

# Assessing Cognitive Behavior, Impact of Matatag Curriculum, and Academic Performance in Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan

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**Abstract:** This study examined the cognitive behavior of Grade 8 students, the perceived impact and extent of implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, and their association with academic performance in Araling Panlipunan. The objectives were to determine the levels of students' cognitive behavior, assess the curriculum's impact and implementation, and identify whether these variables are significantly related to academic achievement. A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized and conducted in a public secondary school. The respondents were Grade 8 students taking Araling Panlipunan, selected through purposive sampling. A structured, researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect data on cognitive behavior and curriculum-related variables, while students' academic performance was obtained from their subject grades. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as weighted mean and inferential statistics through correlation analysis. Findings showed that the respondents generally exhibited a good level of cognitive behavior, whereas the perceived impact and implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum were rated as moderate. Results of the hypothesis testing revealed that cognitive behavior, curriculum impact, and curriculum implementation did not have a statistically significant relationship with students' academic performance in Araling Panlipunan. The study concluded that academic achievement is not solely determined by these factors. It is recommended that educators consider other influential elements such as teaching approaches, classroom environment, and learner motivation, and implement more interactive and supportive instructional practices to improve students' academic performance in Araling Panlipunan.

**Keywords:** Social Studies, Cognitive Behavior, Academic Performance, Matatag Curriculum, Descriptive-Correlational, Cebu, Philippines

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social science uses logic and data to help students comprehend society, culture, and human behavior. It is a crucial component of early education because it influences how pupils perceive their environment and react to problems in the real world. According to Koichu et al. (2020), social science is integrated into daily life and helps students comprehend their experiences. Nonetheless, a lot of students still struggle with the subject or don't recognize its importance. According to Frieder and Simon (2024), those who study it more thoroughly frequently see its worth. Through the tactics they employ, teachers in Araling Panlipunan have a tremendous impact on students' academic performance and cognitive conduct. According to Ruiz-Jiménez et al. (2022), clear, encouraging, and consistent instruction improves student learning. Understanding how Grade 8 children process material cognitively and succeed academically has become more crucial with the switch to the Matatag curriculum.

The degree to which Grade 8 pupils in Araling Panlipunan are adapting to the Matatag curriculum is a matter of increasing concern. Even though many students say they comprehend the lessons, they still have trouble with performance, understanding, and cognitive processing. While Urhahne (2020) asserts that instructional tactics have a significant impact on student motivation and learning outcomes, Peterson et al. (2021) contend that teachers' attitudes or actions may not always have a direct impact on students' thought processes. These contradictory results raise questions regarding the precise factors influencing academic performance and cognitive behavior in the new curriculum. Although

many students fall short of this level of cognitive involvement, Hwang et al. (2021) point out that students who think more deeply about the issue do better. Students' learning experiences are changing quickly as the curriculum incorporates new skills and methods. This begs the question of how these modifications affect their cognitive processes and academic performance. Improving social science education requires an understanding of these issues.

While a number of studies discuss how curriculum and instruction affect learning (Bartolome, 2023; Mariano & Mina-Roguel, 2025), there isn't much study that focuses on the academic performance and cognitive behavior of Filipino pupils following the Matatag curriculum. The majority of the literature now in publication originates from international contexts that differ from the educational setting in the Philippines. Local research on how Grade 8 students react to new Araling Panlipunan content and skills is crucial, according to Punzal et al. (2024). The impact of the curriculum's real-world, competency-based focus on students' thinking and comprehension has not yet been thoroughly investigated. Additionally, little is known about how the new curriculum affects students' performance in a subject that many already find challenging. Curriculum modifications must be assessed to ascertain whether they facilitate or impede student learning, according to Villeneuve et al. (2020). This disparity highlights the necessity of evaluating how the use of the Matatag curriculum affects social science performance and cognitive behavior.

This study aims to determine how the Matatag curriculum affects the academic achievement of Grade 8 pupils in Araling Panlipunan by evaluating their cognitive behavior. It aims to comprehend how students react to curriculum changes, interact with new competencies, and process information. The study also looks at whether teaching methods that are in line with the Matatag curriculum encourage deeper thinking and improved performance. The study aims to determine elements that facilitate or impede learning under the new curriculum by assessing students' cognitive habits. The objective is to produce insights that can enhance the delivery of the curriculum and increase students' performance and comprehension. Additionally, the goal of this research is to help educators improve methods that promote cognitive development. All things considered, the study clarifies how the curriculum affects thinking and performance in Araling Panlipunan.

This study benefits teachers, students, and school administrators by offering proof of how the Matatag curriculum influences academic achievement and cognitive behavior. The results could help administrators enhance teacher preparation programs and curriculum implementation. In line with Guven and Cabakcor's (2023) claim that recognizing students' obstacles leads to improved teaching, the study emphasizes how instructional clarity and supportive methods affect student understanding. Better training that develops students' critical thinking abilities and gives Araling Panlipunan greater significance may be beneficial. The study also highlights how crucial it is to form cognitive habits that improve academic performance and practical application. Iivari et al. (2020) claim that when students apply their knowledge in a meaningful way in their everyday lives, they become more capable. In the end, the study promotes the growth of responsible, critical, and knowledgeable citizens.

## **II. THE PROBLEM**

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research assessed the cognitive behavior, implementation of the Matatag curriculum, and academic performance of Grade 8 students in Araling Panlipunan at the Science and Technology Education Center, Lapu-Lapu City, for school year 2025–2026 as a basis for the Action Plan.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the level of cognitive behavior of the respondents towards Araling Panlipunan?
2. As perceived by the respondents, what is the extent of the impact of the Matatag curriculum on learning achievement?
3. As perceived by the respondents, to what extent is the Matatag curriculum implemented by the teachers?
4. What is the level of academic performance of the respondents in Araling Panlipunan?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the:
  - 5.1. cognitive behavior and academic performance of the respondents in Araling Panlipunan.
  - 5.2. impact of the Matatag curriculum and academic performance of the respondents in Araling Panlipunan, and
  - 5.3. extent of Matatag curriculum implementation and academic performance of the respondents in Araling Panlipunan?

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section describes the procedures and techniques utilized to gather and handle the data in order to meet the study's objectives. It explains the collection, arrangement, and analysis of the data. These methods contributed to the accuracy and dependability of the study's findings.

#### **Design**

This study investigated the relationship between cognitive behavior and academic performance of Grade 8 students in Araling Panlipunan under the MATATAG Curriculum using a descriptive-correlational research design. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to measure and analyze the degree of association between variables without manipulating the learning environment. By focusing on quantifiable data, the study was able to provide an objective understanding of how cognitive behavior corresponded with students' academic outcomes, as guided by Johnson's (2021) theory on learning and cognition.

Data were collected from Grade 8 students enrolled in Araling Panlipunan classes under the MATATAG Curriculum. The primary instrument was a structured questionnaire that measured students' cognitive behavior, academic performance, and basic demographic information. The questionnaire was systematically administered to ensure consistency, and the responses were organized and prepared for statistical analysis. This process allowed for accurate recording and handling of data, ensuring that the findings reflected the students' actual performance and cognitive tendencies.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize students' cognitive behavior and academic performance, and correlation analysis to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the variables. This method made it possible to identify patterns and connections between cognitive behavior and learning outcomes under the MATATAG Curriculum. Overall, the descriptive-correlational design provided a practical and reliable framework to explore how cognitive behavior and curriculum implementation related to students' academic achievement.

### **IV. Flow of the Study**

The Input-Process-Output (IPO) paradigm is used in this study to gather and analyze data in a methodical manner, improving the accuracy and dependability of the findings.

This study meticulously gathers and analyzes data on Grade 8 pupils using the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model. To understand factors that may affect learning, information is obtained at the input stage, including the age, gender, parents' educational background, and family income of the pupils. The primary focus is on the cognitive behavior, impact of the MATATAG Curriculum, and academic performance of pupils in Araling Panlipunan. In order to identify correlations between variables, the data is arranged and examined at the process stage using basic statistics like averages, percentages, and Pearson r. A proposed strategy to enhance student learning and thinking is finally developed in the output stage, with a particular focus on alignment with the MATATAG Curriculum. Additionally, this approach will assist educators in improving the efficacy of their Araling Panlipunan teaching methods.

During the input step, background data on the Grade 8 pupils is gathered, including their age, gender, parents' highest level of education, and monthly family income. These specifics aid in comprehending the elements that could influence pupils' learning. The three primary variables of the study are the academic achievement of the kids in Araling Panlipunan, the influence of the Matatag Curriculum, and cognitive behavior.

The gathered data will be arranged, condensed, and examined throughout the process stage. The results will be described using standard statistical methods like weighted means, percentages, and frequency counts. Academic performance, curriculum impact, and cognitive behavior will all be examined using the Pearson r technique. The study also investigates the effects of instructional strategies and evaluation instruments on Araling Panlipunan students' performance.

Based on the findings, the study will develop a suggested plan in the output step. Particularly in accordance with the Matatag Curriculum, this plan seeks to enhance students' cognitive growth and academic achievement. It also acts as a manual for educators looking to improve their Araling Panlipunan teaching methods.

#### **Environment**

The study was conducted at the Science and Technology Education Center, located in Basak Marigondon, Lapu-Lapu City. The school provides sufficient classrooms, learning facilities, and resources that create a supportive environment for student learning. These facilities ensure that students have a comfortable and well-equipped space to engage in lessons, discussions, and activities essential for their academic development.

To accommodate the growing number of students, the school recently constructed a four-story building for higher grade levels. This expansion provides adequate space for instruction and facilitates the effective implementation

of the MATATAG Curriculum. The curriculum’s design emphasizes foundational competencies and learner-centered instruction, which promotes cognitive growth and enhances academic performance, particularly in Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan.

The school currently serves approximately 800 students with 35 teachers. Over the past few years, the institution has shown steady improvement in its programs and student performance. Academic achievement in Araling Panlipunan has gradually increased, demonstrating the combined effort of teachers, learners, and the support of parents, the local government, and the community in providing essential learning.

Continuous improvement of instructional practices is a priority for the school. Teachers are guided to refine their teaching strategies, while classroom organization, learning schedules, and the availability of materials are structured to promote focused and effective learning. These measures help students strengthen their critical thinking skills, gain confidence, and achieve better academic results, fostering both cognitive development and overall academic success in Araling Panlipunan.

**Respondents**

Students in Grade 8 at the Science and Technology Education Center, situated on Basak Marigondon Road in Lapu-Lapu City, are the subject of this study. A spiral development is used to introduce Araling Panlipunan topics with the introduction of the Matatag Curriculum. This indicates that the classes are related to one another and that every new subject builds on the knowledge that pupils have already acquired. Beginning with basic concepts, topics get more intricate and sophisticated as pupils advance. Under the prior curriculum, which included more difficult material than in previous years, the pupils were taught Araling Panlipunan.

Based on Slovin's formula, 147 of the 237 Grade 8 students were chosen to take part in the study at the 0.05 level of significance. Students were picked at random to make up the total number of responders, and the number of participants selected from each class section was proportionate to the size of that section.

**Table 1**  
**Distribution of the Respondents**

Section	N	N	%
GZ	35	28	19.04
EGF	40	21	14.28
AVL	39	28	19.04
TE	39	23	15.65
MC	40	21	14.28
LDV	44	26	17.68
Total	237	147	100

**Instrument**

The study employed a survey questionnaire adapted from Lev Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Learning Theory - Collaborative Learning Focus (2025 emphasis) to collect data on Grade 8 students’ cognitive behavior, academic performance, and perceptions of the MATATAG Curriculum in Araling Panlipunan. The questionnaire was structured into four parts, each designed to gather specific information aligned with the study’s objectives.

The first part collected students’ demographic information, including age, gender, family monthly income, and parents’ highest educational attainment. This section provided the researcher with a clear understanding of the students’ backgrounds, helping explain differences in learning processes and performance outcomes.

The second part measured students’ cognitive behavior during Araling Panlipunan lessons, focusing on their thinking processes, comprehension, and ability to apply knowledge in practical situations. Grounded in Vygotsky’s theory, this section emphasized collaborative learning, problem-solving, and interactive thinking. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicating “Strongly Agree,” which allowed the researcher to assess the level of cognitive engagement.

The third part assessed the perceived impact of the MATATAG Curriculum on students’ academic performance, including understanding of lessons, completion of assignments, and overall achievement. Quarterly grades were also collected to validate student responses. The fourth part examined the extent of curriculum implementation, asking

students to evaluate teaching methods, instructional strategies, and classroom activities that encourage collaboration, discussion, and critical thinking. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 = Very High, 4 = High, 3 = Moderate, 2 = Low and 1 = Very Low was used to quantify how effectively the curriculum was applied and its influence on cognitive behavior and academic outcomes.

#### **V. Data Gathering Procedure**

**Preliminary Stage.** The researcher followed the proper procedures in conducting the study. A formal letter was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent to ask for permission to conduct the research. Once approval was granted, the researcher met with the school principal to inform her about the study and request support for its implementation. The researcher and the principal agreed on a suitable schedule for the data collection process to ensure that it would not disrupt regular classes.

**Data Gathering Stage.** The researcher gave the respondents an orientation on the planned date, outlining the goal of the study. Students were asked to give their informed consent prior to participation, guaranteeing that they were aware of their rights and the purpose of the study. Help was offered when required, and clear instructions were given on how to complete the survey surveys correctly. Additionally, students had ample time to do the questionnaires without feeling rushed. The researcher collected all completed surveys for data analysis.

**Post Data Gathering Stage.** To validate the responses, the researcher conducted random informal interviews with selected participants. The questions asked during the interviews were limited to topics related to the objectives of the study. After the interviews, all collected data were carefully reviewed and processed based on the research goals to ensure accuracy and relevance.

#### **VI. Results and Discussions**

The results gathered using the survey tool are displayed in this chapter. The data has been examined and analyzed in light of the research's objectives. The critical data comprises the academic performance of Grade 8 students at Araling Panlipunan, the way teachers implement the Matatag curriculum, and the way students think and behave. The study also examined the degree of correlation between these key characteristics and the study's minor components. The responses provided by the respondents via the survey questionnaire serve as the foundation for the findings and conclusions covered in this part.

#### **VII. COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS ARLING PANLIPUNAN**

The respondents' level of cognitive behavior regarding Araling Panlipunan is displayed in Table 2. It demonstrates how students comprehend, analyze, and apply the subject's learning. The information in Table 2 comes from their answers in the survey. These findings contribute to the understanding of how students reason, think, and react in class. By demonstrating the relationship between their cognitive behavior and learning achievement, the table further validates the study. In general, Table 2 clarifies how students' cognitive abilities affect their Araling Panlipunan experience.

Table 2 shows an overall mean of 2.87 with a standard deviation of 1.00, indicating that students exhibit a neutral level of cognitive behavior toward Araling Panlipunan. This finding suggests that learners neither strongly affirm

Table 2  
Level of cognitive behavior of the respondents towards Araling Panlipunan

S/ N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Araling Panlipunan is an important subject that connects me to society and history.	2.94	1.05	Neutral
2	Araling Panlipunan is a challenging subject.	2.89	0.86	Neutral
3	I enjoy learning Araling Panlipunan topics.	2.99	1.04	Neutral
4	The concepts in Araling Panlipunan are easy to understand.	2.86	0.86	Neutral
5	If the teacher is unengaging, the subject feels boring.	2.93	0.88	Neutral
6	Every student should value Araling Panlipunan as part of becoming a responsible citizen.	2.93	1.01	Neutral
7	More time should be given to discussions in Araling Panlipunan.	2.84	0.87	Neutral
8	Teachers should present multiple perspectives when discussing social issues.	3.00	0.94	Neutral
9	Araling Panlipunan teachers are passionate and guide us in critical thinking.	2.78	1.00	Neutral
10	Students should be allowed to actively participate in Araling Panlipunan class discussions.	2.64	1.01	Neutral
11	There are many ways to analyze historical and social events, not just one approach.	2.90	1.20	Neutral
12	Understanding social issues requires patience and empathy.	2.74	1.09	Neutral
13	When studying contemporary issues, I still need to apply historical knowledge.	2.83	0.91	Neutral
14	Learning Araling Panlipunan requires step-by-step understanding.	2.86	1.03	Neutral
15	Araling Panlipunan deserves more discussion time in class.	2.71	0.88	Neutral
16	It helps when teachers give many real-life examples before quizzes or tests.	2.93	1.01	Neutral
17	To understand current events, I need to connect them with past events.	2.89	1.08	Neutral
18	The MATATAG curriculum makes Araling Panlipunan more relevant and meaningful.	2.83	1.04	Neutral
19	I feel more engaged in Araling Panlipunan because of the new curriculum.	2.99	1.13	Neutral
20	The way Araling Panlipunan is taught now helps me do better academically.	2.95	1.18	Neutral
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>		<b>2.87</b>		
<b>Aggregate Standard Deviation</b>			<b>1.00</b>	<b>Neutral</b>

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Very Positive; 3.41-4.20- Positive ; 2.61-3.40-Neutral; 1.81-2.60-Negative;1.00-1.80-Very Negative

reject statements related to understanding lessons, participating in discussions, or applying learned concepts. The predominance of neutral responses implies that students may not yet possess stable cognitive orientations or consistent thinking patterns toward the subject. Consequently, their cognitive engagement appears to be largely shaped by classroom instruction and the learning opportunities provided by teachers.

The neutral level of cognitive behavior further implies that students may need additional academic support to strengthen higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, perspective-taking, and connecting historical events to present-day issues. To foster deeper cognitive engagement, teachers may need to incorporate more interactive learning tasks, real-life applications, and clearer instructional explanations. In addition, the neutral perception of the MATATAG curriculum suggests that students may still be in the process of adjusting to its framework and may require further guidance to fully grasp its purpose and intended outcomes. Enhancing instructional strategies and increasing meaningful student participation may help improve cognitive engagement and overall learning performance.

Similarly, the neutral responses indicate that learners may benefit from structured instructional interventions aimed at developing problem-solving skills, understanding multiple viewpoints, and relating past events to current societal contexts. Previous research highlights that the use of active teaching strategies positively influences students' cognitive engagement by encouraging critical thinking and meaningful participation in learning activities (Santos, 2023). Curriculum-related studies also emphasize that students often require time and sustained support to adapt effectively to

new educational reforms, such as the MATATAG curriculum, before improvements in engagement become evident (Rivera, 2024).

Supporting these findings, earlier studies suggest that students who demonstrate neutral cognitive attitudes rely heavily on teacher facilitation to effectively understand and apply academic content (Del Rosario, 2022). Research further indicates that interactive and student-centered instructional approaches enhance cognitive behavior by enabling learners to connect classroom discussions with real-world experiences (Santos, 2023). More recent studies confirm that adaptation to curricular innovations like MATATAG is a gradual process that influences students’ academic engagement over time (Rivera, 2024; Mendoza, 2025). Taken together, these studies underscore the critical role of instructional practices and curriculum implementation in shaping students’ cognitive behavior in Araling Panlipunan.

**VIII. EXTENT OF THE IMPACT OF THE MATATAG CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTED BY TEACHERS ON LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT**

Table 3 illustrates the impact of teachers' implementation of the Matatag curriculum on students' learning outcomes. It emphasizes how the curriculum affects students' cognitive behavior, including comprehension, analysis, and application of learning. The information is derived from students' survey answers, which represent their experiences in the classroom. These data highlight the link between the Matatag curriculum, students’ thinking skills, and their academic success. All things considered, the table illustrates how the curriculum affects learning outcomes in Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan.

Table 3

Extent of the impact of the Matatag curriculum implemented by the teachers on learning achievement

S/ N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	The teacher helps students who struggle with the lesson to catch up effectively.	3.00	0.96	Moderate
2	The teacher encourages collaborative learning and student support in class.	2.88	0.91	Moderate
3	Sometimes, the teacher lets students plan or lead class activities.	2.97	0.94	Moderate
4	The teacher always treats students with respect and fairness.	2.92	0.91	Moderate
5	The teacher makes the class engaging and enjoyable.	2.82	0.91	Moderate
6	Each lesson helps students understand and learn meaningful content.	2.82	1.08	Moderate
7	The teacher ensures discipline while maintaining a supportive environment.	2.73	1.14	Moderate
8	The teacher gives praise or recognition when students perform well.	2.86	1.12	Moderate
9	The teacher sets clear expectations for students to complete assigned tasks.	2.88	1.11	Moderate
10	The teacher explains concepts in Araling Panlipunan clearly and effectively.	2.76	0.90	Moderate
	<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>2.87</b>		
	<b>Aggregate Standard Deviation</b>		<b>1.00</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Very High; 3.41-4.20- High; 2.61-3.40-Moderate; 1.81-2.60-Low; 1.00-1.80- Very Low

The obtained weighted mean of 2.87 with an approximate standard deviation of 1.00 indicates a moderate level

of cognitive support among teachers implementing the MATATAG curriculum. While instructional assistance is present, the findings suggest that teaching practices have not yet reached an optimal level. The relatively lower score for lesson engagement and enjoyment (WM = 2.82) may restrict students' sustained cognitive involvement. Conversely, the higher mean score for supporting learners who experience difficulty (WM = 3.00) reflects the application of scaffolding strategies in instructional delivery. Meanwhile, indicators related to instructional clarity (WM = 2.88) and the use of positive reinforcement (WM = 2.86) suggest a generally supportive classroom climate, though these practices may not be sufficient to strongly cultivate learner motivation or self-regulation.

Taken as a whole, the results imply that the MATATAG curriculum has produced initial positive effects, but its influence remains limited. Although teachers employ student-centered and collaborative learning approaches (WM = 2.88 and 2.97), these strategies appear to be implemented inconsistently or at moderate levels, which may reduce their potential impact on academic performance. Constraints such as limited professional training, insufficient instructional resources, and time-related challenges may explain this partial implementation (Sumaylo & Espacio, 2025). This interpretation is consistent with Ocampo (2024), who emphasizes that curriculum reforms require sustained professional development and adequate institutional support to translate into improved student outcomes.

Implications. In light of these moderate findings, school leaders are encouraged to strengthen ongoing professional development initiatives that focus on differentiated instruction and active learner participation. Educational policies should also emphasize systematic monitoring of MATATAG curriculum implementation, expanded training opportunities, and the provision of context-sensitive learning materials (Sumaylo & Espacio, 2025). With consistent support and strategic implementation, the curriculum's capacity to enhance academic achievement can be more fully achieved.

#### **IX. EXTENT TO WHICH TEACHERS IMPLEMENTED THE MATATAG CURRICULUM**

Table 4 illustrates how students' learning is impacted by instructors' use of the Matatag curriculum. It emphasizes students' critical thinking abilities, such as comprehending, evaluating, and applying what they have learned. The information is derived from student surveys regarding their experiences in the classroom. These findings demonstrate a relationship between academic achievement, students' cognitive behavior, and the curriculum. Overall, the chart illustrates how Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan learning results are impacted by the Matatag curriculum.

Table 4 reflects a moderate degree of MATATAG curriculum implementation in Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan, as evidenced by an overall mean score of 2.86. Specific instructional practices also fall within the moderate range, including encouraging learner involvement (WM = 2.88), applying varied forms of assessment (WM = 2.94), and modifying teaching approaches to match students' learning preferences (WM = 2.97). The standard deviation values, which range from 0.89 to 1.17, indicate differences in how students perceive these practices. Collectively, these findings suggest that core MATATAG components—particularly differentiated assessment and collaborative learning—are evident in classrooms but are not implemented in a sustained or intensive manner.

Table 4  
Extent to which the teachers implemented the Matatag curriculum

S/ N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	The teacher uses a variety of assessment tools (e.g., projects, discussions, quizzes) to evaluate learning.	2.94	0.96	Moderate
2	The teacher adapts assessment strategies to match student learning styles.	2.97	0.89	Moderate
3	To strengthen understanding, the teacher allows students to demonstrate knowledge through board work or activities.	2.84	0.89	Moderate
4	The teacher promotes gender equity by providing equal opportunities for all learners.	2.96	1.15	Moderate
5	The teacher observes and responds to how students interact and collaborate with each other.	2.74	1.17	Moderate
6	The teacher gives clear instructions and guidance to support effective learning.	2.84	1.15	Moderate
7	Student participation is encouraged and valued in classroom discussions and activities.	2.88	1.06	Moderate
8	The teacher identifies individual student needs and learning challenges.	2.82	0.95	Moderate
9	The teacher checks if students are meeting the intended learning objectives.	2.78	0.90	Moderate
10	The teacher creates opportunities for students to succeed during the learning process.	2.81	0.96	Moderate
	<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>2.86</b>		
	<b>Aggregate Standard Deviation</b>		<b>1.01</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Very High; 3.41-4.20- High; 2.61-3.40-Moderate; 1.81-2.60-Low; 1.00-1.80- Very Low

This level of implementation may constrain the curriculum’s capacity to fully support students’ academic growth and higher-level thinking. While the use of diverse assessments and adaptive instructional strategies can promote deeper engagement with learning materials, their limited application may reduce their overall effectiveness. Broadening assessment approaches and more deliberately aligning tasks with learners’ needs may help improve students’ comprehension, reasoning, and ability to apply concepts. To facilitate this improvement, school administrators should provide continuous instructional guidance and professional learning opportunities that encourage consistent use of differentiated strategies. Prior studies confirm that differentiated instruction contributes positively to both academic achievement and the development of critical thinking skills (Al-Shehri, 2022; Hasan et al., 2025).

The moderate adoption of the MATATAG curriculum may also explain its limited influence on students’ cognitive behaviors, including understanding, analysis, and application of knowledge. Research indicates that when teachers offer varied assessment opportunities and allow students to demonstrate learning through multiple activities, learners are more likely to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving processes (Safawi & Akay, 2022). However, without a higher degree of implementation, some learners may not receive sufficient challenge or instructional support to reach their full potential. Evidence from studies on differentiated instruction further suggests that stronger and more consistent implementation is associated with improved academic outcomes (Safawi & Akay, 2022). Therefore, more systematic and sustained use of MATATAG strategies may enhance students’ cognitive engagement and performance in Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan..

**X. LEVEL OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE RESPONDENTS IN ARLING PANLIPUNAN**

The academic achievement of Grade 8 pupils in Araling Panlipunan is shown in Table 5, which illustrates how well the MATATAG curriculum facilitates learning. The results reflect how well students comprehend, evaluate, and

apply ideas, demonstrating the growth of their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. The degree to which curriculum-based teaching methods affect students' understanding and participation in class activities is demonstrated by their performance levels. These findings point to a link between better academic results and consistent curriculum implementation. Overall, the table shows how the MATATAG curriculum affects students' measured progress in Araling Panlipunan as well as their cognitive behavior.

Table 5  
Level of academic performance of the Respondents in Araling Panlipunan

Level	Numerical Range	f	%
Outstanding	90-100	66	44.90
Very Satisfactory	85-89	40	27.21
Satisfactory	80-84	41	27.89
Fairly Satisfactory	75-79	0	0.00
Did not Meet the Expectations	Below 75	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>147</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Mean</b>		<b>87.90</b>	
<b>St. Dev.</b>		<b>4.24</b>	

The results in Table 5 indicate that Grade 8 learners in Araling Panlipunan generally demonstrate strong academic achievement. Nearly half of the respondents (44.90%) attained an *Outstanding* rating, while 27.21% were classified as *Very Satisfactory* and 27.89% as *Satisfactory*. Importantly, none of the students obtained a score below 80. The computed mean of 87.90, together with a standard deviation of 4.24, shows that student scores are closely grouped, suggesting relatively uniform academic performance. This consistency implies that learners are effectively engaging in cognitive processes such as understanding content, applying knowledge, and solving problems – behaviors associated with active and meaningful learning (Reyes, 2022).

From an instructional perspective, these findings suggest opportunities to further enhance classroom practices. Because most learners are already achieving at high levels, teachers may shift emphasis toward developing advanced cognitive skills, including analysis, evaluation, and inquiry-based thinking through collaborative learning tasks (Cruz, 2022). The results also indicate that students' cognitive engagement is strengthened when well-organized instruction is paired with active participation. Schools may use assessment data to guide curriculum refinement, plan enrichment activities, and design targeted interventions for learners who would benefit from additional academic challenges.

The overall high performance of students may be partly explained by the instructional orientation of the MATATAG curriculum. The curriculum promotes learner-centered and inquiry-driven approaches that prioritize conceptual understanding over memorization (Cruz, 2022). By incorporating real-life applications, group-based activities, and skill reinforcement, MATATAG supports meaningful learning experiences that encourage sustained student engagement and cognitive development. The concentration of students in higher performance categories therefore supports earlier findings that this curriculum framework contributes positively to both academic achievement and cognitive behavior in Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan (Cruz, 2022; Reyes, 2022).

**XI. TEST OF RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE VARIABLES**

The examination of the correlation between Araling Panlipunan pupils' academic achievement and their cognitive behavior is shown in Table 6. It demonstrates the relationship between students' grades and their critical thinking abilities, including understanding, analysis, and application. The information was acquired through student evaluations and classroom observations, which represented their real-world educational experiences. These results underscore the importance of effective learning strategies by implying that higher academic accomplishment is linked to

stronger cognitive behavior. Overall, the data shows how the Matatag Curriculum enhances academic achievement in Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan and promotes cognitive growth.

The correlation results presented in Table 6 indicate an almost negligible positive relationship between cognitive behavior and academic achievement among Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan students ( $r = 0.031$ ). The associated p-value of 0.710 confirms that the relationship is not statistically significant, meaning that variations in students' grades cannot be reliably explained by differences in their cognitive behaviors.

Table 6  
Test of relationship between the cognitive behavior and the academic performance of the respondents in

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Result
Cognitive Behavior and Academic Performance	0.031	Negligible Positive	0.710	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

\*significant at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed)

Although learners may demonstrate skills related to comprehension, analysis, and application, these abilities are not consistently reflected in their academic performance. Academic outcomes may instead be shaped more strongly by factors such as learner motivation, instructional approaches, and the degree of classroom support (Reyes, 2022). These findings suggest that cognitive behavior contributes to learning but does not function as a sole or immediate predictor of academic success.

From an instructional and curricular standpoint, the weak relationship highlights the need to better align cognitive skill development with academic evaluation. Educators may need to design learning tasks that allow students to translate thinking processes into observable academic outputs, such as performance-based assessments and applied projects (Cruz, 2022). Schools may also enhance learning outcomes by introducing enrichment initiatives or peer-support mechanisms that reinforce the application of cognitive skills. In addition, assessment systems should be revisited to ensure they adequately measure higher-order thinking rather than relying primarily on factual recall. A clearer understanding of this relationship can help educators strengthen both cognitive engagement and academic performance in Araling Panlipunan (Reyes, 2022; Cruz, 2022).

The results further underscore the contribution of the MATATAG curriculum to student learning. While immediate gains in academic performance may be limited, its learner-focused and inquiry-driven design appears to support the development of cognitive behaviors (Cruz, 2022). By integrating collaborative activities and real-world applications, the curriculum promotes skills that may contribute to long-term academic growth. The minimal correlation observed suggests that additional instructional support is necessary to more effectively connect cognitive development with performance outcomes. Nonetheless, the MATATAG curriculum remains a meaningful framework for nurturing critical thinking and sustained learning among Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan students (Reyes, 2022; Cruz, 2022).

**XII. TEST OF SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE IMPACT OF MATATAG CURRICULUM**

The test of a substantial association between the Matatag Curriculum's influence and the academic achievement of Grade 8 pupils in Araling Panlipunan is shown in Table 7. It looks at how the curriculum affects students' cognitive abilities, such as knowledge application, comprehension, and analysis. The information, which represented the learning experiences and results of the students, was gathered from student surveys and classroom evaluations. These findings demonstrate how the Matatag Curriculum may help students succeed academically by fostering critical thinking and conceptual comprehension. Overall, the table illustrates the relationship between students' performance in Araling Panlipunan, cognitive behavior, and curriculum implementation.

Table 7  
 Test of significant relationship between the impact of Matatag curriculum and the academic performance of the respondents in Araling Panlipunan

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Result
Impact and Academic Performance	-0.040	Negligible Negative	0.627	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

\*significant at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed)

Table 7 shows a very weak negative relationship between Grade 8 students’ academic performance in Araling Panlipunan and their perception of the MATATAG Curriculum’s impact ( $r = -0.040$ ). The p-value of 0.627 indicates that this association is not statistically significant, suggesting that students’ grades are not directly influenced by how they or their teachers perceive the curriculum. Although the MATATAG Curriculum supports cognitive skills such as comprehension, analysis, and application, these abilities do not automatically result in higher academic scores. Other factors, including instructional approaches, classroom support, and learner motivation, may play a more prominent role in determining academic achievement (Saro, Montejo, Sucong, Bustamante, & Perez, 2024). Therefore, while the curriculum encourages cognitive development, it should not be viewed as a sole predictor of students’ performance.

The findings have practical implications for teaching. Educators can design tasks and applied activities that allow students to directly apply their cognitive skills in ways that are assessed, ensuring a clearer connection between thinking abilities and measurable outcomes (Gumilao & Langam, 2025). Schools might also offer enrichment programs, mentoring, or peer-support systems to help students translate analytical and critical thinking into improved academic results. Modifying the delivery of the curriculum to emphasize the application of cognitive skills toward evaluable objectives may enhance its effectiveness. Focusing on these strategies allows teachers to support both students’ cognitive growth and their academic performance in Araling Panlipunan (Saro et al., 2024; Gumilao & Langam, 2025).

To further strengthen learning outcomes, instructors can implement projects or applied exercises that explicitly connect cognitive development to academic assessment (Gumilao & Langam, 2025). Additional support mechanisms, such as mentoring or targeted workshops, can help students practice critical thinking in ways that impact their grades. By aligning the curriculum’s cognitive objectives with performance-based tasks, students are better able to translate enhanced thinking skills into academic achievement. Understanding and leveraging this connection enables teachers to simultaneously foster critical thinking and improve overall academic performance in Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan (Saro et al., 2024; Gumilao & Langam, 2025).

Table 8  
 Test of significant relationship between the extent of Matatag curriculum implementation and the academic performance of the respondents in Araling Panlipunan

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Result
Implementation and Academic Performance	0.020	Negligible Positive	0.814	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

\*significant at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed)

The data in Table 8 shows a very weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.020$ ) between Grade 8 students’ academic performance in Araling Panlipunan and the extent of MATATAG Curriculum implementation. With a p-value of 0.814, this relationship is not statistically significant, indicating that higher levels of curriculum implementation do not automatically lead to better grades. Although the curriculum encourages cognitive development in areas such as

comprehension, analysis, and application, these skills may not immediately translate into measurable academic gains. Factors such as student motivation, instructional strategies, and classroom environment may have a more substantial impact on performance (Garcia & Santos, 2023). This suggests that curriculum implementation supports learning, but it is not the sole factor influencing academic outcomes.

These findings have practical implications for teaching and learning. Educators can design lessons and activities that allow students to apply cognitive skills in ways that directly contribute to assessed outcomes, including interactive exercises and applied projects (Velasco & Dela Cruz, 2022). Schools can also provide mentorship programs and professional development opportunities to strengthen the delivery of the curriculum and increase student engagement. By aligning instructional strategies with tasks that translate cognitive growth into tangible results, teachers can enhance both curriculum implementation and student achievement (Garcia & Santos, 2023; Velasco & Dela Cruz, 2022).

Even if immediate improvements in academic performance are limited, research shows that a structured and consistently implemented curriculum can foster critical thinking and higher-order cognitive skills. The use of collaborative and real-world learning activities helps students apply their cognitive abilities to academic tasks more effectively. Overall, the MATATAG Curriculum provides a foundation for nurturing advanced thinking skills that support long-term learning and may contribute to improved performance in Grade 8 Araling Panlipunan (Garcia & Santos, 2023; Velasco & Dela Cruz, 2022).

### **XIII. SUMMARY**

This study aimed to examine the relationship between Grade 8 students' cognitive behavior, the influence and implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, and their academic performance in Araling Panlipunan. It specifically sought to determine the students' level of cognitive behavior, their perception of the curriculum's impact, the extent to which teachers applied the curriculum, and the relationship of these factors to academic achievement.

A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized to explore the associations among the variables without altering the learning environment. The research was conducted at the Science and Technology Education Center Junior High School in Lapu-Lapu City, a school equipped with sufficient classrooms and learning resources to support effective implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.

The study involved 147 Grade 8 students, randomly selected from a population of 237 to ensure fair representation. Data were gathered using a survey questionnaire adapted from Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Learning Theory - Collaborative Learning Focus (2025 emphasis). The questionnaire was divided into four parts: (1) students' demographic profile, (2) cognitive behavior and thinking processes, (3) perceived impact of the MATATAG Curriculum, and (4) extent of curriculum implementation by teachers. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure attitudes, perceptions, and engagement.

Data analysis included frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means to describe the levels of cognitive behavior, curriculum impact, and implementation. Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to determine the relationships between these variables and students' academic performance. Results indicated that cognitive behavior, perceived curriculum impact, and the degree of curriculum implementation had no significant effect on academic achievement, suggesting that other factors may play a larger role in students' performance in Araling Panlipunan.

### **XIV. FINDINGS**

The study revealed that Grade 8 students' cognitive behavior in Araling Panlipunan was generally neutral. Respondents showed moderate agreement with statements about the importance of the subject, understanding of lessons, enjoyment of topics, and the value of active participation. While students recognized the relevance of linking historical knowledge to contemporary issues and appreciated teachers' efforts to provide examples and multiple perspectives, their overall responses indicated neither a highly positive nor negative attitude toward the subject.

Students' perceptions of the MATATAG Curriculum were also neutral. They acknowledged that the curriculum made lessons more meaningful and supported engagement, but their responses suggested only a moderate influence on learning outcomes. Similarly, the implementation of the curriculum by teachers, including discussion-based activities, collaborative tasks, and exercises to promote critical thinking, was perceived as satisfactory but did not appear to substantially affect academic performance.

Tests of the hypotheses confirmed that there were no significant relationships between cognitive behavior, the perceived impact of the MATATAG Curriculum, or the extent of its implementation and students' academic achievement. These findings indicate that other factors, such as classroom strategies, student motivation, or the learning

environment, may have a greater effect on performance in Araling Panlipunan than the variables studied.

#### **XV. CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that Grade 8 students' cognitive behavior, the perceived impact of the MATATAG Curriculum, and the extent of its implementation were generally moderate and did not strongly influence academic performance in Araling Panlipunan. These findings suggest that while these factors contribute to the learning process, they are not sufficient on their own to determine student achievement. The results highlight the importance of enhancing instructional strategies, classroom engagement, and learner motivation to support cognitive growth. For educators and school administrators, this implies a need to supplement curriculum delivery with targeted interventions, interactive teaching methods, and resource support to foster critical thinking and deeper understanding. Overall, the study underscores the complexity of factors affecting learning and emphasizes that improving students' cognitive behavior requires a combination of effective teaching, supportive learning environments,

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Teachers can strengthen students' performance in Araling Panlipunan by using engaging strategies such as collaborative activities, project-based tasks, and real-world applications instead of relying solely on the prescribed curriculum. Providing additional support through tutoring or mentoring and conducting regular assessments can help address individual learning needs and guide improvements in instruction. Creating a motivating classroom environment that nurtures critical thinking and problem-solving skills can further enhance student engagement and academic achievement.

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