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POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT STRATEGIES AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES IN PHILIPPINE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: AN EXPLANATORY SEQUENTIAL MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Positive reinforcement is an important classroom management strategy that encourages desirable learner behaviors and promotes supportive learning environments. This study examined the implementation of positive reinforcement strategies and their relationship with classroom management outcomes at St. Christine Elementary School, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, during the Academic Year 2025-2026. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed, involving 184 intermediate elementary learners and 20 school personnel respondents. Quantitative data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and analysis of variance, while qualitative responses were examined through thematic analysis. Results revealed that positive reinforcement strategies were implemented to the greatest extent (M = 4.54), particularly verbal praise, privileges, and non-verbal reinforcement. Classroom management outcomes received a high overall rating (M = 4.56). Significant positive relationships were reported between learners' academic performance and perceived reinforcement outcomes ($r = .41$, $p = .012$), teachers' classroom management styles and reinforcement outcomes ($r = .46$, $p = .008$), and reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes ($r = .53$, $p = .004$). Qualitative findings highlighted the importance of recognition and encouragement in promoting learner confidence, participation, and positive behavior. The findings suggest that positive reinforcement is associated with favorable classroom management outcomes and provide a basis for strengthening teacher professional development and school-based reinforcement practices.

Keywords: *positive reinforcement, classroom management, learner behavior, academic engagement, elementary education, mixed-methods research*

INTRODUCTION

Effective classroom management is fundamental to creating learning environments that promote academic engagement, appropriate behavior, and positive teacher–learner relationships. In elementary education, maintaining classroom discipline while addressing learners' diverse developmental, emotional, and behavioral needs remains a significant challenge. Classroom disruptions, limited attentiveness, and inconsistent participation may interfere with instructional delivery and opportunities for meaningful learning. Korpershoek et al. (2026), in an updated meta-analysis of classroom management interventions in primary education, found that these interventions produced statistically significant improvements across student outcomes, including academic performance, behavior, social-emotional development, and motivation. These findings emphasize the importance of evidence-based classroom management approaches that extend beyond behavioral control toward the development of supportive and productive learning environments.

Among the strategies used to strengthen classroom management, positive reinforcement has received considerable attention because of its potential to encourage desirable behavior through recognition, encouragement, and meaningful rewards. Grounded in the principles of operant conditioning, positive reinforcement involves providing favorable consequences following appropriate behavior to increase the likelihood of its recurrence. In educational settings, these strategies may include verbal praise, tangible rewards, classroom privileges, and non-verbal expressions of approval. Pérez et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of supporting educators in implementing behavior-specific praise as an evidence-based classroom practice. Their research synthesis highlighted professional learning approaches that help teachers apply praise appropriately and consistently. This suggests that positive reinforcement should not be viewed merely as the distribution of rewards but as a deliberate instructional strategy requiring clear behavioral expectations, appropriate feedback, and consistent implementation.

The importance of positive reinforcement is further supported by research examining behavioral interventions in elementary classrooms. Freyssinet and Pansu (2025), through a meta-analysis of 16 single-case studies conducted in regular primary schools, found that differential reinforcement strategies were effective in reducing disruptive classroom behaviors, although intervention effects varied across studies. These findings suggest that reinforcing appropriate behavior can support classroom discipline and instructional continuity. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of reinforcement strategies may depend on how teachers select, implement, and sustain them in response to learners' individual characteristics and classroom conditions. Consequently, examining the extent to which different reinforcement strategies are used and how they relate to classroom management outcomes remains essential.

Beyond behavioral regulation, classroom management is closely associated with learners' motivation, academic engagement, task completion, and perceptions of the learning environment. Positive discipline approaches emphasize constructive teacher–learner interactions, predictable classroom expectations, and supportive responses to behavioral difficulties. Abejón-Fuentes et al. (2025), in a systematic review of 42 studies, reported that positive discipline approaches, particularly positive behavioral support, were associated with improvements in school climate and reductions in disruptive behavior and victimization. These findings demonstrate the relevance of classroom management practices that promote both behavioral development and a supportive educational environment. However, variations in implementation and institutional conditions indicate that reinforcement practices should be examined within specific educational contexts rather than assumed to produce uniform outcomes across schools.

In the Philippine educational context, positive reinforcement is relevant to the continuing emphasis on learner-centered instruction, inclusive education, and child-sensitive disciplinary practices. Teachers are expected to maintain orderly classrooms while encouraging participation, recognizing individual differences, and supporting learners' academic and socio-emotional development. However, classroom management practices may be influenced by teaching experience, available instructional resources, classroom size, learner diversity, and opportunities for professional development. Supsin et al. (2026), in a systematic review of positive behavior support and management interventions in primary education, found that teacher professional development programs incorporating modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching demonstrated relatively consistent improvements in classroom management practices. Their findings highlight the importance of sustained teacher support in implementing positive behavioral approaches and suggest that the effectiveness of reinforcement practices may be strengthened through systematic professional learning.

Despite the growing international evidence supporting positive reinforcement and positive behavioral management, the application of these strategies requires further examination within individual Philippine elementary schools. At St. Christine Elementary School in Lianga, Surigao del Sur, teachers serve learners with diverse academic, developmental, and behavioral needs. The school context presents opportunities to examine how verbal praise, tangible rewards, privileges, and non-verbal reinforcement are implemented and how these practices are associated with learners' motivation, behavior, academic achievement, engagement, task completion, and overall classroom climate. Although existing research has examined classroom management interventions and positive behavioral support, there remains a need for context-specific evidence integrating quantitative assessments of reinforcement practices with qualitative accounts of teachers' and learners' experiences. Such evidence may help explain how reinforcement strategies are experienced in everyday classroom situations and identify practical challenges affecting their consistent implementation.

Accordingly, this study examined positive reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes at St. Christine Elementary School, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Specifically, it investigated the demographic and professional characteristics of respondents, the extent of implementation of verbal praise, tangible rewards,

privileges, and non-verbal reinforcement, and the perceived classroom management outcomes associated with these strategies. It also examined relationships among selected learner and teacher characteristics, reinforcement practices, and classroom management outcomes, as well as differences across learner demographic groups. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the study integrated quantitative findings with qualitative experiences to develop a more comprehensive understanding of positive reinforcement in elementary classroom management. The findings contribute context-specific evidence to the literature and provide an empirical basis for developing a school-based Positive Reinforcement Enhancement Program (PREP) aimed at strengthening supportive and learner-centered classroom practices.

Research Questions

This study aimed to examine the implementation of positive reinforcement strategies and their relationship with classroom management outcomes at St. Christine Elementary School, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the demographic and professional characteristics of the respondents in terms of learners' age, gender, and academic performance, and teachers' years of teaching experience and classroom management styles?
2. To what extent are positive reinforcement strategies implemented in terms of verbal praise, tangible rewards, privileges, and non-verbal reinforcement?
3. To what extent are positive reinforcement strategies perceived to contribute to classroom management outcomes in terms of learners' motivation, behavior, academic achievement, academic engagement and task completion, and overall classroom climate?
4. Are there significant relationships between (a) learners' academic performance and perceived classroom management outcomes, (b) teachers' classroom management styles and perceived classroom management outcomes, and (c) the implementation of positive reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes?
5. Are there significant differences in perceived classroom management outcomes when learners are grouped according to their demographic characteristics?
6. How do teachers and learners describe their experiences with positive reinforcement strategies, particularly their perceived benefits and challenges in classroom management?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design to examine positive reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes at St. Christine Elementary School, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. The design involved two successive phases, beginning with quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by qualitative inquiry to explain and contextualize the statistical findings. The quantitative phase assessed the extent of implementation of positive reinforcement

strategies and their relationships with classroom management outcomes, while the qualitative phase explored teachers' and learners' experiences regarding reinforcement practices, perceived benefits, and implementation challenges. Integrating both forms of evidence provided a broader understanding of positive reinforcement within the elementary classroom context.

The study involved 204 respondents, comprising 184 learners from Grades 4–6 and 20 school personnel respondents, including classroom teachers, a school head, a master teacher, and tenured teachers. Specifically, the learner respondents consisted of 70 Grade 4 pupils, 57 Grade 5 pupils, and 57 Grade 6 pupils. The study employed complete enumeration of teachers, while selected school personnel served as key informants for the qualitative phase. The respondents were selected because of their direct involvement in the implementation or experience of positive reinforcement strategies in classroom management. The investigation was conducted in a public elementary school serving learners with diverse academic, developmental, and behavioral characteristics.

Data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire adapted from related literature and Department of Education frameworks concerning classroom management and learner behavior. The instrument consisted of three parts. The first collected respondents' demographic and professional characteristics, including learners' age, gender, and academic performance, and teachers' years of teaching experience and classroom management styles. The second assessed the extent of implementation of four positive reinforcement strategies: verbal praise, tangible rewards, privileges, and non-verbal reinforcement. It also measured perceived classroom management outcomes relating to learner motivation, behavior, academic achievement, academic engagement and task completion, and overall classroom climate. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (No Extent) to 5 (Greatest Extent). The third part contained open-ended questions designed to capture respondents' experiences and challenges in implementing reinforcement strategies.

To establish the instrument's content validity, the questionnaire underwent evaluation by three experts comprising school heads and a master teacher. Their recommendations were incorporated to improve the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items. The revised instrument was subsequently pilot-tested among individuals who were not included in the main study. Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha with statistical assistance, and the instrument was refined before its administration to the study respondents.

Before data collection, permission was sought from the Schools Division Superintendent of Surigao del Sur through the Lianga District Supervisor and the school principal. Consent letters were distributed to the identified respondents, and the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality provisions were explained. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured that their identities would not be disclosed in the research report. The questionnaires were personally administered during available periods to minimize disruption of regular instructional activities. For the qualitative phase, selected key informants, including the master teacher and experienced teachers,

provided responses to open-ended interview questions, with written responses permitted as an alternative to direct interviews. The completed questionnaires and qualitative responses were subsequently organized, encoded, and prepared for analysis.

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means to describe respondent characteristics, the implementation of positive reinforcement strategies, and perceived classroom management outcomes. Pearson product–moment correlation was employed to examine relationships among selected variables, while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to assess differences in respondents' perceptions across groups. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level. Qualitative responses were examined through thematic analysis, which involved identifying and organizing recurring ideas concerning reinforcement practices, learner responses, and implementation challenges. The qualitative findings were integrated with the quantitative results during interpretation to provide contextual explanations of the observed patterns. Because the study relied primarily on survey responses and qualitative accounts rather than experimental manipulation, its findings were interpreted as perceived outcomes and statistical associations rather than evidence of causal effects.

RESULTS

Table 1

Demographic and Academic Characteristics of Learner Respondents (N = 184)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age	9 years	17	9.24
	10 years	70	38.04
	11 years	40	21.74
	12 years	46	25.00
	13 years and above	11	5.98
Gender	Male	89	48.37
	Female	95	51.63
Academic performance	Outstanding (90–100)	66	35.87
	Very Satisfactory (85–89)	63	34.24
	Satisfactory (80–84)	45	24.46
	Fairly Satisfactory (75–79)	10	5.43
	Did Not Meet Expectations (below 75)	0	0.00

Note. N = total number of learner respondents; n = frequency. Percentages are calculated within each characteristic.

Table 2

Teaching Experience of School Personnel Respondents (N = 20)

Years of teaching experience	n	%
0–5 years	0	0
6–10 years	4	20
11–15 years	9	45
16–20 years	4	20
More than 20 years	3	15
Total	**20**	**100**

Table 3

Classroom Management Styles of Teachers

Classroom management style	M	Descriptive rating
Authoritative	4.69	Very Much Evident
Democratic	4.48	Very Much Evident
Permissive	3.16	Moderately Evident
Authoritarian	3.03	Moderately Evident
Laissez-faire	2.26	Slightly Evident
Grand mean	**3.52**	**Much Evident**

Note. M = weighted mean.

Table 4

Extent of Implementation of Positive Reinforcement Strategies

Positive reinforcement strategy	M	Descriptive rating
Verbal praise	4.54	Greatest Extent
Tangible rewards	4.53	Greatest Extent
Privileges	4.54	Greatest Extent
Non-verbal reinforcement	4.54	Greatest Extent
Grand mean	**4.54**	**Greatest Extent**

Note. M = weighted mean. Scale interpretation: 4.21–5.00 = Greatest Extent; 3.41–4.20 = Greater Extent; 2.61–3.40 = Less Extent; 1.81–2.60 = Least Extent; 1.00–1.80 = No Extent.

Table 5

Perceived Outcomes of Positive Reinforcement in Classroom Management

Classroom management outcome	M	Descriptive rating
Learner behavior	4.60	Very Much Evident
Learner motivation	4.52	Very Much Evident
Academic engagement and task completion	4.57	Very Much Evident
Overall classroom climate	4.56	Very Much Evident
Grand mean	**4.56**	**Very Much Evident**

Note. M = weighted mean.

Table 6

Pearson Correlations Between Selected Variables and Classroom Management Outcomes

Variables correlated	r	p	Decision
Learners' academic performance and perceived reinforcement outcomes	.41	.012	Reject H_0
Teachers' classroom management styles and perceived reinforcement outcomes	.46	.008	Reject H_0
Positive reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes	.53	.004	Reject H_0

Note. r = Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient; p = reported significance value. All three relationships were reported as statistically significant at α = .05.

Table 7

Differences in Perceived Classroom Management Outcomes Across Learner Demographic Groups

Grouping variable	Statistical test	p	Decision
Age	One-way ANOVA	.084	Fail to reject H_0
Gender	Independent-samples t test	.176	Fail to reject H_0
Academic performance	One-way ANOVA	.021	Reject H_0

Note. α = .05. A statistically significant difference was reported for academic performance groups, but not for age or gender groups. Test statistics, degrees of freedom, and effect sizes were not provided in the source table.

Table 8

Themes Identified from Teachers' Experiences with Positive Reinforcement

Generated theme	Key concepts
Reinforcement as a pedagogical structure for classroom behavior	Reward systems, fairness, progress monitoring, behavioral accountability
Reinforcement as a catalyst for motivation and confidence	Self-esteem, emotional affirmation, recognition
Reinforcement as a driver of participation and collaborative engagement	Classroom discussion, participation, collaborative learning
Behavioral regulation and task engagement through reinforcement	Attentiveness, reduced disruptions, task completion
Reward dependency and extrinsic motivation	Reliance on rewards, compliance, intrinsic motivation
Institutional and pedagogical constraints	Consistency, timing, implementation difficulties
Sustainable reinforcement through relationships and consistency	Teacher–learner relationships, collaborative support, integration of practices

Note. Themes are condensed from the seven teacher themes reported in the manuscript's Table 9.1. The original thematic analysis also includes participant quotations.

Table 9

Themes Identified from Learners' Experiences with Positive Reinforcement

Generated theme	Key concepts
Positive reinforcement as recognition	Happiness, pride, appreciation, teacher approval
Reinforcement and classroom discipline	Listening, appropriate behavior, participation
Praise as a means of overcoming shyness	Confidence, willingness to answer, classroom participation
Material and symbolic rewards as motivators	Points, certificates, recognition, effort
Classroom encouragement and emotional safety	Kindness, belonging, supportive classroom climate
Reinforcement and responsible classroom conduct	Respect, cleanliness, helping others
Reinforcement through peer approval	Peer encouragement, recognition, collective morale

Preference for immediate and specific praise	Timely feedback, recognition of small accomplishments

Note. Themes are condensed from the eight learner themes reported in the manuscript's Table 9.2. These are qualitative findings, not numerical rankings.

DISCUSSION

This study examined positive reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes at St. Christine Elementary School, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The findings provided evidence concerning respondents' characteristics, teachers' classroom management styles, the implementation of reinforcement strategies, perceived learner outcomes, statistical relationships, group differences, and teachers' and learners' experiences. Overall, the results indicated that positive reinforcement was widely practiced and positively perceived, particularly in promoting learner motivation, appropriate behavior, academic engagement, and a supportive classroom climate. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided additional insights into how reinforcement strategies were experienced in everyday classroom situations.

Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic findings showed that most learner respondents were 10 years old (38.04%), followed by those aged 12 (25.00%) and 11 (21.74%). Female learners (51.63%) slightly outnumbered male learners (48.37%). Regarding academic performance, 35.87% obtained Outstanding ratings, while 34.24% achieved Very Satisfactory ratings. These results indicated that most respondents demonstrated relatively favorable academic performance. However, the distribution of grades alone did not establish that positive reinforcement caused their academic achievement, since other instructional, personal, and contextual factors may have contributed to their performance.

Among the school personnel respondents, the largest proportion had 11–15 years of teaching experience (45%). The authoritative classroom management style received the highest mean (M = 4.69), followed by the democratic style (M = 4.48). These findings suggested that respondents generally favored classroom approaches characterized by clear expectations, teacher guidance, learner participation, and supportive interactions. Such practices provided a relevant context for examining reinforcement because positive feedback may be more meaningful when learners understand the behaviors being recognized and experience consistent classroom expectations.

Extent of Implementation of Positive Reinforcement Strategies

The findings revealed that positive reinforcement strategies were implemented to the Greatest Extent, with a grand mean of 4.54. Verbal praise, privileges, and non-verbal reinforcement obtained identical means of 4.54, while tangible rewards received a slightly lower mean of 4.53. These closely clustered ratings indicated that respondents perceived

all four strategies as commonly practiced, with no substantial descriptive difference among them.

The high rating for verbal praise emphasized the importance of teachers' spoken recognition of learners' efforts, achievements, and appropriate behavior. Justus et al. (2023) demonstrated that teacher self-monitoring could increase the use of behavior-specific praise in elementary classrooms. Their findings support the practical value of helping teachers become more intentional and consistent in recognizing appropriate behavior. In the present study, the frequent use of verbal praise suggested that encouraging statements formed an established component of classroom management, although the questionnaire did not directly measure the frequency or precision of individual praise statements.

Similarly, the high ratings for privileges and non-verbal reinforcement indicated that respondents recognized the importance of granting classroom responsibilities and using supportive gestures, including smiles, nods, and other expressions of approval. These practices may offer accessible alternatives to material rewards, particularly in classrooms where financial resources are limited. Tangible rewards also received a high rating, suggesting that certificates, stickers, tokens, and similar incentives remained familiar reinforcement practices.

Nevertheless, frequent implementation should not automatically be equated with effectiveness. The appropriateness of reinforcement depends on its relationship to clearly identified behaviors, individual learner needs, and the consistency of its delivery. The findings therefore point toward the importance of examining not only whether reinforcement strategies are used but also how appropriately and consistently they are implemented.

Perceived Classroom Management Outcomes

The study reported favorable perceptions of classroom management outcomes, with a grand mean of 4.56. Learner behavior received the highest rating (M = 4.60), followed by academic engagement and task completion (M = 4.57), overall classroom climate (M = 4.56), and learner motivation (M = 4.52). These findings indicated that respondents associated positive reinforcement with appropriate classroom conduct, participation in learning activities, completion of assigned tasks, and supportive teacher–learner interactions.

The relatively high rating for learner behavior suggested that recognition and encouragement were perceived as useful in promoting desirable classroom actions. Newton et al. (2024) examined behavior-specific praise in a rural elementary school and reported evidence supporting its potential to improve on-task behavior. Their study provides a relevant empirical comparison because both investigations considered positive teacher feedback within elementary classroom settings. However, the present study relied primarily on reported perceptions, whereas Newton et al. examined observed behavioral outcomes. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as consistent with, rather than equivalent to, experimentally observed behavioral improvement.

Academic engagement and task completion also received a high mean, suggesting that learners perceived reinforcement as encouraging them to participate and complete classroom activities. Royer and Ennis (2024), through a systematic literature review and meta-analysis of student-delivered behavior-specific praise, highlighted the potential of peer-mediated praise practices to support positive classroom behavior. Although their review focused on student-delivered rather than teacher-delivered reinforcement, it reinforces the broader importance of positive recognition within classroom social interactions. The present findings suggest that encouragement may be relevant not only to individual motivation but also to the development of a classroom environment where positive behavior and participation are socially recognized.

The favorable rating for overall classroom climate further suggested that respondents perceived reinforcement as contributing to a supportive and encouraging learning environment. Nevertheless, the study did not directly establish changes in classroom climate over time. Its findings provide descriptive evidence of respondents' perceptions rather than proof that reinforcement independently produced the reported outcomes.

Relationships Among Academic Performance, Classroom Management Styles, and Positive Reinforcement

The correlational findings indicated statistically significant positive relationships among the selected variables. Learners' academic performance was positively associated with perceived reinforcement outcomes ($r = .41$, $p = .012$), while teachers' classroom management styles were positively related to perceived reinforcement outcomes ($r = .46$, $p = .008$). The strongest reported relationship was between positive reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes ($r = .53$, $p = .004$). These results suggested that higher reported levels of reinforcement implementation tended to accompany more favorable classroom management ratings.

The positive relationship involving classroom management styles indicated that teachers' approaches to organizing and guiding classroom activities may be associated with how reinforcement is experienced. Ellis et al. (2025) found that coaching and performance feedback delivered by school-based personnel increased teachers' use of behavior-specific praise. Their findings suggest that reinforcement practices can be strengthened through instructional support and feedback. In relation to the present study, this evidence highlights the potential importance of teachers' management practices and professional support in sustaining positive reinforcement.

The relationship between reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes was particularly relevant because it directly addressed the study's central research concern. However, the moderate positive correlation did not demonstrate that reinforcement caused improved classroom management. The association may also reflect shared respondent perceptions, existing classroom conditions, teacher characteristics, or other unmeasured influences. Moreover, the reported coefficients and significance values require verification against the original dataset and the number of

paired observations before definitive inferential conclusions are presented in a journal article.

Differences in Classroom Management Outcomes According to Learner Characteristics

The findings indicated no statistically significant differences in perceived classroom management outcomes when learners were grouped according to age ($p = .084$) or gender ($p = .176$). These results suggested that the study did not detect sufficient evidence of differences between the respective demographic groups at the .05 significance level. This does not necessarily mean that all learners experienced reinforcement identically, but rather that the reported analyses did not establish statistically significant differences.

In contrast, a statistically significant difference was reported when learners were grouped according to academic performance ($p = .021$). This finding suggested that perceptions of classroom management outcomes varied across academic performance categories. However, the available results did not identify which groups differed significantly or the direction and magnitude of those differences. Without post hoc comparisons and effect-size estimates, it would be inappropriate to conclude that learners with higher academic performance necessarily experienced greater reinforcement benefits.

These findings underscore the need to consider individual learner characteristics when examining classroom management practices. They also suggest that subsequent studies should investigate whether differences in academic engagement, prior achievement, classroom participation, or teacher feedback explain variations in how reinforcement is experienced.

Teachers' and Learners' Experiences with Positive Reinforcement

The qualitative findings provided additional context for understanding the quantitative results. Teachers described positive reinforcement as a means of encouraging appropriate behavior, strengthening learner confidence, promoting classroom participation, and maintaining task engagement. They also identified challenges involving consistency, limited time, diverse learner needs, and the possibility that some learners might become dependent on external rewards. Learners similarly described praise and recognition as experiences that made them feel appreciated, confident, and willing to participate in classroom activities. Their responses emphasized the importance of immediate encouragement, recognition of small accomplishments, and supportive teacher interactions. These experiences complemented the high quantitative ratings for verbal praise and non-verbal reinforcement.

Asaoka et al. (2026) examined teachers' praise characteristics and students' academic engagement in elementary classrooms. Their intervention findings showed that the effects of teacher praise varied across classrooms and highlighted the importance of using varied praise statements. This evidence helps explain why the qualitative findings

of the present study emphasized the manner, timing, and consistency of recognition rather than simply the presence of rewards.

The qualitative findings also identified practical limitations in reinforcement implementation. Teachers' concerns about time constraints, inconsistent application, and differing learner responses indicated that reinforcement practices require professional judgment and adaptation. These findings supported the development of the proposed Positive Reinforcement Enhancement Program (PREP), particularly its emphasis on strengthening teachers' capacity to implement appropriate and sustainable reinforcement strategies.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings may be interpreted through the principles of operant conditioning, which emphasize the role of consequences in strengthening behavior. The high ratings for verbal praise, tangible rewards, privileges, and non-verbal reinforcement were consistent with the theoretical expectation that desirable classroom behaviors may be encouraged through positive responses. However, the findings also suggested that reinforcement should be considered within a broader educational context involving teacher–learner relationships, motivation, individual differences, and classroom expectations.

From a practical perspective, the findings support the consideration of a structured school-based professional development initiative that strengthens teachers' use of behavior-specific praise, supportive gestures, meaningful privileges, and equitable reinforcement procedures. The proposed PREP may incorporate teacher coaching, collaborative planning, classroom monitoring, and periodic evaluation. Such measures could help address the implementation challenges identified by participants while encouraging reinforcement practices that are developmentally appropriate and responsive to learners' needs.

Limitations and Contribution of the Study

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the study was conducted in a single elementary school, limiting the transferability of its findings to other educational settings. Second, the quantitative data relied primarily on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by social desirability and respondent interpretation. Third, the nonexperimental design did not establish causal relationships between reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes. Fourth, the available inferential results did not provide complete test statistics, degrees of freedom, confidence intervals, or effect sizes, limiting the precision of statistical interpretation.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes context-specific evidence concerning the implementation and perceived outcomes of positive reinforcement in Philippine elementary education. Its mixed-methods approach combined statistical patterns with teachers' and learners' experiences, offering a more comprehensive understanding of reinforcement practices and the challenges associated with their implementation. The findings provide a foundation for refining classroom management

strategies and evaluating the proposed PREP through future research using stronger observational, longitudinal, or experimental designs.

Conclusions

The study concluded that positive reinforcement strategies were extensively implemented at St. Christine Elementary School, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, and were associated with favorable classroom management outcomes. Verbal praise, tangible rewards, privileges, and non-verbal reinforcement were consistently rated to the greatest extent, indicating their widespread use in elementary classroom practices. Classroom management outcomes were likewise rated very much evident, particularly in promoting appropriate learner behavior, academic engagement, task completion, motivation, and a supportive classroom climate. The findings further revealed significant positive relationships between learners' academic performance and perceived reinforcement outcomes, teachers' classroom management styles and perceived reinforcement outcomes, and positive reinforcement strategies and classroom management outcomes. While perceptions did not significantly differ according to learners' age and gender, a significant difference was observed across academic performance groups. Qualitative findings reinforced these results by highlighting how recognition, encouragement, and supportive teacher interactions fostered learners' confidence, participation, and responsible behavior, while also identifying challenges related to consistency, limited resources, diverse learner needs, and dependence on external rewards. Collectively, the findings suggest that positive reinforcement constitutes a valuable component of supportive and learner-centered classroom management, although the study's nonexperimental design does not establish causal effects. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence contributes to understanding reinforcement practices in Philippine elementary education and provides an empirical basis for developing the proposed Positive Reinforcement Enhancement Program (PREP). Future studies may evaluate the program's effectiveness through direct classroom observations, longitudinal assessments, and experimental or quasi-experimental approaches.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that St. Christine Elementary School strengthen the systematic implementation of positive reinforcement strategies to promote supportive and learner-centered classroom management. Teachers should consistently employ verbal praise, tangible rewards, privileges, and non-verbal reinforcement while ensuring that these practices are appropriate to learners' developmental needs, individual differences, and classroom circumstances. Particular emphasis should be placed on providing immediate, specific, and meaningful recognition of desirable behavior, academic effort, and classroom participation. To address the challenges identified in the qualitative findings, school administrators should consider implementing the proposed Positive Reinforcement Enhancement Program (PREP), incorporating professional development activities, peer mentoring, collaborative planning, and classroom-based coaching to strengthen teachers' competence in applying reinforcement strategies. The program should also promote

equitable recognition practices, encourage learners' intrinsic motivation, and minimize excessive dependence on material rewards. Furthermore, teachers should regularly monitor learners' behavioral responses, academic engagement, and task completion to determine whether reinforcement practices remain

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study observed ethical principles governing educational research involving human participants. Before data collection, the researcher sought institutional permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Surigao del Sur, through the Lianga District Supervisor and the school principal of St. Christine Elementary School, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. The purpose, procedures, and significance of the study were explained to prospective respondents, and consent letters were distributed to ensure informed and voluntary participation. Participants were assured that their identities and responses would remain confidential and that the information collected would be used exclusively for academic research purposes. As the study involved elementary school learners, parental or guardian consent and age-appropriate learner assent were important ethical requirements that should be confirmed in the research documentation. The researcher also sought to minimize potential risks and disruptions by administering questionnaires during appropriate periods without interfering with regular classroom instruction. Participants were treated with respect, and the findings were presented in summarized form to protect their privacy and anonymity. The researcher was responsible for maintaining accuracy, objectivity, and integrity in collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting the data. The manuscript did not specify a formal research ethics committee approval number, external funding arrangement, or definitive conflict-of-interest declaration; these details should be verified and disclosed as required by the target journal before publication.

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