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Pupils' Sense of Belongingness, Social Connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles as Mediated by Social Interaction

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Abstract
The study revealed that these four concepts are all crucial to learners as responded by Grade six pupils. Findings showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between the independent variable, mediating variable, and dependent variables. There is a positive and significant correlation between a sense of belongingness and social interaction; social interaction and social connectedness; sense of belongingness and social connectedness; a sense of belongingness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles; social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles; and social interaction and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. The study also revealed that social interaction mediates the relationship between a sense of belongingness, social connectedness, and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. These findings suggest that there is a need to develop students' social interaction to improve their sense of belongingness, and social connectedness, and appreciate the roles *of Araling Panlipunan* as a subject. Therefore, the school heads and administrators may utilize the study's findings in developing projects and programs that enhance students' social interactions and increase their sense of belongingness, social connectedness, and understanding of the roles of *Araling Panlipunan* as a subject. In addition, future researchers may utilize the study's findings to further analyze the effect of social interaction on students and seek other variables that may relate to it.

Keywords
Social Interaction, Sense of Belongingness, Social Connectedness, *Araling Panlipunan* Roles

INTRODUCTION
The National Council for Social Studies (2017) emphasizes the importance of *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) in elementary schools for empowering students to understand their environment, analyze problems, and make informed decisions. As the school serves as learners' second home, and they need acceptance and understanding from teachers, peers, and school personnel. Maslow (1943) suggests children share experiences and connect with others. Over (2016) explains that children's desire for social interactions is a manifestation of their urge to belong, and as they grow older, they actively seek out social interaction, particularly with peers, to improve their mental and social abilities. Furthermore, social interaction is crucial for a child's growth and learning, as it helps them form friendships and positive self-esteem. A child needs high social skills to interact with people effectively, form friendships, and have fulfilling social connections (Vygotsky, 1978). The school provides children with the necessary social connections and helps them meet developmental achievements, establishing their self-identity and learning expectations. Also, children enjoy social interactions and engage in behaviors that help to maintain positive engagement from an early age (Shochet et. al., 2020). And those learners in grade six, go from developing relationships within home to forming relationships with peers, friends, teachers, and other adults in the school community. They are learning to seek belongingness, connections, and interaction. With their age which is not a beginner but also not advanced in terms of skills, knowledge, and experiences, they still needed guidance to properly interact and connect to make them feel that they are accepted and valued in school.

Based on the matters considered, the researcher wanted to conduct the study and analyze the mediating effect of social interaction in the relationship of sense of belongingness, social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles among Grade Six pupils. Also, through this study, administrators, school head and teachers can develop a school programs, projects, and strategies to improve pupils' social interaction based on the result.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employed descriptive-correlational research. It involved collecting, recording, and interpreting the data. The questionnaire was designed to determine the level of sense of belongingness and social connectedness and describe the social interaction and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles of Grade Six pupils.

Respondents of the Study and Locale

This study was conducted to three elementary schools, namely Bula Elementary School, Bukal Elementary School, and San Pedro Elementary School, in Tiaong I District, Division of Quezon. To select the respondents, the researcher used the total population sampling technique. The study was administered to all Grade Six Pupils of each school with 178 Grade Six learners and their responses were gathered and tabulated for better interpretation.

Research Instrument

The respondents of the study were asked to choose their responses to the given choices. The researcher personally gave and collected all the questionnaires to the student-respondents. The questionnaires were submitted to the researcher's adviser for consultation. The instruments were adopted from the PSSM Scale which was used in the study of Babakhani (2013) on sense of belongingness, Van Bel et. al (2009) on social connectedness (Walker & Baepler, 2017 for feeling of closeness variable), Garcia (2021) on *Araling Panlipunan* Roles, and Afriani & Rammadan (2021) and Vickers et. al. (2014) on social interaction. The research questionnaire, prior to final administration, was translated to Filipino language for student-respondents to easily comprehend the questions. It was also subjected to validation and pilot testing to maintain the validity and reliability of the instrument.

Statistical Treatment

Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, mean, percent were considered for descriptive analysis. In terms of significant relationship, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used as in sense of belongingness and social interaction; social interactions and social connectedness; sense of belongingness and social connectedness; sense of belongingness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles, social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles, , and social interactions and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. In the analysis of mediating effect of social interaction on sense of belongingness, social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles, mediation analysis was utilized following the procedures of Hayes (2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 Test of Significant Relationship between Sense of Belongingness and Social Interaction

Social Interaction	Sense of Belongingness		
	Belonging	Acceptance	Respect
Cooperation	.485**	.389**	.391**
Openness	.346**	.408**	.355**
Empathy	.285**	.376**	.453**
Giving Motivation	.318**	.377**	.349**
Positive Sense	.352**	.377**	.352**
Similarities with others	.329**	.372**	.286**

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Verbal Interpretation of r-value: +1.0 Perfect positive +/- association +0.8 to +1.0 Very strong +/- association +0.6 to +0.8 Strong +/- association +0.4 to +0.6 Moderate +/- association +0.2 to +0.4 Weak +/- association 0.0 to +0.2 Very weak +/- or no association

The result of the Pearson's r correlation analyses shows that there is a weak to moderate positive and significant correlation between the variables of sense of belongingness and social interaction. This weak to moderate correlation is because of students' diverse perception on social interaction and sense of belongingness as they behave and act differently. Some students portray a weak feeling of belongingness and find it difficult to interact with others. This happens when students feel that they were in a worse situation than others and if they encountered difficulties in entering a group, they characterized belonging as a more difficult and less enjoyable feeling (Fernandez et al., 2023). However, the study's findings mean that an increase in the level of students' sense of belongingness will increase the social interaction skills of the students. With these results, it suggested that students' sense of belongness influences students' social interaction and vice versa. These results are in harmony with the study of Pardede & Kovac (2023). It stated that one's assessments of the complex interaction of positive and negative connections and interactions are strongly related to the sense of belongingness, which has a significant and basic impact on human existence.

Table 2 reveals the result of the Pearson's r correlation analyses shows that there is a weak to moderate positive and significant correlation between the variables of social interaction and social connectedness. These findings are the results of some students with weak connections to others that also affect their interaction skills. Whereas other students have larger company and feel confident to connect and interact with other students as well as with their teachers. In the study of Symeou et al (2020), it stated that the quality of student's interactions with their teachers and peers is an issue of teacher and peer support. Students need the attention, care, and support they receive from their teachers.

Table 2 Test of Significant Relationship between Social Interaction and Social Connectedness

Social Interaction	Social Connectedness				
	RS	KOE	CQ	SU	FC
Cooperation	.360**	.280**	.286**	.416**	.366**
Openness	.369**	.258**	.211**	.373**	.332**
Empathy	.379**	.289**	.251**	.457**	.388**
Giving Motivation	.318**	.221**	.213**	.450**	.359**
Positive Sense	.364**	.343**	.256**	.442**	.399**
Similarities with others	.321**	.310**	.298**	.430**	.374**

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Verbal Interpretation of r-value: +1.0 Perfect positive +/- association +0.8 to +1.0 Very strong +/- association +0.6 to +0.8 Strong +/- association +0.4 to +0.6 Moderate +/- association +0.2 to +0.4 Weak +/- association 0.0 to +0.2 Very weak +/- or no association

They also need peer connectedness to have a strong bond with their peers and get the consolation and assistance they need. Nevertheless, the result still depicts that an increase in the level of students' social connectedness will increase the social interaction skills of the students.

Table 3 Test of Significant Relationship between Sense of Belongingness and Social Connectedness

Social Connectedness	Sense of Belongingness		
	Belonging	Acceptance	Respect
Relationship Salience	.340**	.451**	.495**
Knowing Each Other's Experience	.361**	.487**	.413**
Contact Quantity	.220**	.295**	.179**
Shared Understanding	.383**	.513**	.462**
Feeling of Closeness	.347**	.443**	.380**

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Verbal Interpretation of r-value: +1.0 Perfect positive +/- association +0.8 to +1.0 Very strong +/- association +0.6 to +0.8 Strong +/- association +0.4 to +0.6 Moderate +/- association +0.2 to +0.4 Weak +/- association 0.0 to +0.2 Very weak +/- or no association

Table 3 shows the result of the Pearson's r correlation analyses shows that there is a weak to moderate positive and significant correlation between the variables of sense of belongingness and social connectedness. This result has connection with students' deviation on feeling of connectedness and belongingness. In the study of Zheng etal (2022), it stated that putting more of an emphasis on friendship and belonging can help lessen feelings of disconnection. Peers have a bigger role during the adolescent years as students gain greater autonomy from adults including parents, instructors, and school personnel. And as students vary on how they perceive connections and belonginess, this have come to weak and moderate relationship among variables. But this result still signifies that an increase in the level of students' sense of belongingness will increase the level of social connectedness of the students.

Table 4 Test of Significant Relationship between Sense of Belongingness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles

Araling Panlipunan Roles	Sense of Belongingness		
	Belonging	Acceptance	Respect
Content and Knowledge	.335**	.330**	.316**
Socio-cultural Sensitivity	.319**	.406**	.278**
Collaboration	.345**	.328**	.264**
Citizenship Education	.321**	.294**	.375**

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Verbal Interpretation of r-value: +1.0 Perfect positive +/- association +0.8 to +1.0 Very strong +/- association +0.6 to +0.8 Strong +/- association +0.4 to +0.6 Moderate +/- association +0.2 to +0.4 Weak +/- association 0.0 to +0.2 Very weak +/- or no association

Table 4 shows the result of the Pearson's r correlation analyses shows that there is a weak to moderate positive and significant correlation between the variables of sense of belongingness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. The findings of Baek's (2023) study demonstrate that positive engagement and associations with academic subjects, such as *Araling Panlipunan* in addition to social contacts, have a significant impact on students' sense of belonging. His findings imply that, possibly even more than meeting their social needs, encouraging academic belonging may be one of the most important and pertinent strategies to improve students' feeling of belonging. Because of its significant influence, schools should pay more attention to promoting happy learning environments.

Table 5 Test of Significant Relationship between Social Connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles

Social Connectedness	*Araling Panlipunan* Roles			
	CK	SCS	C	CE
Relationship Salience	.270**	.241**	.255**	.296**
Knowing Each Other's Experience	.173*	.279**	.150*	.182*
Contact Quantity	.104	.224**	.051	.077
Shared Understanding	.348**	.460**	.340**	.324**
Feeling of Closeness	.294**	.403**	.348**	.321**

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Verbal Interpretation of r-value: +1.0 Perfect positive +/- association +0.8 to +1.0 Very strong +/- association +0.6 to +0.8 Strong +/- association +0.4 to +0.6 Moderate +/- association +0.2 to +0.4 Weak +/- association 0.0 to +0.2 Very weak +/- or no association

The result of the Pearson's r correlation analyses shows that there is a weak to moderate positive and significant correlation between the variables of social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. This result means that some students may have encountered challenges in connecting with other students and teachers. As the study of Wilson (2018) concluded that students' engagement with the content, similarly in *Araling Panlipunan*, and their performance and achievement in school can be greatly influenced by their perceptions of the significance of the information they are studying. School connection, according to her study, is linked to how significant students think the subject is and how likely they are to apply it in the future. As a result, students are more likely to indicate they will use the content in the future if they feel more connected.

Table 6 Test of Significant Relationship between Social Interaction and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles

Social Interaction	*Araling Panlipunan* Roles			
	CK	SCS	C	CE
Cooperation	.523**	.459**	.504	.555
Openness	.481**	.569**	.464	.599
Empathy	.556**	.496**	.465	.519
Giving Motivation	.620**	.562**	.575	.618
Positive Sense	.494**	.460**	.357	.444
Similarities with Others	.333**	.415**	.276	.329

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Verbal Interpretation of r-value: +1.0 Perfect positive +/- association +0.8 to +1.0 Very strong +/- association +0.6 to +0.8 Strong +/- association +0.4 to +0.6 Moderate +/- association +0.2 to +0.4 Weak +/- association 0.0 to +0.2 Very weak +/- or no association

Table 6 presents the result of the Pearson *r* shows correlation analyses indicate that there is a moderate to strong positive and significant correlation between the variables of Social Interaction and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. And as Cornelius-Ukpepi etal (2019) mention that students who interact with those who possess the ability to perceive things in their own interest is the most important of the elements that encourage adolescents to join their peers. This suggests that a student's social skills and how they interact with teachers, other students, and people in general have a big impact on how well they perform in various subject areas, like social studies. As an outcome of the learning process, social interaction varies among students and is extremely important since it sets up other factors that can contribute to the value of studying social studies.

Table 7 Test of Mediating Effect of Social Interaction to the Relationship between Sense of Belongingness, Social Connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles

Indirect Effects	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
SOB→SI→SC	.2048	.0455	.1198	.2992
SOB→SI→APR	.4884	.0630	.3736	.6199
Completely Standardized Indirect Effects				
SOB→SI→SC	.1813	.0393	.1078	.2647
SOB→SI→APR	.4074	.0485	.3150	.5067

Note: SOB (Sense of Belongingness); SI (Social Interaction); SC (Social Connectedness); APR (*Araling Panlipunan* Roles)

Table 7 shows the mediating effect of social interaction to the relationship between a sense of belongingness, social connectedness, and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. Findings revealed that social interaction mediates the relationship between sense of belongingness, social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles. Findings revealed that constructs of Social Interaction could explain the variation of Sense of Belongingness, Social Connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles. The results further showed that the overall Social Interaction are significant mediators in the relationship between Sense of Belongingness, Social Connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles. The result indicates that the overall Social Interaction can transmit the effect of influenced by Sense of Belongingness, which increases the Social Connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles. It can also be noticed that the overall Social Interaction demonstrated the highest mediating effect of Sense of Belongingness to Social Connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles. This indirect effect means that respondents who differ by one unit in their reported Sense of Belongingness are estimated to vary by 20.48% units on the social connectedness and 48.84% units in *Araling Panlipunan* Roles. The result of the study revealed that social interaction has mediating effect on the relationship between sense of belongingness, social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. It explains that the variables of social interaction could explain the variation of variables in sense of belongingness, social connectedness, and *Araling Panlipunan*.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions and recommendations were drawn: There is a positive and significant relationship between the independent variable, sense of belonging and mediating variable, social interaction. Sense of belongingness in terms of belonging, acceptance and respect are positively and significantly associated with social interaction namely, cooperation, openness, empathy, giving motivation, positive sense, shared understanding, and similarities with others. There is a positive and significant relationship between the mediating variable, social interaction and dependent variable, social connectedness in all dimensions based on the response of Grade six students. Social

interaction in terms of cooperation, openness, empathy, giving motivation, positive sense and similarities with others are positively and significantly associated with social connectedness in terms of relationship salience, knowing other's experience, contact quantity, shared understanding and feeling of closeness. There is a positive and significant relationship between the independent variable, sense of belongingness and dependent variable, social connectedness in all dimensions based on the response of Grade six students. Sense of belongingness in terms of belonging, acceptance and respect are positively and significantly related with social connectedness in terms of relationship salience, knowing other's experience, contact quantity, shared understanding and feeling of closeness.

There is a positive and significant relationship between the independent variable, sense of belongingness and dependent variable, *Araling Panlipunan* roles in all dimensions based on the response of Grade six students. Sense of belongingness in terms of belonging, acceptance and respect are positively and significantly related with *Araling Panlipunan*'s roles in terms of content and knowledge, socio-cultural sensitivity, collaboration and citizenship education. There is a positive and significant relationship between the dependent variables, social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles in all dimensions based on the response of Grade six students. Social connectedness in terms of relationship salience, knowing other's experience, contact quantity, shared understanding and feeling of closeness are positively and significantly related with *Araling Panlipunan* roles in terms of content and knowledge, socio-cultural sensitivity, collaboration, and citizenship education. There is a positive and significant relationship between the mediating variable, social interaction, and dependent variable, *Araling Panlipunan* roles in all dimensions based on the response of Grade six students. Social interaction in terms of cooperation, openness, empathy, giving motivation, positive sense and similarities with others are positively and significantly related with *Araling Panlipunan* roles in terms of content and knowledge, sociocultural sensitivity, collaboration, and citizenship education. For mediation analysis, social interaction mediates the relationship between sense of belonginess, social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles. It was concluded that the constructs of Social Interaction could explain the variation of Sense of Belongingness, Social Connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* Roles. Therefore, social interaction has mediating effect on the relationship between sense of belongingness, social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. It explains that the variables of social interaction could explain the variation of variables in sense of belongingness, social connectedness and *Araling Panlipunan* roles. It is recommended that the school heads and administrators in the district and division may utilize the findings of the study in developing projects and programs that enhance students' social interactions and increase their level of sense of belongingness and social connectedness and understand the role of *Araling Panlipunan* as a subject through considering all the indicators emphasized in the study. Also, teachers may utilize the findings of the study to consider students' sense of belongingness and social connectedness in giving activities and assessments to enhance students' social interaction. For the future researchers, they may utilize the findings of the study to further analyze the effect of social interaction to students and seek other variables that may relate to it.

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