

## Enhancing Learners' Engagement in Araling Panlipunan through Gamification: A Philippine Case Study

Kenneth P. Panga<sup>1</sup>, Marjorie C. Doroin<sup>2</sup>, John Marc Campo<sup>3</sup>, Cherrynel Bohayo<sup>4</sup>,  
Silva P. Oxidental<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>College of Education, Partido State University, Goa, Camarines Sur, Philippines

<sup>5</sup>Department of Education- San Rafael National High School, Tigaon, Camarines Sur, Philippines

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### ABSTRACT

Learner disengagement remains a pressing concern in Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies) classes, where the subject is often viewed as monotonous and detached from students' interests. This action research investigated the potential of gamification as an innovative approach to enhance learners' engagement in Araling Panlipunan. Conducted during the 2024–2025 school year, the study involved a selected Grade 10 class consisting of forty (40) learners at San Rafael National High School in Tigaon, Camarines Sur, Philippines. A single-group research design was employed, and purposive sampling was used to select participants from a section with relatively low classroom engagement and academic performance. A five-week intervention was implemented, integrating game-based elements such as point systems, leaderboards, and reward mechanisms into Araling Panlipunan lessons. Learner engagement was tracked through structured scoring for participation and the quality of responses, supported by weekly leaderboards that fostered healthy competition. The pre-intervention results revealed a Mean Percentage Score (MPS) of 44.44% in engagement-related indicators, classified as "Did Not Meet Expectations." Post-intervention assessments significantly rose to 86.88%, categorized as "Very Satisfactory." The post-intervention results showed a statistically significant improvement ( $p < 0.001$ ), confirming the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing engagement in Araling Panlipunan. Based on the findings, it is strongly recommended that educators integrate gamified strategies into classroom discussions to cultivate a more engaging learning environment.

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### Corresponding Author:

Kenneth P. Panga

College of Education, Partido State University, Goa, Camarines Sur, Philippines

Email: [kpanga.pbox@parsu.edu.ph](mailto:kpanga.pbox@parsu.edu.ph)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape has recently witnessed a significant shift, with educators seeking innovative teaching strategies to engage students and improve their academic

performance. One significant strategy is the application of gamification in the teaching and learning process. Gamification was coined by British computer programmer Nick Pelling in 2002; however, it was not until the second half of 2010 that the term gained widespread adoption as industry players and conferences began to popularize its use [1].

In the Philippine educational context, integrating gamification aligns with national policies promoting innovative teaching methodologies. The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533) mandates a learner-centered curriculum that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and engagement. Additionally, the Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 8, s. 2015 outlines the importance of formative assessments and interactive learning strategies, reinforcing the potential of gamification in improving student participation and performance. A study by Cerdeña et al. [2] demonstrated that gamified learning significantly enhances student motivation and interaction, making it a promising instructional approach in the Philippine setting.

According to Kurt [3], gamification is a teaching strategy that utilizes game-like features in a virtual learning environment, such as leveling up, earning points, and competing with other students, is known as gamification in education. To make learning more engaging and fun, many educators are implementing gamification, which can motivate students to interact with the content more thoroughly. According to the study by Nahial et al. (2024), gamification is an invaluable tool for increasing learners' collaboration, motivation, interest, engagement, and teamwork in the classroom.

Deterding et al. [1] describe gamification as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts. It aims to boost engagement, motivation, and problem-solving by creating interactive experiences that support users' sense of autonomy, competence, and connection.

Gamification is the integration of game elements, such as point systems, leaderboards, badges, or other game mechanics, into conventional learning activities to increase engagement and motivation. In contrast, game-based learning involves designing learning activities that incorporate game characteristics and principles directly into the educational experience [4].

Gamification and game-based learning may appear similar or even interchangeable. Although both blend gaming with education, they differ in how game elements are incorporated into the learning process. In game-based learning, the game itself serves as the primary learning experience, whereas in gamification, game elements are integrated into traditional teaching methods to enhance the learning process [5]. Research suggests that gamification is more adaptable to different subjects and instructional methods, making it a versatile tool for increasing student participation.

Gamification has been widely explored as a strategy to enhance both traditional and non-traditional teaching approaches. In the study of Smiderle et al. [6], gamification education can boost student engagement in ways similar to games, helping them develop specific skills and enhance their overall learning experience.

Similarly, Kermanshachi et al. [7] highlighted how gamified instructional methods help develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills when combined with innovative teaching approaches. These studies suggest that gamification, rather than altering content,

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improves the learning process by increasing participation and creating a more dynamic and student-centered environment.

Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies) is a crucial pillar of the curriculum, as it primarily aims to prepare and gear up students to become critical, reflective, productive, and responsible members of society, fully equipped with civic competence that is anchored to the profound understanding of cultural identity and nationalism while incorporating global understanding [8].

Given the concept of Araling Panlipunan, many learners find the subject of Araling Panlipunan boring and tedious. To support this claim, the study of Balante et al. [9] shows that many students perceived and defined Araling Panlipunan as an uninteresting and challenging subject. This is supported by the 2016-2018 National Achievement Test (NAT) results, which showed that Araling Panlipunan had the lowest mean percentage score among all tested subjects [9]. This NAT result is an excellent indicator of a crisis within the teaching and learning process in the Araling Panlipunan subject. Interestingly, it is evident that within different grade levels, students struggle to participate and engage in the learning process, considering the vast and broad topic of Araling Panlipunan.

Several studies have highlighted the challenges of engaging students in Araling Panlipunan, which covers history, government, culture, and economics. Research has shown that students often perceive Araling Panlipunan as uninteresting or challenging to relate to their daily experiences, leading to decreased participation and motivation [10]. One way to enhance students' critical thinking and analysis of historical and societal issues in Araling Panlipunan is through the use of interactive learning strategies, which significantly improve student engagement and understanding [11]. The study by Gonzales and Hermosa [12] states that many learners perceive Social Studies as boring because it involves memorizing past events and dates.

According to Ahmad [13], students' hesitation to voice their opinions in class is often linked to anxiety and fear of negative feedback rather than a lack of knowledge. Factors such as nervousness, tension when forced to answer, and concerns about pronunciation contribute to their reluctance. A study by Aguilod et al. [14] shows that social studies students typically struggle to express their ideas, beliefs, and concepts in the way they would like. Furthermore, a study by Akpama et al. [15] found that limited access to visual aids and inadequate library facilities negatively impacted students' academic performance in social studies. These few variables have been a condemning factor that underlies the problem of low student engagement in the field or subject of Araling Panlipunan.

In the study by Jabbarov et al. [16], as cited in Baguioro [17], one of the challenges faced by students that results in low academic performance and leads to difficulties in understanding the subject is language barriers, most of which involve the subject being taught in Filipino or Tagalog. It was found that these languages are difficult to understand, especially those whose native dialect is not Tagalog or Filipino. Furthermore, the lack of textbooks, reference materials, and qualified Social Studies teachers seemed to be the problem. Research also indicates that oral participation significantly enhances student engagement, particularly when discussing contemporary issues. Houser [18] found that oral participation is associated with indicators of motivation and learning. Similarly, Apat et al.

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[19] demonstrated that oral communication has a significant influence on students' learning engagement.

Studies have shown that while gamification has been widely explored in various subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and Language, there is a lack of research on its application in Araling Panlipunan [20]. Many existing studies focus on how gamification enhances engagement and motivation in STEM-related fields, yet its potential in social studies education remains underexplored [21]. Castro [22] highlights that traditional, lecture-based methods are commonly employed in teaching Araling Panlipunan and emphasizes the need for further research into integrating gamification strategies to enhance critical thinking, historical analysis, and student participation.

Research has consistently shown a positive relationship between student engagement and academic performance. Likewise, Bustos et al. [23] found that affective variables, including emotional engagement, significantly influenced students' reading comprehension. Similarly, Çali et al. [24] identified a correlation between overall student engagement and academic achievement, emphasizing the role of behavioral engagement as a key factor. These findings suggest that higher levels of learner engagement, particularly in behavioral aspects, are associated with improved academic outcomes.

Despite the well-established link between engagement and academic success, many students struggle to remain actively involved in classroom learning, particularly in challenging or less engaging subjects. Traditional teaching methods often fail to capture students' interest or cater to diverse learning styles, resulting in decreased motivation and participation. Innovative instructional approaches, such as gamification, have emerged as potential solutions to enhance engagement by incorporating game-like elements into discussions and learning activities.

At San Rafael National High School in the Municipality of Tigaon, Camarines Sur, Philippines, a gap analysis revealed that the engagement level of a selected Grade 10 class in Araling Panlipunan classes was below expectations. Limited participation and motivation were identified as contributing factors to their low academic performance. To address this issue, this study introduced gamification strategies to enhance learners' engagement. Over the course of five weeks, gamification elements were integrated into Araling Panlipunan lessons to enhance students' motivation and participation. This research aimed to assess the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing the engagement of Grade 10 learners at San Rafael National High School during the 2024-2025 school year.

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study employed a single-group design to examine the effectiveness of gamification, an approach that enhances learners' engagement in Araling Panlipunan. The design involved implementing an intervention and comparing the learners' engagement levels before and after its application.

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## 2.2 Participant Selection

The participants in the study were Grade 10 Pequeras learners from the regular class at San Rafael National High School during the 2024-2025 school year. Purposive sampling was used to select this group, as they were from a section with relatively lower academic performance than others. The group consisted of forty (40) learners, and their performance data provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the gamification approach.

## 2.3 Data Gathering Procedure

Before initiating the study, the researchers obtained formal approval from San Rafael National High School. A gap analysis was conducted to identify specific challenges in the Araling Panlipunan class that the intervention aimed to address. Following this, coordination was made with the Araling Panlipunan Department Head, who had been informed of the action plan and intervention. The class adviser was also informed about the research process, including its purpose, timeline, and the various activities involved. Once all permissions were granted, the researchers proceeded with the preparation and scheduling of the intervention.

## 2.4 Pre and Post-Test

To assess the effectiveness of the intervention, a pre-test and post-test were administered to the same group of Grade 10 learners. Both tests used the same questions to ensure consistency in measuring learning progress. The test items were validated by three Araling Panlipunan teachers who are considered experts in the subject, ensuring content relevance and alignment with the curriculum. The pre-test was conducted before the implementation of gamified strategies, while the post-test was administered afterward to evaluate improvement in understanding and engagement. Using identical, validated instruments helped ensure the reliability and fairness of the assessment.

## 2.5 Data Analysis

The Mean Percentage Score (MPS) was used to determine the learners' engagement levels based on their pre-test and post-test scores. This allowed the researchers to measure the learners' engagement before and after the implementation of gamification. The MPS also gauged how gamification influenced their participation and involvement in Araling Panlipunan class discussions. Calculating the MPS for both the pre-test and post-test helped assess changes in learners' engagement over time. The results are interpreted using the following (based on DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015: Grading Scale, Descriptive Equivalent, and Remarks).

Table 1. Interpretation of results

Percentage of Score	Interpretation
90%-100%	Outstanding
85%-89%	Very Satisfactory
80%-84%	Satisfactory
75%-79%	Fairly Satisfactory
75% below	Did Not Meet Expectations

Additionally, a paired t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in learners' engagement levels before and after the implementation of gamification. This statistical test assessed whether changes in engagement could be attributed to the intervention. The paired t-test compared learners' pre-test and post-test scores to identify any significant variations in their performance. It ensured that any observed differences were statistically significant and not due to random fluctuations. The test provided a framework for analyzing how the implementation of gamification influenced engagement levels. This method allowed for a deeper understanding of the impact of gamification on learners' involvement in Araling Panlipunan discussions.

Paired t-test

$$t = \frac{\sum d}{\sqrt{\frac{n(\sum d^2) - (\sum d)^2}{n-1}}} \quad (1)$$

Where:

$d$  = difference per paired value

$n$  = number of samples

## 2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for research. All necessary approvals were obtained from the school administration prior to the implementation. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, and the class adviser assisted in communicating procedures and expectations to the students. Transparency was maintained throughout the process, and learners' data were handled with strict confidentiality. Participation was voluntary, and all study participants were treated fairly, respectfully, and without coercion or undue influence.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Level of Engagement of Learners Prior to the Implementation of Gamification as an Effective Approach

Table 2 illustrates the level of engagement of forty (40) Grade 10 learners in Araling Panlipunan prior to the implementation of gamification as an approach. The data serves as a baseline for evaluating the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing learners' engagement, as shown below.

Table 2. Level of Engagement of Learners Prior to the Implementation of Gamification as an Effective Approach

	Mean Percentage Score	Qualitative Interpretation
Pre-test	44.44%	Did Not Meet Expectations

*Legend: 90%-100% - Outstanding, 85%-89% - Very Satisfactory, 80%-84% - Satisfactory, 75%-79% - Fairly Satisfactory;*

*75% below - Did Not Meet Expectations*

The pre-test scores of forty (40) Grade 10 learners in Araling Panlipunan are presented in Table 2, highlighting a Mean Percentage Score (MPS) of 44.44%, classified as 'Did Not Meet Expectations.' This reflects low engagement and comprehension under the

current approach. The result is corroborated by Estévez et al. [25], who found that low learner engagement often leads to poor academic performance. Similarly, Atay et al. [26] emphasized that passive learning environments reduce learners' motivation and participation.

### 3.2 Level of Engagement of Learners After the Implementation of Gamification as an Effective Approach

Table 3 presents the level of engagement of forty (40) Grade 10 learners in Araling Panlipunan after implementing gamification as an instructional approach. The data serves as a reference for assessing the effectiveness of gamification on learners' engagement, as shown below.

Table 3. Level of Engagement of Learners After Implementing Gamification as an Effective Approach.

	Mean Percentage Score	Qualitative Interpretation
Post-test	86.88%	Very Satisfactory

*Legend: 90%-100% - Outstanding, 85%-89% - Very Satisfactory, 80%-84% - Satisfactory, 75%-79% - Fairly Satisfactory; 75% below - Did Not Meet Expectations*

As shown in Table 3, the post-test scores of the same group indicate a Mean Percentage Score (MPS) of 86.88%, falling under the 'Very Satisfactory' category. This demonstrates a significant boost in engagement and comprehension. This finding aligns with the comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by Fan et al. [27], which reported a moderately positive effect of gamification on learner academic performance across various educational contexts.

### 3.3 Effectiveness of Gamification as an Approach in Enhancing Learners' Engagement in Araling Panlipunan

Table 4 presents the effectiveness of gamification as an approach to enhancing learners' engagement in Araling Panlipunan, as measured using a paired t-test.

Table 4. Effectiveness of Gamification as an Approach in Enhancing Learners' Engagement

Pair	Mean Difference	Paired T-test		Interpretation
		t-value	p-value (Two-Tailed)	
Pre-test & Post-test	-16.975	-32.296	<.001	Significant

*Legend: p < 0.05 - Significant*

A significant increase is observed between the pre-test and post-test scores, as analyzed using a paired samples t-test with a 5% margin of error. The p-value of <0.001 confirms a notable improvement in learner engagement and academic performance, as shown in Table 4.

This result aligns with the research of Kaymakci et al. [28], who highlighted that gamification enhances learners' engagement in learning environments. Similarly,

Lampropoulos and Sidiropoulos [29] found that integrating gamified elements in educational settings positively influenced student engagement and academic performance. These studies support the effectiveness of gamification in improving learner performance and involvement in classroom discussions.

### **3.4 Discussions**

The results reveal a significant improvement in the engagement of Grade 10 learners in Araling Panlipunan after using gamified instruction. Before the intervention, students demonstrated low levels of engagement and understanding, which affected their performance in the subject. This outcome reflected how conventional teaching methods did not sufficiently support learner motivation and participation. After introducing gamification, students became more involved and attentive during classroom activities. Their increased interest contributed to more effective learning experiences.

The integration of game-based elements led to noticeable improvements in both behavioral and academic outcomes among the learners. Features like point systems, rewards, and structured challenges stimulated motivation and consistent classroom engagement. These elements enabled students to participate more actively, resulting in a deeper understanding of the lesson content. The improved interaction within the class environment also created more opportunities for collaboration and peer support. The results suggest that learners responded positively to instructional methods that involved active participation.

The difference in scores between the pre-test and post-test indicates that the shift in instructional strategy had a measurable impact. The gamified approach provided learners with a structured yet dynamic way to interact with the material. This helped reinforce concepts more effectively than passive learning methods. The findings emphasize the importance of creating engaging learning conditions, particularly in subjects such as Araling Panlipunan, which require conceptual understanding. Overall, the data support the role of interactive strategies in improving student performance and engagement.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The pre-test results underscored the need for more engaging and learner-centered approaches in Araling Panlipunan, as students showed low motivation and participation under traditional teaching methods. To address this, gamification was introduced as an innovative intervention, incorporating point systems, rewards, and leaderboards aligned with lesson objectives. This strategy promoted collaboration, healthy competition, and active involvement, creating a more interactive and motivating learning environment.

Post-test results, supported by paired t-test analysis, revealed a statistically significant improvement in learner performance. These findings confirm that gamified instruction can effectively enhance student engagement, comprehension, and content retention in Araling Panlipunan.

In light of these positive outcomes, it is recommended that teachers incorporate gamification into their instructional practices, particularly in subjects that benefit from increased student interaction and motivation. Structured point systems, incentive-based

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recognition such as badges or rankings, and game-like challenges supporting individual and group participation can be effective tools when thoughtfully aligned with learning goals. Regular evaluation and refinement should be implemented based on student feedback and performance data to ensure the ongoing relevance and effectiveness of these strategies.

This study was conducted within a specific subject and learning context, which may limit the generalizability of its results. Future studies should explore the long-term effects of gamification and its application across diverse student populations and academic disciplines. Additionally, further research could investigate how gamification influences different learning styles and whether its effectiveness varies across age groups or educational levels.

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