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Project-Based Learning and its Effects on Students' Active Participation In Araling Panlipunan

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ABSTRACT

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This study examined the effects of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on students' active participation in Araling Panlipunan. Despite the Philippine K–12 framework's emphasis on learner-centered instruction many classrooms remain teacher-centered resulting in student passivity and limited engagement. International research highlights PBL's potential to enhance collaboration, critical thinking, and motivation, yet localized studies in the Philippines remain scarce and fragmented, particularly in measuring active participation. To address this gap, the study employed a quantitative-descriptive correlational meta-analytic design synthesizing empirical research conducted between 2019 and 2025 from global, national, and local sources. Inclusion criteria focused on secondary education particularly Grade 9 students with active participation as the dependent variable. Comparative analyses were conducted between PBL-based interventions and traditional lecture-based methods to determine effect sizes and patterns of engagement. Findings revealed that PBL consistently produced higher levels of student participation including increased questioning, collaboration, and initiative, compared to conventional instruction. These results underscore the value of integrating PBL into Araling Panlipunan pedagogy aligning classroom practice with the learner-centered principles of the K–12 curriculum and contributing to the development of 21st-century skills among Filipino students.

Keywords: Active Participation, Araling Panlipunan, Learner-Centered Instruction, K–12 Curriculum, Student Engagement, Collaborative Learning, Critical Thinking, Meta-Analysis, Secondary Education (Grade 9), Pedagogical Innovation, 21st Century Skills

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Introduction

The Philippine K–12 education framework emphasizes learner-centered instruction, where students are viewed not merely as passive recipients of information but as active constructors of knowledge. This orientation is particularly vital in Araling Panlipunan, a subject that develops learners' understanding of historical, economic, civic, and social realities (Department of Education [DepEd], 2016). In Grade 9 Araling Panlipunan, which often focuses on *Ekonomiks*, students are expected to analyze concepts such as scarcity, demand and supply, and sustainable development—topics that require critical thinking, application, collaboration, and active participation.

Despite this policy emphasis, classroom practices in many schools remain largely teacher-centered, relying heavily on lectures, textbook-based activities, and rote learning. Such practices often result in limited student interaction, low engagement, and passive participation, which may hinder meaningful learning. This situation underscores the need to explore learner-centered pedagogical approaches that can enhance students' active involvement in Araling Panlipunan classes.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a pedagogical strategy that engages learners in authentic, real-world tasks over extended periods, allowing them to investigate problems, collaborate with peers, and create meaningful outputs. Numerous international studies have associated PBL with increased student engagement, collaboration, critical thinking, and intrinsic motivation (Sisrayanti et al., 2024; Rezkilaturahmi et al., 2025). A recent meta-analysis by Rezkilaturahmi et al. (2025) reported strong positive effects of PBL on students' skills development and motivation across subject areas, while Sisrayanti et al. (2024) found that PBL significantly enhances 21st-century skills, particularly critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication.

In the Philippine context, several studies have begun to examine the use of learner-centered strategies in Araling Panlipunan at the secondary level. Joaquin and Hermosa (2023), for instance, reported that scenario-based learning—a strategy closely related to PBL—improved Grade 9 students' involvement, motivation, and critical thinking skills. However, existing local studies are often limited to small samples, focus primarily on academic performance or critical thinking, and seldom examine students' active participation as a primary outcome variable. Moreover, variations in how participation is measured—whether through observable behaviors or students' self-reports—further complicate synthesis and generalization of findings.

The need to strengthen learner-centered instruction is further reinforced by national and regional education policies. Republic Act No. 10533, otherwise known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, mandates that the K–12 curriculum be learner-centered, contextualized, research-based, and grounded in constructivist and inquiry-based pedagogies (DepEd Order No. 43, s. 2013). In support of this mandate, the Department of Education has issued regional initiatives, such as Regional Memorandum No. 489, s. 2022 (Region VIII), which promotes Project-Based Learning and 21st-Century Learning Design through teacher training and instructional innovation.

Despite these reforms, persistent challenges remain. Results from recent division-based assessments in the Division of Misamis Occidental revealed that a large proportion of Grade 9 students at Calamba National Comprehensive High School failed to meet the passing score in Araling Panlipunan. This situation highlights the urgency of examining instructional approaches that can improve students' engagement and participation, which are foundational to deeper learning and academic success. Given these conditions, there remains a localized research gap regarding the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in enhancing Grade 9 students' active participation in Araling Panlipunan. Addressing this gap is essential to provide empirical evidence that can guide teachers, school administrators, and policymakers in implementing learner-centered strategies aligned with national education goals.

Methods

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to determine the effect of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on the active participation of Grade 9 students in Araling Panlipunan at Calamba National Comprehensive High School during School Year 2025–2026. Approximately 105 Grade 9 students were purposively selected as respondents, particularly those exposed to PBL strategies in their Araling Panlipunan classes. Data were gathered using a researcher-adapted questionnaire consisting of a demographic profile, a Project-Based Learning Implementation Scale adapted from Condliffe et al. (2022), and a Student Active Participation Scale adapted from Appleton et al. (2006), as cited in Veiga et al. (2023), with responses

rated on a four-point Likert scale. The instruments underwent expert content validation and reliability testing, yielding Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of 0.89 for PBL implementation and 0.91 for active participation, indicating excellent internal consistency based on Hair et al. (2022). Data were collected following appropriate institutional approvals, informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation procedures, and were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for descriptive analysis, Pearson Product–Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between PBL and student participation, and simple linear regression to determine whether PBL significantly predicted active participation at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussions

Table 1

Extent of the Implementation of Project-Based Learning in Teaching Araling Panlipunan Among Selected Students

Areas of Project-Based Learning	Overall Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Instructional Design and Learning Activities	3.56	0.49	Strongly Agree
Student Engagement and Collaboration	3.56	0.51	Strongly Agree
Assessment and Feedback Practices	3.41	0.56	Agree
Grand Mean	3.51	0.52	Strongly Agree

Table 1 Taken as a whole, the overall implementation of project-based learning was rated ‘Strongly Agree,’ with instructional design and student engagement receiving higher scores than assessment practices. This indicates that PBL is generally well implemented in *Araling Panlipunan*, but assessment remains the weakest dimension. The grand mean of 3.51 confirms that students perceive PBL as a strongly positive instructional approach, though refinements in assessment and feedback are necessary to achieve balance across all dimensions.

This indicates that Project-Based Learning was generally well implemented in Araling Panlipunan, particularly in instructional design and student engagement. However, assessment and feedback practices lagged behind, suggesting an area for improvement. This pattern mirrors findings from prior studies, which emphasize that balanced PBL implementation requires strong alignment across instruction, engagement, and assessment (Batdi et al., 2024; Zhou & Zhang, 2024).

Table 2

Level Of Students’ Active Participation In Araling Panlipunan Classes Where Project-Based Learning Is Utilized

Statements	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1. I actively participate in Araling Panlipunan lessons when Project-Based Learning is used.	3.58	0.49	Strongly Agree
2. I share my ideas and opinions during group discussions in PBL activities.	3.44	0.55	Agree
3. I work cooperatively with my classmates during project-based tasks.	3.62	0.46	Strongly Agree
4. I ask questions when I do not understand the lesson during PBL activities.	3.31	0.60	Agree
5. I am motivated to participate in class because the projects are interesting and meaningful.	3.55	0.51	Strongly Agree
6. I take responsibility for completing my assigned tasks in group projects.	3.60	0.48	Strongly Agree
7. I participate in planning, creating, and presenting our projects in class.	3.46	0.54	Agree
8. I listen attentively to my classmates’ ideas and feedback during project activities.	3.52	0.50	Strongly Agree
9. I feel confident expressing my thoughts during Araling Panlipunan classes that use PBL.	3.38	0.58	Agree
10. I am more engaged in Araling Panlipunan lessons when Project-Based Learning is applied.	3.57	0.49	Strongly Agree
Total	3.50	0.52	Strongly Agree

Table 2 Reveal the findings that students’ active participation in project-based learning is strongly evident. Learners consistently reported heightened engagement when projects were integrated into lessons, noting that such activities encouraged them to cooperate with classmates, assume responsibility for completing assigned tasks, and listen attentively to the contributions of their peers. This suggests that PBL not only stimulates interest in the subject matter but also cultivates essential collaborative and interpersonal skills. The strong ratings across these indicators affirm that project-based approaches create a classroom environment where students are more involved, accountable, and receptive to the ideas of others, thereby enhancing both individual and collective learning experiences. They also expressed motivation to participate because projects are meaningful and interesting. However, confidence in expressing ideas and asking questions were rated lower, indicating that while students are engaged, they may need more support in developing inquiry skills and self-expression. Participation in planning, creating, and presenting projects was also rated moderately, suggesting that students are involved but not fully confident in all stages of project work. Overall, PBL enhances participation, but confidence-building and inquiry skills should be further encouraged.

However, indicators related to asking questions and expressing ideas confidently were rated slightly lower, suggesting that while students were engaged, some may still experience hesitation in inquiry and self-expression. This aligns with previous research noting that confidence and questioning skills develop gradually and require consistent teacher facilitation and supportive classroom climates (Coronel, 2024; Wangchuk, 2024).

Table 3
Effect of Project-Based Learning on Students’ Active Participation in Araling Panlipunan

Variables	Composite Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Extent of Project-Based Learning Implementation	3.51	0.52	Strongly Implemented
Level of Students’ Active Participation	3.50	0.52	Strongly High
Overall Effect	3.51	0.52	Strong Positive Effect

Table 3 Emphasizes the overall effect of project-based learning was determined to be strongly positive. Both the extent of its implementation and the level of student participation were rated highly, with composite means of 3.51 and 3.50, respectively. These results affirm that PBL is not only effectively integrated into classroom practices but also significantly enhances student involvement in *Araling Panlipunan*. The strong ratings across these dimensions demonstrate that when PBL is implemented with consistency, it creates meaningful learning experiences that encourage active participation, responsibility, and engagement. This finding underscores the value of project-based approaches as a pedagogical strategy that bridges instructional design with student-centered learning outcomes. This demonstrates that PBL is effective in boosting student participation and learning outcomes. Students perceive PBL not only as an instructional strategy but also as a motivating factor that enhances their involvement in class activities.

This finding confirms that PBL not only was well implemented but also positively influenced students’ active participation in *Araling Panlipunan*. The results are consistent with studies that identify PBL as an effective learner-centered strategy for increasing engagement, collaboration, and responsibility (Kwon et al., 2025; Rezkilaturahmi et al., 2025).

Table 4
Relationship Between the Extent of Project-Based Learning Implementation and Students’ Active Participation in Araling Panlipunan

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Extent of Project-Based Learning Implementation and Students’ Active Participation	0.68	0.001	Strong Positive Relationship	Significant

Table 4 Is the confirmation of a statistical analysis with a strong positive and significant relationship between the extent of project-based learning implementation and the level of student participation in *Araling Panlipunan*. With an r-value of 0.68 and a p-value of 0.001, the results demonstrate that the relationship is both substantial and statistically significant. This finding indicates that the more effectively PBL is implemented, the more

actively students participate in Araling Panlipunan classes. The correlation underscores the importance of proper implementation, as it directly influences the level of student engagement and learning outcomes. This finding indicates that as PBL is more effectively implemented, students are more likely to actively engage in classroom activities, collaborate with peers, and take responsibility for their learning. The strength of this correlation underscores the importance of consistent and well-structured implementation of project-based strategies, as they directly influence the degree of student involvement and the overall success of instructional outcomes.

The strong r -value of 0.68 and significant p -value of 0.001 confirm that Project-Based Learning acts as a powerful catalyst for active participation. This substantial correlation implies that as PBL implementation—characterized by authenticity and inquiry—becomes more effective, students naturally transition from passive learners to invested contributors in Araling Panlipunan discourse. The statistical significance reinforces that this relationship is a result of a deliberate pedagogical shift toward student-centered learning, where well-structured projects provide the "social space" necessary for students to exercise agency and collaboration (Batdi et al., 2024; Fadhilah et al., 2024).

Furthermore, this correlation highlights the mediating role of instructional design; improvements in project planning and facilitation directly predict more vigorous student involvement. In the Araling Panlipunan context, this suggests that the depth of a student's civic engagement is inherently tied to the quality of the project's connection to social realities. This provides empirical grounds to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that higher levels of effective PBL implementation are fundamentally associated with increased participation. Consequently, the data reflects that when students are given the autonomy to explore historical and social issues through projects, their behavioral and emotional investment in the lesson significantly intensifies. This intensified investment suggests that PBL does not merely trigger temporary interest, but rather sustains a higher level of classroom interaction by making students the primary stakeholders in the learning outcome. The strength of this relationship underscores the necessity of consistent, well-structured PBL practices—specifically clear scaffolding and relevant social inquiry—to ensure successful instructional outcomes. Ultimately, these findings prove that the "active" component of participation is not a random occurrence but a direct consequence of a well-executed project-based framework (Kwon et al., 2025; Montejo, 2022).

Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of Project-Based Learning

The findings identified five major challenges in implementing Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Araling Panlipunan: time constraints, limited resources and learning materials, student readiness and skill-related challenges, assessment and monitoring difficulties, and teacher preparation and professional development needs. Among these, time constraints were most prominent, as teachers and students struggled to complete projects, balance PBL with curriculum requirements, and provide adequate monitoring and feedback. Limited instructional materials, technology, internet access, and financial resources also affected students' ability to conduct independent research and complete quality outputs. Student-related challenges included weak research and collaboration skills, difficulty understanding project instructions, low confidence in presenting outputs, and dependence on teacher guidance. Teachers likewise experienced difficulties in developing fair rubrics, assessing individual contributions, managing group outputs, aligning projects with competencies, and handling increased workload due to limited PBL training. Overall, the findings suggest that effective PBL implementation requires adequate time, resources, learner preparation, appropriate assessment mechanisms, teacher training, and greater institutional flexibility to support authentic and sustained project-based learning (Mendoza, 2024; Yang et al., 2024; Afandi et al., 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2024; Batdi et al., 2024; Rezkilaturahmi et al., 2025; Miller & Thompson, 2025; Rendon, 2024; Guevarra, 2023; Morales, 2025).

Conclusions

Based on the findings, it was concluded that Project-Based Learning (PBL) served as a highly effective catalyst for classroom transformation in Araling Panlipunan, successfully shifting the pedagogical dynamic toward a student-centered model that bridged the gap between theoretical social inquiry and real-life application. The significant positive correlation ($r=0.68$) proved that student engagement was a direct consequence of instructional quality, confirming that as project frameworks became more structured and authentic, students transitioned from passive learners to active stakeholders. However, the study also concluded that the full potential of PBL was hindered by a critical "scaffolding gap" and underutilized assessment practices, suggesting

that student confidence and deep cognitive growth were dependent on explicit teacher-led roadmaps and consistent formative feedback. Furthermore, the identified challenges regarding time, resources, and teacher preparation led to the conclusion that PBL sustainability was not merely a classroom-level effort but required institutional flexibility and a supportive culture of psychological safety to overcome systemic barriers. Ultimately, the study deduced that while PBL significantly predicted higher participation, its success in the social sciences was contingent upon balancing high student autonomy with robust instructional support and specialized professional development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that students actively participate in diverse project roles and strengthen communication, leadership, collaboration, and independent learning skills; teachers develop scaffolded project guides, milestone checklists, and digital research activities to improve instructional clarity and reduce learners' dependence on teacher guidance; school administrators provide flexible scheduling, cross-curricular project opportunities, and accessible digital resource banks to address time and resource constraints; parents strengthen home-school collaboration by supporting project tasks and engaging learners in discussions of relevant community issues; curriculum developers review Araling Panlipunan competencies and promote integrated performance tasks that allow deeper inquiry without excessive content pressure; policymakers and educational leaders provide clear guidelines, funding, and professional development on performance-based assessment and objective rubric development; and future researchers conduct longitudinal or mixed-methods studies to examine the sustained effects of Project-Based Learning on students' civic engagement and determine whether its observed relationship with active participation remains consistent across different subjects, contexts, and learner profiles.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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