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Factors Affecting the Academic Engagement of Junior High School Learners in the ARAL Program: A Correlational Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study examined basic psychological need satisfaction and frustration in relation to multidimensional academic engagement among junior high school learners in the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program and sought to inform a guidance intervention. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, it surveyed all 91 ARAL learners at Zosimo A. Gulle Memorial National High School, Talibon, Bohol, during Academic Year 2025–2026 through complete enumeration. Adapted psychological-needs and student-engagement questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson product–moment correlation. Learners reported high psychological need satisfaction (M = 4.08), with relatedness strongest, alongside high need frustration (M = 3.56), driven principally by autonomy frustration (M = 4.14). Overall academic engagement was high (M = 3.52), although emotional engagement (M = 3.27) was moderate relative to behavioral (M = 3.67) and cognitive engagement (M = 3.61). Neither need satisfaction ($r = 0.168$, $p = 0.111$) nor frustration ($r = 0.103$, $p = 0.333$) showed a statistically significant relationship with overall engagement. Thus, reported participation and learning strategies coexisted with perceived pressure and limited emotional enthusiasm, without establishing causal explanations. The study recommends implementing and evaluating a data-driven guidance and counseling plan emphasizing learner choice, supportive tutoring, peer interaction, and psychosocial monitoring. Findings are limited by a single-school cohort, adapted self-report measures, and correlational design. This localized evidence supports sustainable, learner-centered academic recovery and guidance planning aligned with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Keywords: *Academic Engagement, Academic Recovery, ARAL Program, Guidance Counseling, Junior High School, Need Frustration, Need Satisfaction*

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic engagement is a fundamental component of meaningful learning, encompassing students' behavioral participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment in educational activities. These dimensions are associated with academic achievement, psychological well-being, and sustained participation in school (Wong et al., 2024). Hattie (2023) emphasizes the importance of evidence-based instructional practices and learner-centered conditions in improving educational outcomes. However, students' participation in academic recovery programs does not necessarily indicate genuine interest, motivation, or sustained engagement, particularly when learning activities are perceived as compulsory or stigmatizing. The Philippines continues to confront substantial challenges in foundational learning. The World Bank and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022) reported that approximately 91% of Filipino children at late primary-school age lacked minimum reading proficiency, highlighting the urgency of effective learning recovery. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) also documented continuing challenges in Filipino students' academic performance. In response, Republic Act No. 12028 institutionalized the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program to provide structured learning interventions for students requiring additional academic support (Republic of the Philippines, 2024). The Department of Education (2025) subsequently established guidelines to support its implementation. At Zosimo A. Gulle Memorial National High School in Talibon, Bohol, preliminary observations indicated that some junior high school learners attending ARAL sessions exhibited limited enthusiasm, passive participation, and concerns about peer judgment. These circumstances raised questions about whether attendance reflected meaningful psychological engagement. Accordingly, this study examined the basic psychological need satisfaction and frustration of ARAL learners in relation to their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. The findings were intended to provide an empirical basis for a localized Data-Driven Guidance and Counseling Intervention Plan.

Research Problem

Although academic recovery programs provide structured opportunities to address learning deficiencies, their effectiveness requires attention to learners' psychological experiences and engagement. Student engagement is multidimensional, and behavioral participation may not necessarily correspond with emotional identification or cognitive investment (Wong et al., 2024). Research indicates that autonomy-supportive educational environments are associated with positive student engagement, while controlling and need-thwarting practices are associated with less favorable motivational and psychological outcomes (Yang et al., 2022; Howard et al., 2025). Within the ARAL Program, learners may experience different levels of satisfaction and frustration concerning autonomy, relatedness, and competence. These psychological experiences warrant examination because students may comply with instructional requirements while experiencing limited personal choice, social connection, or confidence in their academic abilities. The study therefore addressed the insufficient localized evidence concerning the relationships between basic psychological need satisfaction, need frustration, and multidimensional academic engagement among junior high school learners participating in the ARAL Program. Specifically, it investigated whether psychological need satisfaction and frustration were significantly associated with academic engagement among learners at Zosimo A. Gulle Memorial National High School during Academic Year 2025–2026. The study also sought to identify areas of concern that could inform a guidance and counseling intervention responsive to the learners' academic and psychosocial needs.

Assumptions of the Study

The study was guided by the assumption that learners' academic engagement can be examined through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, while their basic psychological needs can be assessed through satisfaction and frustration involving autonomy, relatedness, and competence. These constructs are supported by contemporary educational research highlighting the relevance of psychological need support and multidimensional engagement in students' educational experiences (Howard et al., 2025; Wong et al., 2024). It was further assumed that learners could provide meaningful self-reports of their psychological experiences and engagement during ARAL sessions. The study recognized that need satisfaction and frustration are conceptually distinct and may coexist within the same educational environment (Vite et al., 2024). However, the existence, direction, and statistical significance of relationships among the study variables were treated as empirical questions rather than predetermined outcomes. Given the descriptive-correlational design, the study did not assume that psychological need satisfaction or frustration directly caused changes in academic engagement.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to determine the levels of basic psychological need satisfaction, need frustration, and academic engagement among junior high school learners participating in the ARAL Program at Zosimo A. Gulle Memorial National High School during Academic Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it sought to describe the respondents' demographic profiles in terms of age, gender, birth order, living arrangement, and monthly family income; determine their levels of autonomy, relatedness, and competence satisfaction; assess their corresponding levels of psychological need frustration; and describe their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive academic engagement. Furthermore, the study examined the statistical relationships between basic psychological need satisfaction and academic engagement and between basic psychological need frustration and academic engagement at the 0.05 level of significance. Based on the findings, it aimed to formulate a Data-Driven Guidance and Counseling Intervention Plan addressing the identified academic and psychosocial needs of ARAL learners.

Theoretical or Conceptual Basis

The study was anchored on Self-Determination Theory, the Participation-Identification Model, and the Multidimensional Engagement Framework. These established perspectives provided complementary explanations of learners' psychological needs, school participation, sense of belonging, and academic engagement. Contemporary research supports their continued relevance in examining motivational and educational processes. Self-Determination Theory served as the principal theoretical foundation for examining basic psychological need satisfaction and frustration. It emphasizes three fundamental needs: autonomy, referring to the experience of personal choice and volition; relatedness, representing social connection and belonging; and competence, reflecting perceived capability and mastery. Contemporary evidence indicates that educational environments supporting these needs are generally associated with favorable motivational, engagement, and well-being outcomes, whereas need-thwarting experiences are associated with less favorable outcomes (Howard et al., 2025). Vite et al. (2024) further demonstrated that autonomy satisfaction and frustration have distinct relationships with psychological well-being among school-aged learners. These concepts informed the study's examination of psychological need satisfaction and frustration as independent variables. The Participation-Identification Model provided a complementary perspective on the relationship between students' observable participation and their psychological identification with school. Within the ARAL context, this perspective helped distinguish compliance with academic activities from students' sense of belonging and personal investment in learning. Contemporary research on autonomy-supportive teaching emphasizes

the importance of classroom relationships, student voice, and meaningful participation in maintaining engagement (Yang et al., 2022). The Multidimensional Engagement Framework guided the measurement of academic engagement through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Behavioral engagement involves participation, effort, and adherence to learning activities; emotional engagement concerns interest, enjoyment, belonging, and affective responses; and cognitive engagement reflects strategic learning, self-regulation, and willingness to invest effort in understanding academic content. Wong et al. (2024) confirmed the importance of distinguishing these dimensions when examining their associations with academic achievement and student well-being. Integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study examined basic psychological need satisfaction and frustration across autonomy, relatedness, and competence as independent variables and multidimensional academic engagement as the dependent variable. Respondents' demographic characteristics provided descriptive context, while the proposed Data-Driven Guidance and Counseling Intervention Plan constituted the intended practical output. This framework supported the investigation of statistical associations without assuming causal relationships.

The study primarily aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education by examining psychological and engagement-related concerns among learners participating in an academic recovery program. Its findings may inform targeted guidance interventions that support meaningful participation, inclusive learning, and sustained educational engagement. It also supports SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being by addressing psychological need satisfaction, frustration, emotional engagement, and student well-being. Furthermore, SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities is relevant to its potential contribution to more responsive educational support for learners experiencing academic disadvantage. These alignments are consistent with international priorities concerning inclusive education, learner well-being, and equitable educational opportunities (United Nations, 2024; OECD, 2023). Overall, the study contributes to educational and institutional sustainability by providing localized evidence that may guide responsive counseling services, learner-centered academic recovery initiatives, and improved support for students requiring additional educational assistance.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the psychological needs and academic engagement of junior high school learners enrolled in the ARAL Program. The descriptive component determined the respondents' demographic profiles, levels of basic psychological need satisfaction and frustration in terms of autonomy, relatedness, and competence, and academic engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. The correlational component examined the direction, strength, and statistical significance of relationships between psychological need satisfaction, need frustration, and academic engagement without manipulating the study variables. The research also followed an Input-Process-Output framework, wherein the identified psychological and engagement indicators served as inputs, data collection and statistical analysis constituted the process, and the proposed Data-Driven Guidance and Counseling Intervention Plan represented the output.

Research Locale or Study Setting

The study was conducted at Zosimo A. Gulle Memorial National High School, a public secondary school located in Barangay Bagacay, Talibon, Bohol, Philippines, during Academic Year 2025–2026. The school serves learners from a rural coastal community where agriculture and fishing are major sources of household income. Its educational environment reflects socioeconomic

conditions that may affect students' access to learning resources, school attendance, and academic participation. The institution provides junior and senior high school education and implements the ARAL Program to address learning deficiencies among students requiring additional academic assistance. The school was selected because it directly serves the target population whose psychological needs and academic engagement were investigated.

Participants or Data Sources

The respondents consisted of 91 junior high school learners officially enrolled in the ARAL Program at Zosimo A. Gulle Memorial National High School. Complete enumeration was employed to include all active ARAL learners across Grades 7 to 10. The respondents comprised 22 Grade 7 learners (24.18%), 25 Grade 8 learners (27.47%), 24 Grade 9 learners (26.37%), and 20 Grade 10 learners (21.98%). These learners were enrolled in the program because previous diagnostic assessments or academic records indicated that they had not achieved the required minimum proficiency levels in core learning areas. Their demographic profiles were examined in terms of age, gender, birth order, living arrangement, and monthly family income.

Research Instruments or Materials

Data were gathered using an adapted structured survey questionnaire consisting of three sections. The first section collected demographic information, including age, gender, birth order, living arrangement, and monthly family income. The second section utilized the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale (BPNSFS), adapted from Chen et al., comprising 24 items distributed equally across six dimensions: autonomy satisfaction, autonomy frustration, relatedness satisfaction, relatedness frustration, competence satisfaction, and competence frustration. Each dimension contained four indicators measured using a five-point Likert scale. The third section employed an Academic Engagement Scale adapted from the Multidimensional Student Engagement Scale by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris. It contained 15 items, consisting of five indicators each for behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, measured using a five-point response scale. These instruments provided quantitative measures of the respondents' psychological experiences and academic engagement.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher initially secured administrative permission by submitting a formal request to the school principal of Zosimo A. Gulle Memorial National High School. Following approval, coordination was undertaken with ARAL Program facilitators and class advisers to schedule questionnaire administration. Before data collection, the respondents were oriented regarding the objectives, procedures, confidentiality measures, and voluntary nature of participation. Parent-student informed consent documents were distributed and signed before the questionnaires were administered. The researcher personally supervised the survey administration, provided clarification when necessary, and ensured that respondents understood the instructions. Upon completion, the questionnaires were collected, checked, securely organized, and coded for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts and percentages were employed to describe the respondents' demographic characteristics, while weighted means and standard deviations determined the levels and variability of psychological need satisfaction, need frustration, and academic engagement. Responses were interpreted using a five-point scale ranging from very low to very high, with corresponding mean intervals of 1.00–1.79, 1.80–2.59, 2.60–3.39, 3.40–4.19, and 4.20–5.00. The Pearson Product-

Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the direction, strength, and statistical significance of the relationships between psychological need satisfaction and academic engagement and between psychological need frustration and academic engagement. Both null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The statistical findings were subsequently interpreted to identify areas requiring attention in the proposed Data-Driven Guidance and Counseling Intervention Plan.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of the respondents. Administrative permission was obtained before data collection, and informed consent was secured from participating learners and their parents. Respondents were informed of the study's objectives, procedures, and voluntary nature, including their right to withdraw at any stage without academic penalties. Confidentiality was maintained by securely compiling, coding, and handling the collected information in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The researcher also provided appropriate guidance during questionnaire administration to ensure that participants understood the instructions and could respond without unnecessary pressure. These measures supported the responsible collection and use of student information for academic research purposes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

3.1.1 Age and Gender

The respondents comprised 91 learners, with 14-year-olds representing the largest age group (38.46%), followed by 15-year-olds (24.18%) and 13-year-olds (19.78%). Learners older than 15 accounted for 13.19%, while 12-year-olds represented 4.40%. In terms of gender, 66 respondents were female (72.53%), while 25 were male (27.47%), indicating a predominantly female population within the ARAL Program. The distribution indicates that most respondents were in early to middle adolescence, a period when academic participation and school belonging are particularly relevant developmental concerns. Štremfel et al. (2024) identified age, gender, and educational experiences among the factors associated with students' sense of school belonging. However, the present findings describe only the composition of the respondent population and do not establish differences in motivation or engagement between male and female learners. The demographic profile provides context for understanding the psychological and academic experiences reported by the surveyed students.

3.1.2 Birth Order and Living Arrangement

Regarding birth order, 46 respondents (50.55%) were middle children, while eldest and youngest children each accounted for 20 respondents (21.98%). Only five learners (5.49%) were only children. In terms of living arrangements, 64 respondents (70.33%) lived with both parents, 15 (16.48%) lived with guardians, and 12 (13.19%) lived with one parent. These findings indicate that most respondents came from households with both parents present, although alternative caregiving arrangements were also represented. Family relationships and household environments are relevant contexts for understanding adolescent psychological experiences. Štremfel et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of relationships with parents, peers, and teachers in developing students' sense of belonging. Although most respondents lived with both parents, the study did not statistically examine the relationships between living arrangements, birth order, and psychological need satisfaction. Consequently, the observed family

characteristics should be interpreted as descriptive information rather than evidence that particular household structures explain learners' engagement or psychological conditions.

3.1.3 Monthly Family Income

The findings revealed that 70 respondents (76.92%) belonged to households earning below ₱10,000 monthly, representing the largest income category. Thirteen respondents (14.29%) reported family incomes between ₱10,001 and ₱20,000, while seven (7.69%) came from households earning above ₱30,000. Only one respondent (1.10%) belonged to the ₱20,001–₱30,000 income category. These results indicate that most ARAL learners in the study came from households within the lowest reported income bracket. The socioeconomic distribution is relevant to the educational context because financial resources may shape access to learning opportunities and academic support. Tan (2024), through an umbrella review, established that socioeconomic status is associated with student learning outcomes, although this relationship varies across contextual and individual conditions. The predominance of lower-income households in the present study highlights the importance of considering learners' socioeconomic circumstances when planning academic recovery assistance. However, the study did not test whether monthly family income was significantly related to psychological need satisfaction, frustration, or academic engagement.

3.2 Level of Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction

3.2.1 Autonomy Satisfaction

The respondents demonstrated a high level of autonomy satisfaction, with an aggregate mean of 4.12. The highest-rated indicator concerned making decisions that reflected personal desires (M = 4.35), followed by experiencing choice and freedom in daily activities (M = 4.29). The lowest-rated indicator concerned whether personal choices expressed the learner's authentic identity (M = 3.88), although this remained within the high satisfaction category. These findings indicate that respondents generally perceived themselves as capable of making meaningful personal decisions. The results suggest that learners experienced a relatively strong sense of personal choice, although perceptions of authentic self-expression were comparatively lower. Vite et al. (2024) found that autonomy satisfaction was positively associated with psychological well-being among school-aged learners. Similarly, Howard et al. (2025) emphasized the relevance of autonomy-supportive educational environments to student motivation and engagement. In the present study, the high autonomy satisfaction score indicates favorable self-reported experiences of choice, but it does not establish that these experiences directly increased academic engagement.

3.2.2 Relatedness Satisfaction

Relatedness satisfaction recorded the highest mean among the three psychological need satisfaction dimensions (M = 4.19), indicating a high level of perceived interpersonal connection. The strongest indicator concerned feeling close to important people (M = 4.35), followed by experiencing mutual connection with caring individuals (M = 4.30). The lowest-rated indicator involved experiencing warmth when spending time with others (M = 4.04), which remained within the high category. These results suggest that respondents generally perceived meaningful relationships and emotional connections within their social environments. The high relatedness satisfaction score reflects the importance of social connection in the respondents' reported psychological experiences. Štremfel et al. (2024) identified supportive relationships with family

members, peers, and teachers as important conditions associated with school belonging. Howard et al. (2025) likewise emphasized the relevance of relatedness-supportive behaviors in educational settings. Although the respondents reported favorable interpersonal connections, these findings do not establish the specific contribution of family or peer relationships to academic engagement because those relationships were not examined separately.

3.2.3 Competence Satisfaction

The respondents reported a high level of competence satisfaction (M = 3.94), although this was the lowest among the three satisfaction dimensions. The highest-rated indicator was feeling capable of performing activities (M = 4.18), followed by confidence in performing tasks effectively (M = 3.91). The lowest-rated indicator concerned perceived competence in achieving personal goals (M = 3.82). These results indicate that respondents generally expressed confidence in their abilities while reporting comparatively lower confidence in achieving broader personal goals. The findings suggest that respondents perceived themselves as capable of completing immediate activities, although confidence concerning goal attainment was comparatively less pronounced. Wang et al. (2024) demonstrated that educational interventions grounded in Self-Determination Theory can support students' competence satisfaction. Patall et al. (2024) also identified positive associations between classroom structure and students' competence beliefs. These studies provide a relevant context for interpreting the respondents' reported confidence, although the present research did not evaluate the effectiveness of particular instructional strategies.

Overall, basic psychological need satisfaction was high (grand mean = 4.08), with relatedness satisfaction ranking highest, followed by autonomy and competence satisfaction.

3.3 Level of Basic Psychological Need Frustration

3.3.1 Autonomy Frustration

Autonomy frustration obtained an aggregate mean of 4.14, indicating a high level of perceived pressure and restricted personal choice. The highest-rated indicator concerned viewing daily activities as a continuous chain of obligations (M = 4.34), followed by feeling forced to participate in activities that respondents would not independently choose (M = 4.21). The perception of having to perform most daily activities received the lowest rating (M = 3.92), although it remained within the high frustration category. These findings indicate that respondents frequently experienced obligation and external pressure in their daily activities. The coexistence of high autonomy satisfaction and frustration suggests that learners may experience personal choice in some situations while perceiving substantial pressure in others. Vite et al. (2024) emphasized that autonomy satisfaction and frustration represent distinct psychological experiences with different associations with well-being. Howard et al. (2025) likewise distinguished need-supportive from need-thwarting behaviors in educational settings. The findings highlight autonomy frustration as a prominent concern among respondents, although the data do not establish whether the reported pressure originated specifically from ARAL activities, family expectations, or other circumstances.

3.3.2 Relatedness Frustration

The respondents demonstrated a moderate level of relatedness frustration (M = 3.40). The perception that important individuals were emotionally cold or distant received the highest mean (M = 3.76), followed by feeling excluded from desired social groups (M = 3.70). In contrast, the belief that personal relationships were merely superficial recorded the lowest rating (M = 2.56).

These findings indicate that respondents experienced certain forms of interpersonal difficulty despite reporting high overall relatedness satisfaction. The findings suggest that meaningful social relationships may coexist with occasional feelings of exclusion or emotional distance. Štremfel et al. (2024) identified school belonging as a multidimensional experience shaped by interactions across personal, relational, and educational contexts. Howard et al. (2025) further emphasized that supportive and thwarting interpersonal experiences may have different psychological implications. The present findings therefore indicate the importance of considering both favorable social connections and perceived interpersonal difficulties when examining learners' psychological experiences.

3.3.3 Competence Frustration

Competence frustration registered an aggregate mean of 3.13, indicating a moderate level of perceived inadequacy and performance-related difficulty. The highest-rated indicator concerned serious doubts about performing tasks effectively (M = 3.76), followed by insecurity regarding personal abilities (M = 3.26). The lowest rating involved feeling like a failure because of mistakes (M = 2.63). These results indicate that respondents experienced some performance-related self-doubt, although feelings of general failure were comparatively less pronounced. The findings suggest that learners may experience confidence in certain activities while simultaneously expressing uncertainty about their abilities. Patall et al. (2024) identified classroom structure and instructional guidance as relevant to students' academic competence beliefs. Wang et al. (2024) likewise reported that psychological need-supportive educational interventions can improve competence satisfaction. These findings support the relevance of competence-related experiences in learning environments, although the present study did not determine whether respondents' self-doubt was associated with their actual academic achievement. Overall, the respondents demonstrated high psychological need frustration (grand mean = 3.56), primarily reflecting autonomy frustration (M = 4.14), followed by moderate relatedness frustration (M = 3.40) and competence frustration (M = 3.13). The simultaneous high ratings for need satisfaction and frustration indicate that these experiences were not mutually exclusive within the surveyed population.

3.4 Level of Academic Engagement

3.4.1 Behavioral Engagement

The respondents demonstrated a high level of behavioral engagement (M = 3.67). Task persistence, following tutor instructions, and completing assignments on time each recorded a mean of 3.89. Regular attendance and punctuality also received a high rating (M = 3.45). However, active participation in group activities and discussions recorded the lowest mean (M = 3.23), indicating moderate engagement. These findings suggest that learners generally complied with academic requirements and exerted effort, although collaborative participation was comparatively less frequent. The results demonstrate a distinction between compliance with individual academic responsibilities and active involvement in collaborative learning. Patall et al. (2024) found that structured classroom environments were positively associated with student engagement and academic competence beliefs. Yang et al. (2022) likewise identified autonomy-supportive teaching as relevant to sustained student engagement. The present findings suggest that strong task completion and rule-following may coexist with less frequent group participation, indicating that different behavioral indicators should be considered when assessing the quality of learner involvement.

3.4.2 Emotional Engagement

Emotional engagement obtained an aggregate mean of 3.27, indicating a moderate level and representing the lowest of the three engagement dimensions. The strongest indicator concerned recognizing the value of ARAL lessons for personal improvement (M = 3.47). Positive motivation (M = 3.30) and excitement about learning new concepts (M = 3.26) remained moderate. Enjoyment of ARAL activities recorded the lowest mean (M = 3.11). These findings indicate that learners generally recognized the usefulness of the program but experienced comparatively limited enjoyment and enthusiasm. The findings suggest a distinction between recognizing the educational value of learning activities and experiencing positive emotions during participation. Zheng et al. (2023) demonstrated that academic emotions are associated with self-regulated learning processes, with enjoyment showing positive relationships with metacognitive strategies. Wong et al. (2024) further emphasized the importance of emotional engagement in understanding educational and well-being outcomes. The moderate emotional engagement reported in the present study identifies an area requiring attention, particularly in making academic recovery experiences more engaging and personally meaningful.

3.4.3 Cognitive Engagement

The respondents reported high cognitive engagement (M = 3.61). The highest-rated indicator involved developing personal strategies for remembering formulas and concepts (M = 3.76), followed by checking completed work before submission (M = 3.75). Connecting ARAL lessons with regular academic subjects also received a high rating (M = 3.51). Independent goal setting for mastering learning modules received the lowest mean (M = 3.44), although it remained within the high engagement category. These results indicate that respondents reported using learning strategies and monitoring their academic work. The findings highlight the respondents' reported use of cognitive and self-regulatory learning practices. Zheng et al. (2023) emphasized that self-regulated learning involves cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and emotional processes. Wong et al. (2024) also identified cognitive engagement as an important dimension associated with educational outcomes. Although respondents reported using memory strategies and checking their work, the study relied on self-reported engagement rather than direct assessment of learning strategies or academic performance. Overall, academic engagement was high (grand mean = 3.52), with behavioral engagement obtaining the highest mean (3.67), followed by cognitive engagement (3.61), while emotional engagement remained moderate (3.27). The differences among these dimensions demonstrate that strong task participation and reported strategy use did not necessarily coincide with equally strong emotional involvement.

3.5 Relationships Between Psychological Needs and Academic Engagement

3.5.1 Relationship Between Psychological Need Satisfaction and Academic Engagement

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a negligible positive relationship between basic psychological need satisfaction and academic engagement ($r = 0.168$, $p = 0.111$). Because the probability value exceeded the 0.05 significance level, the first null hypothesis was not rejected. The findings indicate that the study did not establish a statistically significant linear relationship between overall psychological need satisfaction and academic engagement among the 91 ARAL learners. The result differs from the generally positive associations reported in broader educational research. Howard et al. (2025) found that supportive educational behaviors were associated with favorable student outcomes, including engagement, while Yang et al. (2022)

identified autonomy-supportive teaching as relevant to engagement over time. Nevertheless, these findings do not require every study or educational setting to demonstrate a statistically significant association. The present result indicates insufficient statistical evidence of a linear relationship within this population. It does not establish that psychological satisfaction is irrelevant or that institutional requirements and family expectations are responsible for the observed engagement levels, because those potential explanations were not independently tested.

3.5.2 Relationship Between Psychological Need Frustration and Academic Engagement

The relationship between basic psychological need frustration and academic engagement also yielded a negligible positive correlation ($r = 0.103$, $p = 0.333$). Since the probability value exceeded the 0.05 significance level, the second null hypothesis was not rejected. These results indicate that the study did not establish a statistically significant linear relationship between overall psychological need frustration and academic engagement. Despite the respondents' high level of need frustration, particularly autonomy frustration, their overall academic engagement remained high. The findings demonstrate that elevated reported need frustration was not accompanied by a statistically significant association with overall engagement scores in this group. However, the absence of a significant correlation does not establish that frustration has no psychological or educational implications. Vite et al. (2024) documented relationships between autonomy frustration and psychological well-being among school-aged learners, while Howard et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of distinguishing psychological need support from need thwarting. The findings therefore support continued attention to autonomy-related difficulties and emotional engagement in the proposed guidance and counseling intervention. Such support should be understood as responsive to the respondents' descriptive needs rather than as a treatment whose effectiveness has been established by the present correlational analysis.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that junior high school learners enrolled in the ARAL Program at Zosimo A. Gulle Memorial National High School experienced both high basic psychological need satisfaction and high need frustration. Relatedness was their strongest area of satisfaction, whereas autonomy frustration was the most prominent difficulty, reflecting perceived obligations and restricted choices. Although overall academic engagement was high, behavioral participation and cognitive strategy use exceeded emotional engagement, which remained moderate. Pearson correlation tests found no statistically significant relationships between academic engagement and either need satisfaction ($r = 0.168$, $p = 0.111$) or need frustration ($r = 0.103$, $p = 0.333$). These findings do not establish that psychological needs are unrelated to engagement in every context or that external pressures cause participation. Rather, they reveal a local pattern in which reported task involvement coexists with psychological strain and limited enthusiasm. The study thus provides a focused basis for guidance planning beyond attendance and task completion.

School administrators, the ARAL coordinator, and guidance personnel should implement and evaluate the proposed Data-Driven Guidance and Counseling Intervention Plan, prioritizing autonomy frustration and moderate emotional engagement. Tutors should provide meaningful choices within learning activities, explain the purpose of tasks, and offer supportive feedback while maintaining essential academic structure. Guidance personnel should coordinate peer-

led motivation sessions, regular psychosocial check-ins, and targeted support for learners reporting pressure or diminished interest. Teacher orientations should cover autonomy-supportive communication, recognition of stress, and appropriate referrals. Collaboration with parents should reinforce encouragement and learner choice rather than relying solely on compliance. The school should monitor changes in psychological need satisfaction, frustration, and engagement through follow-up surveys and review whether the interventions are feasible and responsive to learners' experiences. Existing strengths in social connection, behavioral participation, and cognitive strategy use should be maintained as the school strengthens learners' emotional involvement in academic recovery.

The findings are limited to 91 learners enrolled in the ARAL Program at one public secondary school during Academic Year 2025–2026. Although complete enumeration covered the school's identified ARAL cohort, the results cannot be assumed to represent learners in other schools or settings. Psychological needs and engagement were measured through adapted self-report questionnaires, and the correlational design did not involve manipulation or establish causation. The study assessed overall relationships rather than testing demographic differences or additional contextual explanations. Future studies could examine other ARAL populations, include additional relevant factors, and use repeated measurements or complementary qualitative data to clarify patterns over time.

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