

Voices from the Margins: Exploring Students' Experiences and Academic Outcomes in Social Studies Taught in Makeshift Classrooms

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Abstract. Amid persistent classroom shortages in resource constrained educational system, makeshift classrooms have emerged as a widespread yet underexamined learning environment that may profoundly shape students' academic experiences and outcomes. Practical response to the shortage of classrooms. Nevertheless, there is limited knowledge concerning how these makeshift classrooms influence students' educational experiences, especially in Social Studies. The study explored the lived experiences and academic performances of the students in learning Social Studies in the makeshift classrooms in Upper Sepaka Integrated School, Talahik Integrated School and Tapok Integrated School in Surallah North District. A phenomenological research design was used. Data were collected via in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The results indicated that students encountered several challenges including poor classroom conditions, instructional challenges, learning challenges and lack of involvement. Nevertheless, they showed resilience through peer collaboration, independent learning, self-regulation, and a positive mindset. Teachers also made adaptations includes interactive instruction, instructional adaptations, effective classroom management, and environmental adjustments to continue learning. However, the makeshift educational environment continued to impact on academic results with reduced engagement, interrupted learning, poor academic performance and reduced learning development. The key finding of the study is that although students and teachers can adapt to challenging learning environments, adaptation alone cannot compensate for poor classroom conditions. The findings highlight the need for better learning facilities, increased instructional support, and more responsive educational policies to provide equitable opportunities for success for students in marginalized learning spaces.

Keywords: Academic Outcomes; Coping Mechanisms; Makeshift Classrooms; Social Studies Education; Teacher Adaptability

Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of social development and academic success. Yet, despite its importance, many schools worldwide continue to face challenges related to inadequate learning facilities. To address these shortages, makeshift classrooms have been used as temporary learning spaces to ensure continuity of education. While these spaces provide immediate solutions, concerns remain regarding their long-term impact on students' academic performance and overall learning experiences. Globally, research underscores the critical role of the physical learning environment in shaping student achievement. Barrett et al. (2019) emphasized that classroom conditions directly influence academic performance, motivation, and well-being. Similarly, the OECD (2021) highlighted that safe and well-designed learning environments contribute to improved learning outcomes, while Cruz et al. (2026) found that effective learning spaces enhance engagement and instructional quality. In contrast, poor classroom environments may hinder concentration and reduce participation.

In the context of Social Studies education, the learning environment is especially important because the subject requires discussion, collaboration, and critical thinking. Levstik and Barton (2018) noted that Social Studies learning depends on interactive classroom environments that encourage inquiry and participation, while Wineburg (2018) emphasized that students develop deeper historical understanding

through discussion-based learning. Thus, inadequate classroom conditions may negatively affect engagement, collaboration, and learning outcomes in Social Studies. In the Philippines, classroom shortages remain a persistent concern. The Department of Education (2023) reported that many schools still experience deficits, leading to the use of makeshift classrooms. Eltahir and Alsalhi (2025) confirmed that classroom environments significantly influence academic achievement and motivation in Social Studies, while Bernardo (2019) further highlighted the link between learning conditions and student performance. Despite ongoing efforts, many learners continue to study in overcrowded and temporary learning environments.

In Region XII, similar challenges persist. Tolentino (2018) reported that schools struggle with limited classroom facilities and resources, while Agustin and Decano (2020) found that makeshift classrooms are often overcrowded, less safe, and not conducive to effective learning. Compared to standard classrooms, these temporary spaces limit comfort, interaction, and instructional effectiveness—factors essential for Social Studies learning. Despite the growing body of literature on classroom environments and student achievement, there remains a lack of research specifically examining how makeshift classrooms affect Social Studies learning outcomes. Given that Social Studies plays a vital role in developing civic awareness, cultural understanding, and critical thinking (Wineburg, 2018; Levstik & Barton, 2018), this gap is significant. Existing studies have focused broadly on classroom conditions, but few have explored the unique challenges faced by marginalized learners studying in temporary learning spaces.

This study therefore addresses the problem of inadequate classroom facilities in Region XII, where many students continue to study in makeshift classrooms that do not meet standards of safety, comfort, and effective learning. Such conditions may negatively influence engagement, participation, and academic achievement in Social Studies. Specifically, the study seeks to explore the experiences of students studying Social Studies in makeshift classrooms, examine the impact of temporary learning environments on their academic achievement and motivation, highlight the voices of marginalized learners whose experiences are often overlooked, and inform policymakers and stakeholders about existing challenges and potential adaptive strategies to improve the quality of Social Studies education in marginalized contexts. By synthesizing global and local literature and focusing on the Philippine setting, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how classroom conditions influence Social Studies learning outcomes and advances the discourse on educational equity by emphasizing the need for safe, interactive, and conducive learning environments for all students.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore and understand the experiences of students and their academic outcomes in social studies taught in makeshift classrooms. It answered the following questions:

1. What are the challenges encountered by the students in learning social studies in makeshift classrooms?
2. What coping mechanisms do students develop to manage their learning in social studies in makeshift classrooms?
3. What teaching strategies do social studies teachers employ to address the challenges of learning in makeshift classrooms?
4. How does the quality of the makeshift classroom environment affect students' academic outcomes in social studies?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The research investigated the experiences of students learning social studies, as well as their academic performance, in makeshift classrooms within the Surallah North District. It was conducted in Talahik Integrated School, Upper Sepaka Integrated School, and Tapok Integrated School. The research period covered the school year 2025–2026 and focused on the lived experiences of six (6) students from Grades 7 to 12 and three (3) teachers handling social studies classes in makeshift classrooms.

Literature Review

Challenges on Makeshift Classrooms

The makeshift classrooms have been extensively reported to differ substantially from usual learning environments, notably in the physical shape, the provision of resources and the mastery positions. Reyes (2024) described those makeshift classrooms as often having unstable or short creation, overcrowding, excessive noise, negative ventilation, inadequate lighting and inappropriate seating arrangements. Peng et al. (2023) emphasized that the quality of the learning environment has a strong influence on student engagement and academic overall performance. Keyser Eschenburger et al. (2023) indicated that the physical learning

environments have a significant impact on students' motivation, stress levels and basic well-being, which suggests that poor classroom conditions may necessarily impede learning strategies.

Barrett et al. (2019) noted that classroom layout and environmental quality including lighting, noise levels, and spatial engagement has greatly influence students' instructional success. Poorly designed learning classroom had been shown to reduce focus and limit students' ability to engage in meaningful learning. Binayao (2025) revealed that overcrowded and poorly furnished classrooms restrict the motion of the teachers and lessen the effective communication exchanges between the teachers and the students. These challenges affect academic instruction and classroom management, making it more difficult to maintain engagement and ensure familiarity among learners.

Learning Social Studies in Challenging Learning Environments

Social studies learning require debate, critical forgetting, and lively participation; however, when students study under challenging conditions, their learning are greatly affected. Barrett et al. (2019) emphasized that classroom layout and physical conditions significantly affect cognitive improvement and academic overall performance. Similarly, poor learning environments decrease students' motivation and engagement, which are important for understanding social concepts (Keyser Eschenberger et al. 2023). Rance et. al. (2023) stated that noise in the lecture room reduces listening comprehension and attention. Similarly, Shield and Docrell (2018) determined that noise limits students' attention and data processing abilities. Thus, it is important to enhance the classroom environment and provide adequate materials to enhance social studies education and gain exposure to difficult environments. Chen et al., (2025) explained that students engaged in collaborative learning are more capable of developing strategies to manage learning challenges and sustain engagement. Likewise, Garrison (2018) highlighted that self-directed learners take responsibility for their own learning by setting goals, monitoring progress, and adjusting strategies when needed.

Adaptive Strategies for Students learning in Makeshift Classroom

Students learning Social Studies in makeshift classrooms are often exposed to challenging conditions such as noise, inadequate facilities, lack of learning materials, and environmental distractions. Despite these difficulties, learners develop adaptive strategies that enable them to continue participating in classroom activities and achieve learning outcomes. One of the most common adaptive strategies is peer collaboration. Johnson and Johnson (2017) emphasized that cooperative learning enhances academic achievement by allowing students to share ideas, clarify understanding, and support one another in learning tasks. Similarly, Gillies (2019) found that collaborative discussions promote deeper understanding and critical thinking skills. Academic resilience plays a crucial role in helping students adapt to makeshift classroom conditions. Martin (2018) noted that resilient learners persist despite academic difficulties and environmental barriers. Similarly, Cassidy (2019) found that students used effective coping and emotional regulation strategies to maintain academic performance.

Instructional Strategies and Teacher Adaptability

Teaching Social Studies in makeshift classroom settings is marked by numerous challenges brought about by environmental limitations, lack of resources, and the unstable nature of learning spaces. Abdullah (2022) found that Social Studies teachers commonly employ learner-centered strategies such as brainstorming, simulation, role playing, dialogue, dramatization, and discovery learning to actively engage students. In contrast, Parsons et al. (2018) emphasized that adaptive teachers continuously adjust their teaching methods based on students' academic, social, and contextual needs. scaffolding and experiential learning approaches further support instructional effectiveness. Garba and Aliyu (2022) emphasized that scaffolding helps simplify complex concepts by guiding students through gradual understanding. Similarly, Kolb and Kolb (2017) found that experiential learning enables students to connect academic concepts to real-life experiences, thereby strengthening comprehension in Social Studies. Academic resilience plays a crucial role in helping students adapt to makeshift classroom conditions. Martin (2018) noted that resilient learners persist despite academic difficulties and environmental barriers. Similarly, Cassidy (2019) found that students used effective coping and emotional regulation strategies to maintain academic performance.

Learning Outcomes of Students in Makeshift Classroom

Learning outcomes in Social Studies are strongly influenced by classroom environment, interaction, and instructional resources. In particular, classroom environment and student engagement play a critical role in shaping academic achievement. Erdem and Kaya (2024) indicated that both classroom and school climate are significantly associated with students' academic performance, emphasizing that learning environments directly affect achievement outcomes. Kuhfeld et al. (2020) reported that reduced classroom interaction negatively impacts student learning outcomes, especially in subjects that require discussion and critical

thinking such as Social Studies. In relation, research highlights that interaction and engagement are essential determinants of academic success. Hattie (2019) emphasized that teacher–student and peer interactions remain among the most powerful predictors of student achievement. Mercer and Howe (2017) explained that dialogic classroom interaction enhances knowledge construction and cognitive development. Conversely, limited interaction reduces students' opportunities for collaborative learning and critical reflection, which ultimately weakens learning outcomes. Moreover, classroom environmental conditions significantly affect student learning outcomes. Barrett et al. (2019) found that concentration, behavior, and academic performance

The reviewed literature consistently revealed that makeshift classrooms posed significant challenges to teaching and learning, particularly in Social Studies. Poor physical conditions such as overcrowding, noise, inadequate ventilation, and lack of resources were found to negatively affect students' concentration, participation, and academic performance. These unfavorable environments limited opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and critical thinking, which are essential components of effective Social Studies learning. In addition, insufficient instructional materials and poorly structured classrooms reduced teaching effectiveness and hindered both student engagement and comprehension. Such findings underscore the importance of conducive learning spaces in fostering inquiry-based and participatory approaches that Social Studies education requires.

Despite these constraints, the literature also highlighted adaptive and compensatory mechanisms employed by both teachers and students. Collaborative learning, peer support, and self-regulated learning strategies were shown to enhance student engagement and academic outcomes even in resource-constrained settings. Students who demonstrated motivation, self-discipline, and proactive learning behaviors were able to overcome environmental limitations and sustain their academic performance. Similarly, teachers who adopted interactive, experiential, and student-centered strategies successfully maintained participation and improved understanding despite limited resources. In terms of instructional practices, active learning approaches such as discussion, collaboration, experiential activities, and scaffolding were consistently emphasized as more effective than traditional lecture-based methods. These strategies promoted deeper understanding, critical thinking, and knowledge retention, while teacher creativity in improvising materials and adapting instruction played a crucial role in mitigating the negative effects of makeshift classroom conditions.

On the other hand, contradictory findings emerged regarding the extent to which environmental limitations determined learning outcomes. While several studies asserted that poor classroom conditions directly led to decreased academic performance and engagement, other studies suggested that effective teaching strategies, strong student motivation, and adaptive learning behaviors could offset these disadvantages. Some literature indicated that even in constrained environments, students achieved meaningful learning when supported by interactive instruction and collaborative practices. This dual perspective suggests that while the learning environment remains a critical factor, student outcomes are also influenced by pedagogical approaches, learner agency, and the availability of supportive social interactions.

In summary, the literature establishes that makeshift classrooms present significant barriers to effective Social Studies learning, particularly by limiting interaction, collaboration, and inquiry-based practices. At the same time, adaptive strategies and motivated learners demonstrate the potential to overcome these challenges. However, despite these insights, there remains a clear research gap: few studies have specifically examined how makeshift classrooms affect Social Studies outcomes among marginalized learners, especially in the Philippine context where classroom shortages persist. Addressing this gap is crucial, as Social Studies plays a vital role in developing civic awareness, cultural understanding, and critical thinking. Thus, the present study seeks to explore the experiences and academic achievement of students in Social Studies classes within makeshift classrooms, with particular attention to the voices of marginalized learners. By aligning global perspectives with local realities, this study aims to contribute to educational equity and inform policies and practices that enhance Social Studies learning in temporary and resource-constrained environments.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological research design, guided by the philosophical orientation of Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenology as articulated by Moustakas (1994). This approach was chosen because it emphasizes the exploration of lived experiences by bracketing out researcher biases to uncover the essence of participants' realities. Phenomenology was particularly appropriate for this study since it allowed for a deep understanding of how students and teachers experienced Social Studies education in makeshift classrooms, focusing on the meaning they ascribed to these experiences rather than imposing external interpretations. By adopting this design, the study was able to capture the emotional, cognitive, and

social dimensions of learning in resource-constrained environments, thereby revealing the universal themes that characterize the phenomenon.

Research Locale

This study was conducted in Surallah North District, specifically at Upper Sepaka Integrated School, Talahik Integrated School, and Tapok Integrated School in the Division of South Cotabato. These three schools were identified as public institutions utilizing makeshift classrooms due to limited infrastructure and increasing student enrollment. Despite these limitations, the schools continued to deliver instruction in core subjects, including Social Studies, which required critical thinking, contextual analysis, and interactive discussion. These institutions were considered relevant to the study as they reflected the intersection of educational disadvantage and curricular complexity. Additionally, the locations of these schools were situated in rural and geographically isolated areas, which posed challenges in terms of infrastructure development, teachers' efforts, and resource allocation. Therefore, the setting of Upper Sepaka Integrated School, Talahik Integrated School, and Tapok Integrated School provided an appropriate context for examining students' experiences in learning Social Studies within non standardized classroom environments.

Research Participants

This study involved six (6) junior and senior high school students and three (3) Social Studies teachers within Surallah North District, Surallah, South Cotabato. These participants were selected based on their direct involvement in Social Studies education conducted in makeshift classrooms, thereby providing a multi perspective understanding of the learning environment and its impact. These students were purposively selected to represent a range of academic performance levels, socioeconomic backgrounds, and experiences with makeshift classrooms through in depth interviews (IDI). Moreover, these educators provided valuable perspectives on instructional strategies, classroom management, and pedagogical adaptations necessitated by the physical limitations of the learning environment through in depth interviews (IDI).

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide, developed based on the research questions and themes identified in the literature review. The guide included open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share detailed narratives about their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in makeshift classrooms. To ensure validity, the interview guide was reviewed by three experts in Social Studies education and qualitative research, and their feedback was incorporated to refine the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the questions. A pilot interview was also conducted with one student and one teacher outside the study locale to test the instrument's effectiveness. In addition, field notes were systematically recorded during site visits to capture non-verbal cues, contextual details, and environmental observations. These notes enriched the data and provided triangulation alongside interview transcripts.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure followed a systematic and ethically grounded sequence of activities. First, the researcher secured approval from the Dean of SKSU Graduate School and obtained authorization from the Schools Division Superintendent. Letters of permission were then sent to school heads of the participating institutions. Second, informed consent forms were distributed to all participants, detailing the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, and confidentiality measures of the study. Participation was voluntary, and students were assured that refusal or withdrawal would not affect their academic standing. Ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice were observed throughout the process. Privacy was protected under the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), with participants' identities anonymized using codes. Tokens of appreciation were provided to acknowledge their time and effort. Third, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and teachers, each session audio-recorded with consent and supplemented by field notes. Fourth, member checking was employed by returning summaries of interview transcripts to participants for validation, ensuring accuracy and credibility of interpretations. Finally, all recordings and transcripts were stored securely, accessible only to the researcher, and destroyed after the completion of the study. This systematic procedure ensured that data collection was both rigorous and ethically sound, while safeguarding participants' rights and well-being. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to identify, code, and interpret patterns in the data. Transcripts were coded iteratively, clustered into themes, and refined through triangulation with field notes. Reflexivity was maintained throughout, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in participants' perspectives rather than researcher assumptions. This process allowed the study to present findings that authentically reflected the lived experiences of students and teachers in Social Studies classes conducted in makeshift classrooms.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What are the challenges encountered by students in learning social studies in makeshift classrooms?

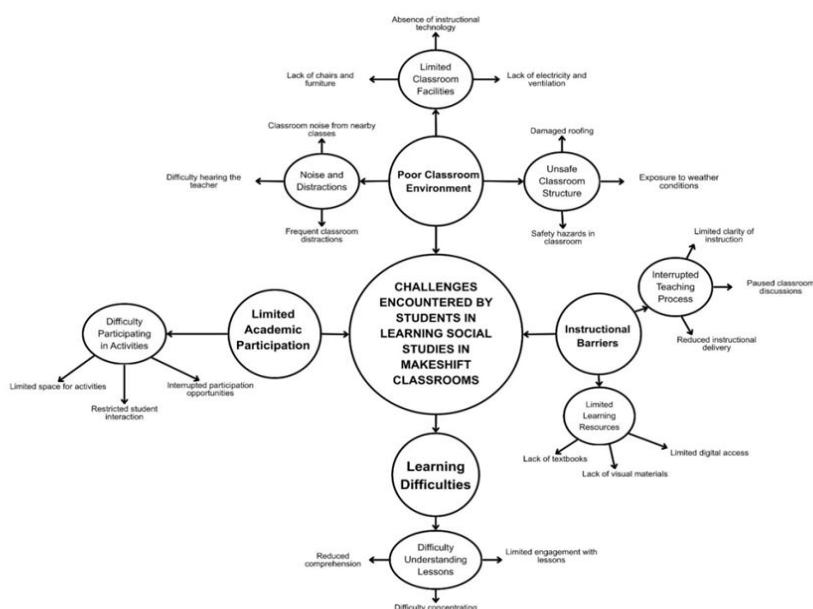


Figure 1: Challenges encountered by students in learning social studies in makeshift classrooms

Figure 1 revealed the emerging themes on the challenges encountered by the students in learning social studies in makeshift classrooms. Based on the analysis of the participants' responses, many challenges were identified about their experiences with social studies learning in temporary classrooms. These challenges reflect the difficulties that students have in adapting to learning environments that can often be characterized by limited environmental conditions, pedagogical and academic challenges obstacles. Four emerging themes were generated from the participants' narratives: Poor Classroom Environment, Instructional Barriers, Learning Difficulties, and Limited Academic Participation. These themes provide a deeper insight into how makeshift classroom conditions affect students' learning experiences and engagement in Social Studies.

There were four (4) emerging themes that were articulated through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from seven (7) clustered theme and twenty (21) codes. The four (4) emerging themes that characterized the challenges encountered by the students in learning social studies in makeshift classrooms are the following: Poor Classroom Environment, Instructional Barriers, Learning Difficulties, and Limited Academic Participation.

Research Question 2: What coping mechanisms do students develop to manage their learning in social studies in makeshift classrooms?

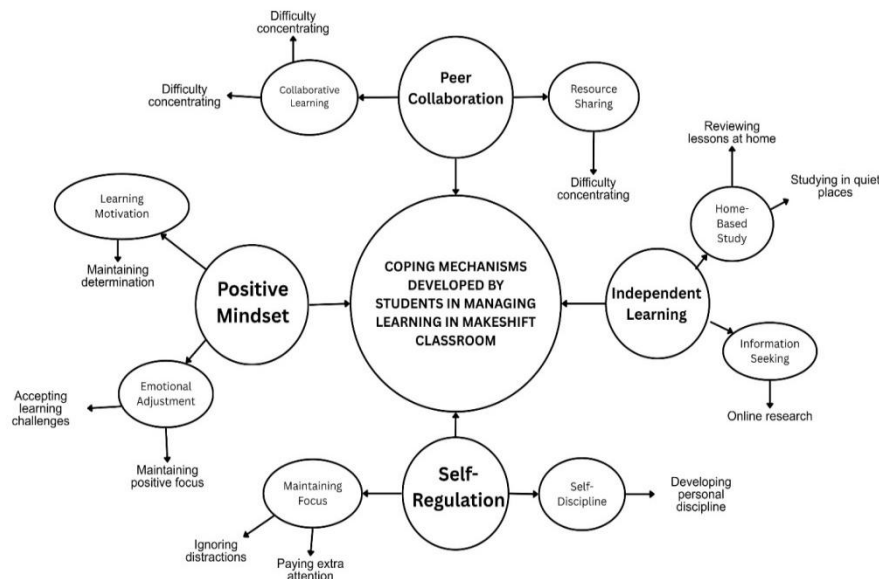


Figure 2: Coping Mechanisms Developed by Students in managing Learning Social Studies in Makeshift Classroom

Figure 2 shows The participants' narratives showed that Social Studies in makeshift classrooms have to deal with frustration, distraction and the unknown. However, they were very steadfast and wanted to learn. Rather than allow the challenges posed by their learning environment discourage them, the students simply adapted to make sense of and navigate through what they were experiencing.

Their experiences mirrored both the hardships they went through and their determination and grit to succeed. In total, four themes emerged after analysis of their responses which were Peer Collaboration, Independent Learning, Self-Regulation and Positive Mindset. The themes reflected the different ways students coped with the challenges of learning Social Studies in make-shift classrooms but still remained committed to their academic goals.

There were four (4) emerging themes that were articulated through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from eight (8) clustered theme and twelve (12) codes. The four (4) emerging themes that characterized the Coping Mechanisms Developed by Students in managing Learning Social Studies in Makeshift Classroom are the following: Peer Collaboration, Independent Learning, Self-Regulation, and Positive Mindset.

Research Question 3: What teaching strategies do social studies teachers employ to address the challenges of learning in makeshift classrooms?

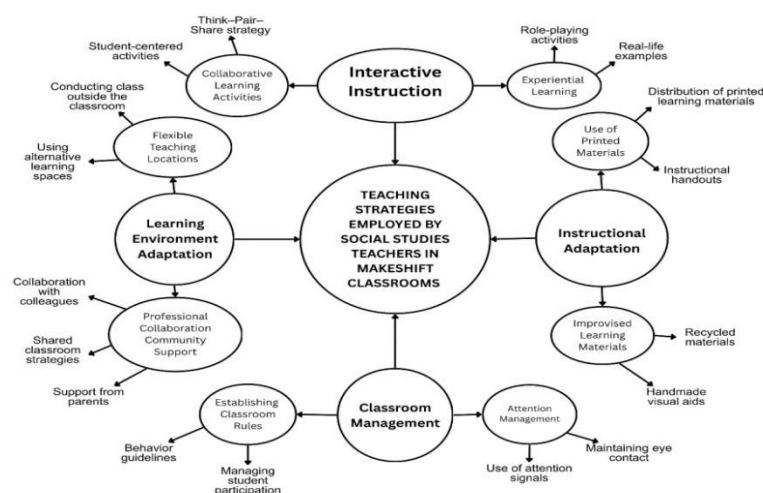


Figure 3: Teaching Strategies do social studies Teachers employ to address the challenges of learning in Makeshift classrooms

Figure 3 reveals the teacher-participants' perspective revealed that teaching Social Studies in makeshift classrooms was difficult and strenuous. They were worried, dissatisfied and challenged in their teaching in noisy and distracting situations with little resources. Despite these challenges, the teachers were dedicated to offering meaningful learning experiences to their students. Their stories reflected how they always adjusted their teaching styles, improvised on available resources and sought to keep pupils engaged in learning.

Analysis of their responses revealed four emerging themes: Interactive Instruction, Instructional Adaptation, Classroom Management and Learning Environment Adaptation. The themes reflect teachers' adaptation to the challenges of makeshift classrooms and the need to continue learning despite the limitations of the environment.

There were four (4) emerging themes that were articulated through procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from eight (8) clustered themes and seventeen (17) codes. The four (4) emerging themes that characterized the Teaching Strategies Employed by social studies teachers in Makeshift Classroom are the following: Interactive Instruction, Instructional Adaptation, Classroom Management, and Learning Environment Adaptation

Research Question 4: How does the quality of the makeshift classroom affect students' academic outcomes in social studies?

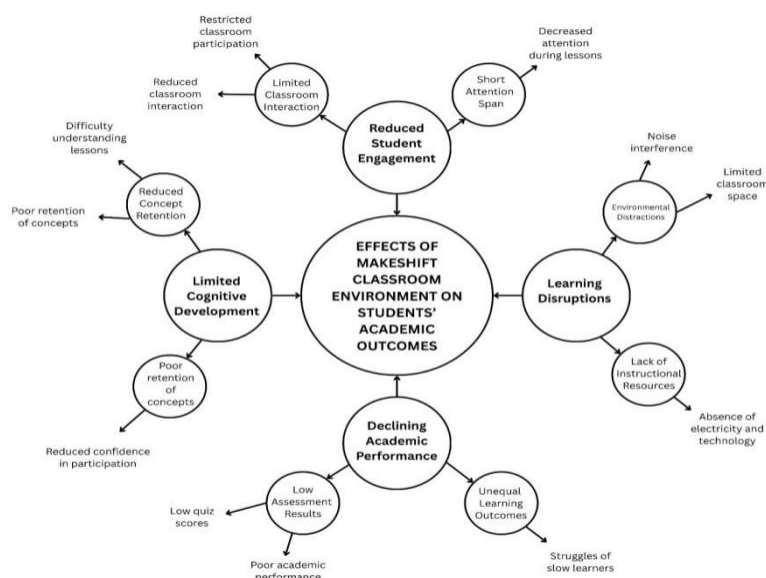


Figure 4: Effects of Makeshift classrooms on students' Academic Outcomes

Table 4 presents while reflecting on the experience of teaching Social Studies in makeshift classrooms, the participating teachers had worries concerning the effects of the learning environment on students' academic performance. They noted that environmental factors such as noise, overcrowding, insufficient learning materials and classroom facilities tended to have an impact on students' concentration and participation in classroom activities.

The participating teachers exhibited feelings of frustrations as they watched students struggle in dealing with the environmental challenges even as they attempted to offer them meaningful learning experience. The narratives of the participating teachers show that makeshift classroom had more impacts on students than mere physical inconvenience and greatly affected their learning and academic performance. Four major themes emerging from the participants' narratives include Reduced Student Engagement, Learning Disruptions, Decreasing Academic Performance and Cognitive Impediment.

The four (4) emerging themes were articulated through procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from eight (8) clustered themes and twelve (12) codes.

The four (4) emerging themes are the following: reduced student engagement, learning disruptions, declining academic performance, and Limited Cognitive Development.

Interpretation of Findings

The Emerging Themes described the Challenges of Students in Learning Social Studies in Makeshift Classroom

Emerging Theme 1: Poor Classroom Environment

The findings revealed that the poor classroom environment experienced by students in makeshift classrooms was multifaceted, encompassing noise and distractions, limited classroom facilities, and unsafe classroom structures. These physical conditions significantly differed from those of standard classrooms, resulting in an environment that was not conducive to effective learning. Such environmental limitations may have constrained students' attention, comfort, and overall academic engagement.

This finding was strongly supported by the behavioral theory of B.F Skinner, which posited that learning is shaped by environmental stimuli. In this context, excessive noise, poor ventilation, and inadequate seating arrangements may have acted as negative stimuli that disrupted students' focus and learning behaviors. Empirical studies of Barrett et al. (2019) indicated that classroom environmental quality including lighting, noise levels, and spatial engagement has greatly influence students' instructional success.

Furthermore, the findings aligned with study indicating that makeshift classroom environments were characterized by unstable or impermanent construction, excessive student density, elevated noise levels, insufficient airflow, inadequate illumination, and a lack of appropriate seating (Reyes, 2024). Inadequate classroom infrastructure may also contribute to stress and discomfort to students, Uline et. al (2018) also revealed that poor classroom infrastructure was related to poorer levels of student involvement and academic success. Thus, the physical environment serves as a critical determinant of learning behavior, reinforcing the importance of conducive classroom conditions.

Emerging Theme 2: Instructional Barriers

Instructional barriers emerged as a major challenge among students, particularly in terms of unclear instruction, disrupted classroom discussions, limited instructional delivery, and insufficient learning resources. These constraints hindered effective teaching and learning processes, in Social Studies, which requires conceptual understanding and engagement.

This theme was best explained by the constructivist theory of Lev Vygotsky, which emphasized that learning occurs through guided interaction, scaffolding, and social engagement. The lack of clarity in instruction and insufficient teacher support may have limited students' opportunities to function within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), thereby restricting their ability to construct knowledge effectively.

Supporting literature indicated that makeshift classrooms are often poorly constructed and may expose novices to the risk of physical harm and psychological stress (UNESCO 2022). In addition, limited access to instructional resources such as textbooks, visual aids, and multimedia tools may reduce students' ability to comprehend abstract concepts, particularly in subjects like Social Studies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Recent studies have indicated that overcrowded and poorly organized classrooms still create hurdles to effective teaching and learning. According to Peng et. al (2019), the quality of learning environment has a strong influence on on student engagement and academic overall performance. According to Earthman (2017) Poor school facilities have an adverse effect on academic outcomes while Maxwell (2021) states that overcrowded and poorly maintained classrooms lessen the efficacy of learning.

In the same way, Rance et. al. (2023) stated that noise in the lecture room reduces listening comprehension and attention. Similarly, Shield and Dockrell (2018) determined that noise limits students' attention and data processing abilities. In their evaluation, Zhang et al. (2023) reported that students reveal higher comprehension and cognitive overall performance in stable and fully dependent lecture halls compared to students in stable environments. Thus, environmental distractions significantly reduce students' ability to participate in discussions and retain instruction, even though they are intended for social studies instruction

Emerging Theme 3: Learning Difficulties

The findings further revealed that students experienced significant learning difficulties, particularly in understanding lessons, maintaining concentration, and actively engaging in classroom discussions. These challenges were largely attributed to the unfavorable learning conditions present in makeshift classrooms. This theme was most strongly supported by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, particularly the concept of self-efficacy. Students who repeatedly encountered difficulties in understanding lessons due to environmental distractions may have developed lower confidence in their academic abilities. According to Keser Aschenberger et al. (2023), the significant influence of the physical learning environment on students' motivation, stress levels, and overall well-being during the learning process.

In support of this, Barrett et al. (2019) found that the physical attributes of classrooms exerted a considerable influence on students' academic achievement. In particular, poorly designed or uncomfortable learning environments diminished students' ability to concentrate, thereby creating conditions that were not conducive to effective learning. Furthermore, research has emphasized that supportive and well-structured learning environments are essential for promoting students' comprehension and academic success (OECD, 2019).

Theme 4: Limited Academic Participation

Limited academic participation was another key theme identified in the study, characterized by reduced student engagement, restricted interaction, and interruptions during classroom activities. These conditions significantly affected students' ability to actively participate in Social Studies learning experiences, which require collaboration, discussion, and critical thinking.

This finding aligned with Lev Vygotsky Constructivist Approach, who emphasized that learning was inherently social and requires active participation and interaction. The limited and inadequate classroom conditions in makeshift settings may have limited opportunities for collaborative learning, thereby reducing students' engagement and participation. Supporting studies have shown that classroom environment and physical space significantly influence student participation and interaction (Fredricks et al., 2019; OECD, 2019). When students are placed in environments that limit movements, communications, and collaborations, their level of engagement tends to decline.

This finding implied that students who felt safe and supported within their learning spaces were more likely to participate in classroom discussions, an essential component of effective Social Studies instruction. On the same note, Sulastrri et al. (2023) emphasized that collaborative learning and flexible technologies can improve outcomes even in beneficial resource-constrained settings. Thus, despite the constraints imposed by temporary lecture halls, the flexibility of students can help mitigate certain side effects on social studies mastery.

The Emerging Themes on the Coping Mechanisms Developed by Students in Managing Learning Social Studies in Makeshift Classroom

Emerging Theme 1: Peer Collaboration

The findings revealed that peer collaboration served as a significant coping mechanism among students in managing their learning in Social Studies within makeshift classroom environments. Participants consistently described how working with classmates enabled them to better understand lesson content, sustain engagement, and overcome challenges brought about by the limitations of their learning environment.

Collaborative learning was evident as students actively engaged in discussions, exchanged ideas, clarified misconceptions, and assisted one another in understanding complex Social Studies concepts. This finding corroborated the work of Johnson et al. (2018), who emphasized that cooperative learning enhances students' comprehension and problem-solving skills through shared cognitive processes. Similarly, Gillies (2019) highlighted that collaborative learning promotes both social and intellectual development by fostering communication, teamwork, and shared responsibility among learners.

Moreover, peer collaboration extended beyond academic discussions to include mutual academic encouragement and support. Students reported motivating one another to participate in classroom activities, complete tasks, and review lessons collectively. This aligns with the findings of David (2019), which indicated that students in resource-constrained environments often rely on peer networks to share learning materials and compensate for the lack of instructional resources. The practice of borrowing notes and exchanging materials further reinforced the role of peer collaboration as a practical strategy in addressing resource limitations.

The above theme was grounded in Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory, which posited that knowledge was constructed through social interaction and collaboration. The students' reliance on peers reflected the importance of learning within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), wherein learners benefit from the guidance and support of more capable individuals. Through collaborative engagement, students were able to co-construct understanding and enhance their academic performance despite environmental constraints.

Emerging Theme 2: Independent Learning

Independent learning emerged as another prominent coping mechanism, wherein students assumed responsibility for their own learning to better understand Social Studies lessons. Participants described

engaging in self-directed activities such as reviewing lessons at home, studying in quiet environments, and revisiting classroom discussions to enhance comprehension.

These practices demonstrated students' ability to extend learning beyond the classroom, particularly in response to the limitations of makeshift learning environments. Alam (2019) found that students who develop structured learning habits outside the classroom exhibit improved comprehension, retention, and academic performance. Likewise, Miller and Rollnick (2018) emphasized that learners who take responsibility for their learning demonstrate higher levels of motivation and self-efficacy.

This theme was anchored in Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, particularly the concept of self-efficacy. Students' engagement in independent learning reflected their belief in their capacity to overcome academic challenges. Their proactive efforts to review lessons and seek information demonstrated how self-efficacy influences motivation, persistence, and goal-directed behavior in learning contexts.

In addition, students engaged in information-seeking behaviors, actively searching for additional learning materials to supplement classroom instruction. This proactive approach to learning was supported by Siddique et al. (2023), who noted that students who seek additional resources tend to achieve better understanding and academic outcomes.

Emerging Theme 3: Self-Regulation

Self-regulation emerged as a critical coping mechanism, as students developed strategies to manage distractions, maintain concentration, and sustain engagement in their learning despite unfavorable classroom conditions. Participants reported consciously regulating their attention, ignoring environmental distractions, and exerting effort to remain focused during lessons.

These findings were consistent with Zimmerman and Schunk (2017), who described self-regulated learners as individuals capable of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning processes. In challenging environments, self-regulation enables students to maintain academic engagement and successfully complete tasks. Furthermore, the development of self-discipline was evident among students, as they demonstrated control over their behavior and commitment to academic responsibilities.

Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2017) emphasized that self-disciplined learners can sustain effort even in non-conducive learning environments. Garrison (2018) highlighted that self-directed learners take responsibility for their own learning by setting goals, monitoring progress, and adjusting strategies when needed. In the same way, Broadbent and Poon (2021) found that self-regulated learning strategies such as planning, monitoring, and reviewing significantly contribute to academic success.

The theme was supported by Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, particularly the concept of self-regulation. Bandura posited that learners actively regulate their cognition, motivation, and behavior to achieve desired outcomes. The students' ability to control distractions and remain focused demonstrated their capacity for self-regulated learning in response to environmental challenges.

Emerging Theme 4: Positive Mindset

The adoption of a positive mindset emerged as a significant coping strategy among students, enabling them to remain engaged in learning despite the challenges posed by makeshift classroom environments. Participants demonstrated resilience by maintaining motivation, sustaining determination, and managing emotional responses to unfavorable learning conditions.

Students reported that their determination to succeed motivated them to review lessons, manage their time effectively, and seek assistance from peers. Nguyen et al. (2020) indicated that motivated students actively employ strategies to address learning difficulties, resulting in improved academic performance. In addition, emotional adjustment was evident as students developed the ability to manage stress and maintain a positive outlook toward learning. Students who viewed challenges as part of the learning process were more likely to remain engaged and participate actively in classroom activities. This finding was supported by Dweck (2017), who highlighted the role of growth mindset in fostering resilience and sustained academic effort.

This theme was grounded in Bandura's Social Learning Theory, particularly the concept of self-efficacy and motivational beliefs. Students' positive mindset reflected their confidence in overcoming challenges, which influenced their persistence, emotional regulation, and continued engagement in learning tasks despite adverse conditions.

The Emerging Themes on the Teaching Strategies Employed by Social Studies Teachers in Makeshift Classroom

Emerging Theme 1: Interactive Instruction

The findings revealed that interactive instruction was a prominent

teaching strategy employed by Social Studies teachers in makeshift classrooms. Despite environmental and resource constraints, teachers emphasized the importance of engaging learners through participatory and experience-based approaches to facilitate meaningful learning.

Under the clustered theme of collaborative learning activities, teachers implemented strategies such as think-pair-share and other student-centered approaches to promote active participation. These strategies enabled learners to exchange ideas, ask questions, and construct knowledge collaboratively. The physical and organizational structure of learning spaces influenced the quality of teaching and learning experiences. Byers et al. (2018) found that flexible learning spaces promoted collaboration, active engagement, and student centered learning. Similarly, Imms and Byers (2017) affirmed that adaptable classroom environments allowed teachers to modify layouts to support diverse instructional activities.

In addition, Singh et. al. (2023) found that methods of problem solving and collaborative learning result in deeper understanding and expanded engagement with the help of promoting vigorous participation in the identification process. While Kolb and Kolb (2017) emphasized that connecting classroom learning to real-life experiences promotes reflection and deeper understanding. These strategies enabled learners to better comprehend and apply Social Studies concepts despite limited instructional resources.

This theme was grounded in Lev Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory, which posited that learning occurs through social interaction and active engagement. The use of collaborative and experiential strategies reflected the principles of scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners construct knowledge through interaction and guided participation.

Emerging Theme 2: Instructional adaptation

Instructional adaptation emerged as a significant strategy, as teachers' demonstrated creativity and flexibility in utilizing available resources to support Social Studies instruction. In response to limited facilities, teachers employed alternative teaching materials and strategies to enhance learners' understanding.

Teachers highlighted the use of printed learning materials and instructional handouts as essential tools in facilitating comprehension. These materials supported learners in grasping concepts and engaging with lesson content. Parsons et al. (2018) emphasized that adaptive teachers constantly change their instructional practices primarily based on the academic, social, and contextual needs of their students. Similarly, recent studies have suggested that teachers manage instructional strategies, assessment methods, and management practices in the reading room to respond appropriately to limited resources and changing learning environments.

Furthermore, teachers utilized improvised learning materials and visual aids to make abstract concepts more concrete and accessible. Ogunniyi (2024) found that improvised materials significantly contribute to learners' academic achievement in resource-constrained environments, while Aina (2023) emphasized their role in promoting participation and understanding. These findings demonstrated that instructional adaptation enabled teachers to mitigate the challenges posed by makeshift classroom conditions.

This theme was best explained by B.F. Skinner's Behaviorist Theory, which emphasized that learning was influenced by stimuli and reinforcement. The use of varied instructional materials and strategies provided alternative stimuli that facilitated learning, while consistent instructional support served as reinforcement to strengthen students' understanding and responses.

Emerging Theme 3: Classroom management

Effective classroom management was another key strategy employed by teachers to maintain order and promote engagement in makeshift classroom environments. Teachers implemented structured strategies to regulate student behavior and sustain attention during lessons.

Teachers emphasized the importance of establishing classroom rules promoting respectful interaction through mutual respect. In accordance with Wang et al. (2020) good management of the lecture hall is related to better engagement of the students, less disturbance and the creation of an environment that encourages effective teaching. In addition, Korpershock et al. (2020), effective classroom management enhances student involvement, motivation and academic performance.

This theme was anchored in Skinner's (1953) Behaviorist Theory, which posited that behavior is shaped through reinforcement and environmental control. The implementation of classroom rules, signals, and structured interactions served as reinforcement mechanisms that guided students' behavior and promoted sustained engagement in learning activities.

Emerging Theme 4: Learning Environment Adaptation

Learning environment adaptation emerged as a crucial strategy, as teachers adjusted instructional practices and utilized alternative spaces and community resources to support Social Studies teaching. These adaptations reflected teachers' efforts to create conducive learning conditions despite infrastructural limitations.

Teachers reported conducting classes in alternative spaces such as shaded outdoor areas and community spaces, which facilitated collaboration and active learning. This finding was supported by Byers et al. (2018), who noted that flexible learning spaces enhance student engagement and support diverse learning activities. Similarly, Imms and Byers (2017) emphasized that adaptable learning environments promote varied instructional approaches and learner participation.

Adaptation of the learning environment was essential in situations where classroom conditions were not favorable. In such cases, teachers usually adjust their teaching methods and use whatever they have in order to keep learning. As OECD (2021) observes, adaptable teaching practices allow teachers to address different learning needs and environmental factors. In the same breath, Schleicher (2020) asserts that flexible teaching practices are essential in educational settings which experience dynamic and resource-constrained environments.

This theme was best explained by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasized that learning occurs through interaction within a social and environmental context. Teachers' adaptation to the environment and collaboration with others reflected reciprocal determinism, where behavior, environment, and social interaction continuously influence one another.

The Emerging Themes on the Effects of Makeshift Classroom Environment on Students' Academic Outcomes

Emerging Theme 1: Reduced Student Engagement

The findings revealed that reduced student engagement was a major challenge in makeshift Social Studies classrooms, primarily attributed to environmental factors. Teachers observed a decline in class participation and interaction, which consequently limited opportunities for discussion and critical thinking. This reduction in engagement posed a significant concern, as active participation is essential in developing higher-order thinking skills in Social Studies. These observations were consistent with prior studies emphasizing the importance of interaction and dialogue in shaping academic outcomes (Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Hattie, 2015; Mercer & Howe, 2017).

Furthermore, teachers noted that students exhibited reduced attention during lessons due to environmental distractions such as noise and movement within the makeshift classrooms. These distractions hindered students' ability to sustain focus, thereby affecting their engagement in classroom activities. This finding was supported by Romer et al. (2018), who highlighted the negative impact of distractions on attention, and Fisher et al. (2018), who emphasized the role of active instructional strategies in maintaining student focus and engagement.

This theme was best explained by Lev Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory, which posited that learning was socially constructed through interaction and dialogue. Limited opportunities for participation and discussion in makeshift classrooms may have constrained students' engagement in meaningful knowledge construction, thereby reducing their involvement and critical thinking.

Emerging Theme 2: Learning Disruptions

Learning disruptions emerged as another significant issue, as teachers reported frequent interruptions in Social Studies instruction within makeshift classrooms. These disruptions were primarily caused by environmental noise, limited space, and inadequate instructional resources, resulting in fragmented learning experiences.

Consequently, students experienced difficulty in maintaining continuity in learning, which adversely affected their cognitive performance. This observation was supported by Barrett et al. (2019), who emphasized the impact of classroom design on learning outcomes, and Jensen (2015), who highlighted the detrimental effects of distractions on cognitive processing.

Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated adaptability by utilizing improvised materials and accessible resources to sustain instruction. Such practices reflected the importance of teacher creativity in addressing resource limitations. This finding aligned with UNESCO (2020) and Bennett et al. (2018), who underscored the role of teacher innovation and community support in enhancing learning in resource-constrained environments.

This theme was supported by B.F. Skinner's Behaviorist Theory, which emphasized that learning was influenced by environmental stimuli and reinforcement. The presence of constant interruptions and

unfavorable classroom conditions may have disrupted the stimulus-response process, thereby weakening students' ability to sustain attention, process information, and retain learning.

Emerging Theme 3: Declining Academic Performance

The findings further revealed a decline in students' academic performance, as evidenced by difficulties in maintaining consistent learning outcomes in makeshift classroom settings. Teachers highlighted that environmental and instructional factors contributed to low assessment results and unequal learning outcomes among students. These conditions reflected the challenges faced by learners in achieving expected academic standards within constrained learning environments.

Teachers reported that low assessment results were evident in quizzes and other academic tasks, which were attributed to limited resources and reduced opportunities for effective learning. These findings were consistent with Tadesse and Gillies (2019), who emphasized that inadequate classroom conditions hinder academic achievement and performance. Moreover, unequal learning outcomes were observed, particularly among slow learners who were more affected by environmental and instructional constraints. This finding aligned with Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) and Kim and Hall (2020), who highlighted that inequitable access to resources and learning experiences contributes to disparities in academic outcomes.

This theme was anchored on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, particularly the concept of self-efficacy. Students who are exposed to unfavorable learning conditions may develop reduced confidence in their academic abilities, which may lead to decreased motivation, persistence, and performance. The decline in academic outcomes may therefore be linked to diminished self-efficacy shaped by environmental and instructional challenges.

Emerging Theme 4: Reduced Learning Progress

The findings also indicated limited cognitive development among students, as teachers observed difficulties in comprehension, retention, and higher-order thinking in Social Studies. These challenges were attributed to environmental barriers and limited opportunities for meaningful learning engagement. As a result, students struggled to develop deeper understanding and analytical skills necessary for the subject. Teachers noted that students had difficulty comprehending concepts, particularly in analyzing historical events and engaging in critical discussions. This lack of understanding was consistent with the findings of Tadesse and Gillies (2019), who emphasized that limited resources hinder students' comprehension. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) highlighted that active learning and supportive environments are essential for promoting retention and deeper learning.

In addition, teachers observed that students lacked confidence in participating in classroom activities, which resulted in hesitation and reduced engagement. This condition further widened cognitive gaps among learners. Mercer and Howe (2017) emphasized the role of dialogic interaction in knowledge construction, while Hattie (2019) highlighted the importance of relational factors in enhancing learning and retention.

In support of this, Lev Vygotsky Constructivist Learning Theory emphasized that cognitive development occurs through social interaction and guided learning experiences. The limited opportunities for interaction, scaffolding, and collaborative engagement in makeshift classrooms may have restricted students' ability to develop higher-order thinking skills and deeper conceptual understanding.

Ethical Considerations

This section of study adhered to strict ethical protocols to protect the rights and welfare of participants. Prior to data collection, the researcher sought and obtained ethical clearance from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) of SKSU Graduate School. Approval was also secured from the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of South Cotabato, followed by formal permission from the school heads of Upper Sepaka Integrated School, Talahik Integrated School, and Tapok Integrated School. These approvals ensured that the study was conducted in compliance with institutional and educational authority requirements. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews. Through the provision of consent forms, participants were made aware of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and their rights. Participation was voluntary, and students were assured that refusal or withdrawal would not affect their academic standing. Given that the participants were students, their vulnerability to social stigma was acknowledged, and they were provided with the autonomy to decide freely whether to participate. Confidentiality and privacy were strictly observed in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173). Participants' identities were anonymized through coded names, and all information shared during interviews was kept confidential and accessible only to the researcher. Audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored and destroyed after the completion of the study. No identifying information was disclosed in written reports or shared with individuals not directly involved in

the research. Risk management was carefully considered. The researcher ensured that no physical or psychological harm would befall participants. While qualitative research often requires participants to share personal feelings and experiences, safeguards were in place to minimize discomfort. Benefits included tokens of appreciation provided to participants as a gesture of gratitude for their time and effort. Data storage and security protocols were implemented to protect sensitive information. All interview recordings, transcripts, and field notes were stored in password-protected files, with access restricted to the researcher. Participants were informed about how their data would be used and what would happen to the recordings after the study. Finally, participants' rights were respected throughout the research process. They were treated equally, given opportunities to ask questions, clarify procedures, and provide feedback on the accuracy of transcripts during member checking. They were also allowed to correct or withdraw any information they had shared. Transparency was maintained through clear communication of the research steps, ensuring that participants understood the process and outcomes. By systematically addressing ethical approval, informed consent, confidentiality, risk management, data storage, and participants' rights, the study ensured compliance with ethical standards and upheld the dignity and welfare of all participants. section of the paper presented the ethics that were follow considering that this study dealt with human participants their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Thus, ethical consideration was put in place to avoid the defilement of their rights as participants. The researcher's goal of exploring students' experiences and academic outcomes in social studies taught in makeshift classrooms can bridge the gap during the educational disruption, the usefulness of the research can be brightly seen considering that everyone was struggling to cope in this trying time. She ensured that once it is approved, a copy of the results was given to the participants.

Conclusion

This study concludes that makeshift classrooms pose significant barriers to effective Social Studies education, primarily due to environmental and instructional challenges such as noise, overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and limited resources. These conditions hinder students' ability to concentrate, participate, and achieve academically, underscoring the critical role of safe and conducive learning environments in promoting student success. Despite these constraints, the study highlights the resilience of learners and the adaptability of teachers. Students developed coping mechanisms—peer collaboration, independent learning, self-regulation, and maintaining a positive mindset—that enabled them to sustain learning even in adverse conditions. Teachers, in turn, employed interactive instruction, improvisation of materials, and flexible classroom management to mitigate the effects of poor infrastructure. These findings demonstrate that while structural limitations remain a pressing challenge, learner agency and teacher creativity can partially offset the disadvantages of resource-constrained environments. The broader contribution of this study lies in its implications for Social Studies education and educational equity. Social Studies, as a discipline that relies on collaboration, inquiry, and critical thinking, is uniquely vulnerable to classroom shortages and poor infrastructure. The findings reveal that marginalized learners in makeshift classrooms face systemic barriers that not only affect academic performance but also limit opportunities for civic awareness and cultural understanding. At the same time, the study shows that adaptive strategies—both at the learner and teacher level—can sustain meaningful learning, offering insights into how education systems can promote equity in disadvantaged contexts. Ultimately, this study contributes to the discourse on learning environments in resource-constrained settings by demonstrating that classroom conditions are not merely physical spaces but determinants of engagement, participation, and achievement. It calls for urgent investment in infrastructure and instructional resources, while also recognizing the importance of supporting resilience, innovation, and collaboration among students and teachers. By giving voice to marginalized learners, the study underscores the need for policies and practices that ensure equitable access to quality Social Studies education, even in the most challenging environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to address the challenges of teaching and learning Social Studies in makeshift classrooms. Students should be encouraged to sustain and formalize coping strategies such as peer collaboration, independent learning, self-regulation, and maintaining a positive mindset, as these were shown to help them overcome distractions and poor facilities. Schools may support this by organizing peer tutoring programs, study groups, and mentoring initiatives that institutionalize these practices. Teachers, on the other hand, should continue to strengthen interactive and student-centered instructional strategies, embedding collaborative activities, experiential learning, and role-playing into Social Studies lessons. The study revealed that such approaches sustained engagement despite environmental challenges, and teachers may further adapt instructional materials by improvising with locally available resources to ensure lessons remain meaningful even in resource-constrained settings. School administrators are urged to prioritize infrastructure improvement by addressing classroom shortages and unsafe conditions,

as poor classroom environments were found to directly hinder student focus and participation. This can be achieved by allocating funds for basic facilities such as chairs, ventilation, and safe roofing, while also providing teachers with training on adaptive classroom management. Policymakers should design and implement targeted programs to reduce classroom deficits and improve learning environments in marginalized schools, since inadequate facilities and overcrowding were shown to negatively affect academic outcomes. Policies should include increased funding for rural infrastructure, equitable distribution of instructional resources, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure marginalized learners are not left behind. Finally, future researchers may expand on this study by conducting investigations in diverse educational contexts to validate the findings. Employing mixed-methods or quantitative approaches could measure the statistical relationship between classroom environment, teaching strategies, and academic outcomes, while intervention-based studies could test the effectiveness of specific strategies—such as structured peer collaboration or teacher improvisation—in improving engagement and performance in makeshift classrooms. These recommendations, grounded in the study's evidence, aim to enhance Social Studies education, promote educational equity, and improve learning environments in resource-constrained settings.

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