including the teacher-made test, survey questionnaire, and FGD guide questions. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Cebu City to ensure compliance with institutional policies and ethical research standards. Since the participants were minors, Informed Consent Forms were distributed to and signed by the parents or legal guardians, while Assent Forms were accomplished by the student participants before the conduct of the study. The researcher explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality of responses, and the participants' right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. During the gathering phase, the researcher administered the pretest before the implementation of the Peer Support Program and the posttest after the intervention to measure changes in students' academic performance. A colleague assisted in administering the instruments, while the researcher monitored the process to ensure proper implementation and consistency in data collection. After the intervention, students answered the survey questionnaire, and ten (10) purposively selected respondents participated in the FGD to share their experiences and perceptions regarding the program. During the post-gathering phase, the collected quantitative and qualitative data were organized, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools and Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. The results were then used as the basis for drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations for the study.

Results and Discussions

Research Question: What is the pre-test performance of the respondents?

Table 1. Pretest performance results

Verbal Description	f	%
Did not meet expectations	50	100.0 %
Fairly Satisfactory	0	0.0%
Satisfactory	0	0.0 %
Very Satisfactory	0	0.0 %
Outstanding	0	0.0 %
		Mean 12.29
		Median 12.0
		Std. Dev. 6.65

Table 1 shows the pre-test performance of the Grade 8 students based on the performance descriptors of DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015. The results revealed that all 50 students (100%) were classified under "Did Not Meet Expectations," with no students reaching the higher performance levels. The mean score of 12.9, median of 12.0, and standard deviation of 6.65 indicate that the respondents generally had low academic performance, with only slight differences in individual scores. This suggests that the students had existing learning gaps and required additional academic support before the implementation of the intervention. The findings support the importance of peer support programs, as previous studies emphasized that structured peer interaction can improve learners' engagement, confidence, and academic achievement. However, effective implementation requires proper guidance and organization to ensure that peer assistance addresses students' learning needs. Considering the challenges experienced by many learners, including financial difficulties, work responsibilities, and limited time for academic tasks, the Peer Support Intervention serves as a valuable strategy by providing academic assistance, motivation, and emotional support. Through collaborative learning and peer guidance, students may develop better understanding of lessons and improve their academic performance despite the challenges they encounter.

Research Question 2: After the peer support program was used as an intervention, what is the post-test performance of the respondents?

Table 2: Post-Test Performance Results

Verbal Description	f	%
Did not meet expectations	38	76.0 %
Fairly Satisfactory	0	0.0%
Satisfactory	2	4.0 %
Very Satisfactory	5	10.0 %
Outstanding	5	10.0 %
		Mean 23.4
		Median 21.0
		Std. Dev. 12.95

Table 2 shows the post-test performance of the Grade 8 students after the implementation of the Peer Support Intervention. The results revealed that 38 students (76%) remained under "Did Not Meet Expectations," while some learners improved and reached higher levels, including "Satisfactory" (4%), "Very Satisfactory" (10%), and "Outstanding" (10%). The increase in the mean score to 23.4 and median score of 21.0 indicates an improvement in students' academic performance after the intervention, although the standard deviation of 12.95 shows variations in the level of improvement among learners. These findings suggest that the Peer Support Intervention was beneficial in helping some students enhance their learning outcomes; however, additional strategies are still needed to support learners who continue to experience

academic difficulties. The results are consistent with studies emphasizing that peer-assisted learning can improve engagement, motivation, and achievement, but its effectiveness depends on proper guidance and continuous support. Therefore, strengthening the peer support program through an enhanced intervention plan and additional school-based support mechanisms may further help students with academic delays improve their performance and achieve better learning outcomes.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test performance?

Table 3. Test of Significant Difference between the Pre-test and Post-test Performance

	Wilcoxon W Statistic	p- value	Mean Difference	SE difference	95% Confidence Interval		Significance	Results
					Lower	Upper		
Pre- test Post- Test	0.00	<0.001	-10.0	0.912	-12.0	-8.00	Significant	Reject H ₀

Table 3 shows the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the Grade 8 students using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. The results revealed a Wilcoxon W value of 0.00 and a p-value of less than 0.001, indicating a significant improvement in students' academic performance after the implementation of the Peer Support Intervention. The mean difference of -10.0 confirms that post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores, while the confidence interval further supports the presence of a meaningful difference. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, showing that the intervention had a positive effect on students' learning outcomes. These findings indicate that peer support is an effective strategy in improving the performance of learners with academic delays, although continuous guidance and additional interventions are still needed to support students who require further assistance.

Research Question 4: How do learners with academic delays and peer supporters describe their experiences in participating in the peer support program and its influence on their learning in terms of Understanding of Lessons, confidence in Learning, Motivation and Participation, and Peer Interaction?

Table 4. Learners' Experiences in the Peer Support Program in Terms of Understanding of Lessons

	Statements	Mean	Median	SD	Verbal Description
1.	My classmate (peer buddy) helps me understand the lesson better.	4.50	4.50	0.52	Strongly Agree
2.	It is easier for me to learn when my classmate explains the lesson.	4.50	4.50	0.52	Strongly Agree
3.	I can ask questions freely to my peer buddy.	4.28	4.00	0.54	Strongly Agree
	Composite	4.43	4.00	0.53	Strongly Agree

Table 4 shows the students' perceptions of their understanding of lessons while working with a peer buddy. The results revealed that all statements obtained high mean scores ranging from 4.28 to 4.50, interpreted as "Strongly Agree." The statements "My peer buddy helped me understand the lesson better" and "Learning became easier because of my peer buddy" both obtained the highest mean of 4.50 with a median of 4.50 and a standard deviation of 0.52, indicating that most students consistently perceived peer support as beneficial in improving their understanding of the lessons. Meanwhile, the statement "I felt free to ask questions to my peer buddy" obtained the lowest mean of 4.28, which is still interpreted as "Strongly Agree," suggesting that students were comfortable seeking clarification from their peers. The composite mean of 4.43 indicates that students strongly agreed that the Peer Support Intervention enhanced their learning experience by improving lesson comprehension and encouraging collaborative learning. These findings support previous studies showing that structured peer interaction promotes better understanding, active participation, and increased confidence among learners.

Table 5. Learners' Experiences in the Peer Support Program in Terms of Confidence in learning

Statements	Mean	Median	SD	Verbal Description
1. I feel more confident in answering questions in class.	4.12	4.00	0.69	Agree
2. I am not afraid to share my ideas during activities.	3.64	4.00	0.66	Agree
3. My peer buddy helps me feel comfortable in learning.	4.50	4.50	0.51	Strongly Agree
Composite	4.09	4.00	0.62	Agree

Table 5 shows that students generally agreed that the peer support intervention improved their confidence in learning, with a composite mean of 4.09. The highest-rated statement, "My peer buddy helps me feel comfortable in learning" ($M = 4.50$), indicates that students felt more at ease and supported when learning alongside their peers. Meanwhile, the lowest-rated statement, "I am not afraid to share my ideas during activities" ($M = 3.64$), although still interpreted as agree, suggests that some students remain hesitant to express themselves despite the support provided. Overall, the findings imply that peer support positively enhances students' confidence, participation, and classroom engagement, while highlighting the need for continued encouragement to help learners develop greater self-confidence in sharing their thoughts and ideas during learning activities.

Table 6. Learners' Experiences in the Peer Support Program in Terms of Motivation and Participation

Statements	Mean	Median	SD	Verbal Description
1. I feel more motivated to study because of my peer buddy.	4.50	4.50	0.51	Strongly Agree
2. I participate more in class activities.	4.46	4.00	0.50	Strongly Agree
3. I enjoy learning when working with my classmates.	4.50	4.50	0.51	Strongly Agree
Composite	4.49	4.00	0.50	Strongly Agree

Table 6 shows that students strongly agreed that the peer support intervention enhanced their motivation and participation in learning, with a composite mean of 4.49. The highest-rated statements, "I feel more motivated to study because of my peer buddy" and "I enjoy learning when working with my classmates" ($M = 4.50$), indicate that peer support increased students' enthusiasm for learning and made classroom activities more enjoyable. Meanwhile, the statement "I participate more in class activities" ($M = 4.46$), although slightly lower, was also interpreted as strongly agree, suggesting that students became more actively involved in classroom discussions and learning tasks. Overall, the findings imply that peer support positively promotes students' motivation, active participation, and enjoyment of learning, creating a more engaging and collaborative classroom environment.

Table 7. Learners' Experiences in the Peer Support Program in Terms of Peer Interaction

Statements	Mean	Median	SD	Verbal Description
1. I can easily communicate with my peer buddy.	4.50	4.50	0.51	Strongly Agree
2. I feel supported by my classmates.	4.32	4.00	0.47	Strongly Agree
3. We help each other during class activities.	4.50	4.50	0.51	Strongly Agree
Composite	4.44	4.00	0.49	Strongly Agree

Table 7 shows that students strongly agreed that the peer support intervention promoted positive peer interaction, with a composite mean of 4.44. The highest-rated statements, "I can easily communicate with my peer buddy" and "We help each other during class activities" ($M = 4.50$), indicate that students experienced open communication and mutual cooperation during learning activities. Meanwhile, the statement "I feel supported by my classmates" ($M = 4.32$), although slightly lower, was still interpreted as strongly agree, suggesting that students generally felt encouraged and assisted by their peers. Overall, the findings imply that peer support fostered effective communication, collaboration, and a supportive classroom environment, strengthening positive relationships among students.

Table 8. Summary of the Peer Support Intervention

Statements	Mean	Median	SD	Verbal Description
Understanding of Lessons	4.43	4.00	0.50	Strongly Agree
Confidence in Learning	4.09	4.00	0.62	Agree
Motivation and Participation	4.49	4.00	0.50	Strongly Agree
Peer Interaction	4.44	4.00	0.49	Strongly Agree
Overall Composite	4.36	4.00	0.53	Agree

Table 8 shows that students gave a positive evaluation of the peer support intervention, with a composite mean of 4.36, interpreted as Strongly Agree. Among the four indicators, Motivation and Participation obtained the highest mean (4.49), followed by Peer Interaction (4.44) and Understanding of Lessons (4.43), all interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicating that the intervention effectively increased students' engagement, collaboration, and understanding of lessons. Meanwhile, Confidence in Learning obtained the lowest mean (4.09), interpreted as Agree, suggesting that although students became more confident, they may still need continued encouragement to fully develop their self-confidence. Overall, the findings indicate that the peer support intervention was effective in promoting academic engagement, improving classroom interaction, and creating a supportive learning environment, demonstrating its potential as a valuable school-based strategy for assisting students with academic delays.

Research Question 5: Based on the findings, what enhancements can be made to better address the academic delays of Grade 8 students?

An enhancement that can be proposed is an improved and structured Peer Support Enhancement Program that directly addresses the identified academic delays of Grade 8 students by strengthening peer-assisted learning through trained peer supporters, extended intervention sessions, targeted academic activities, and continuous monitoring of learner progress. This enhancement focuses on creating a more effective and sustainable support system that improves students' understanding of lessons, confidence in learning, motivation, participation, and peer interaction. By integrating guided peer tutoring, teacher supervision, remedial activities, and additional learner support services, the program can provide a more inclusive and responsive learning environment that helps struggling students overcome academic challenges and achieve improved academic outcomes.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical standards in educational research to ensure the protection, privacy, and welfare of all participants. Proper permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned school authorities, and informed consent was secured from all participants after explaining the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to participate voluntarily or withdraw at any time without consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed by protecting participants' identities through coding procedures and ensuring that no personal information was disclosed in the analysis and reporting of results. All collected data, responses, and records were handled with strict confidentiality and were used solely for the purpose of this research. The management, storage, and processing of information followed the principles of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) to prevent unauthorized access, disclosure, or misuse of participants' information. The study also ensured that participants were not exposed to any physical, psychological, or emotional harm, while ethical principles of fairness, respect, objectivity, and academic integrity were maintained throughout the research process.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the Peer Support Intervention is an effective strategy in improving the academic performance of Grade 8 students with academic delays. Results showed that students demonstrated significant improvement from their pre-test to post-test scores after participating in the intervention, indicating that peer-assisted learning contributed to better understanding of lessons and increased academic achievement. The findings also revealed that students had positive experiences in terms of motivation and participation, peer interaction, and confidence in learning, highlighting the value of collaborative support in the classroom. However, some learners continued to experience academic difficulties, emphasizing the need for continuous guidance, monitoring, and additional support interventions. These findings suggest that strengthening peer support programs can help create an inclusive learning environment, enhance students' academic skills, and provide meaningful assistance for learners facing academic challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several recommendations are proposed. Department of Education (DepEd) officials are encouraged to strengthen policies and programs that support peer-assisted learning and inclusive education by providing schools with adequate resources, professional development opportunities for teachers, and clear implementation guidelines for peer support interventions. Such initiatives may contribute to the institutionalization of evidence-based practices that promote equitable learning opportunities for students experiencing academic delays. School heads are encouraged to utilize the findings of this study in developing, implementing, and sustaining peer support programs that address the academic needs of learners with academic delays and to establish appropriate supervision, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms to ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement of these interventions. Teachers are encouraged to participate in professional development programs focusing on peer tutoring strategies, collaborative learning approaches, and inclusive classroom practices to enhance their capacity to facilitate peer support activities, monitor learners' progress, and provide appropriate guidance to both peer tutors and learners requiring additional academic assistance. Students are encouraged to actively participate in peer support activities by demonstrating cooperation, responsibility, respect, and willingness to assist their classmates in the learning process. Active participation in such activities may contribute not only to improved academic performance but also to the development of students' confidence, communication skills, interpersonal relationships, and sense of shared responsibility for learning. Inayawan National (Night) High School is encouraged to implement and continuously improve the proposed Enhanced Peer Support Plan as a school-based intervention for learners experiencing academic delays. Its sustained implementation, accompanied by regular monitoring and evaluation, may contribute to improvements in students' academic performance, confidence, motivation, peer relationships, and overall learning outcomes while fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies involving larger and more diverse samples, different grade levels, subject areas, and school settings to further validate the effectiveness of structured peer support interventions. Future investigations may also examine additional outcomes, such as students' self-efficacy, attendance, academic motivation, engagement, and long-term academic achievement, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the potential contributions and sustainability of peer support interventions in improving student learning.

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