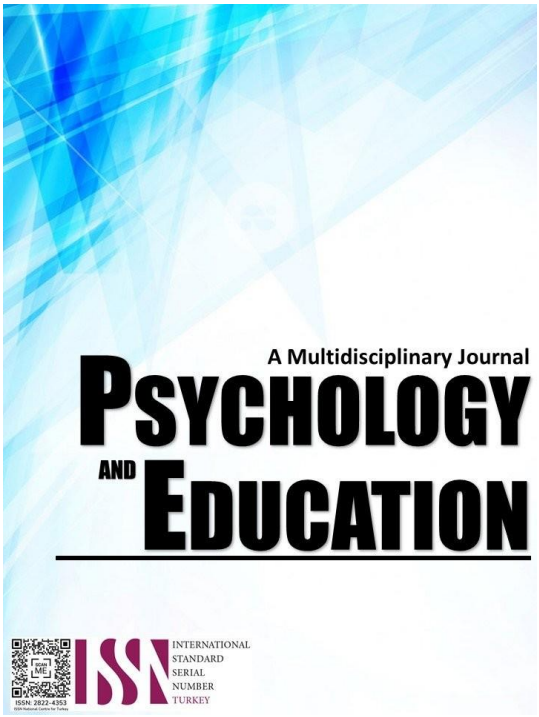
BALANCING ACADEMICS AND ATHLETICS: THE ACCESS (ATHLETE - CENTERED COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION SUPPORT SYSTEM) PROGRAM AS AN ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY MODE (ADM) FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES



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Research Article

Balancing Academics and Athletics: The Access (Athlete-Centered Comprehensive Education Support System) Program as an Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM) for Student-Athletes

Rachelle D. Cruzada,* Rizzie D. Rodriguez, Dominador B. Rebugio Jr., Albert John P. Aquino
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of the Athlete-Centered Comprehensive Education Support System (ACCESS) program, an alternative delivery mode (ADM), on the academic performance and module engagement of junior high school student-athletes in six high schools in Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat, Philippines. Thirty student-athletes participating in the ACCESS program were surveyed to assess their frequency of printed module utilization and level of engagement. GPA data before and after ACCESS participation was obtained from the student-athlete advisor. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and paired t-tests. Results indicated moderate utilization (Mean = 2.93, SD = 0.77) and neutral engagement (Mean = 3.02, SD = 0.98) with printed modules. A paired t-test revealed a statistically significant increase in GPA after participation in the ACCESS program (Before: Mean = 2.65, SD = 0.255; After: Mean = 3.30, SD = 0.417; $p < 0.05$). However, Pearson correlation showed no significant relationship between the frequency of module utilization and GPA ($p > 0.05$). These findings suggest that while ACCESS participation correlates with improved academic performance, the benefits may stem from the program's overall structure rather than solely from module utilization frequency. The study recommends refining module design, promoting active learning strategies, and personalizing learning experiences to maximize the ACCESS program's impact on student-athlete academic success. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects and optimal design of ACCESS for student-athletes.

Keywords: *student-athletes, Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM), academic performance, module engagement*

Introduction

Student-athletes face unique challenges in balancing their athletic commitments with academic requirements (Brown et al., 2015). The rigorous demands of training, competition, and travel often lead to difficulties in attending regular classes, completing assignments on time, and maintaining satisfactory academic performance (Quimbo, 2023). Consequently, concerns arise regarding their overall academic engagement and achievement levels. Traditional, classroom-based instruction, with its rigid schedules and standardized curriculum, often fails to accommodate the demanding lifestyles of student-athletes, leading to disengagement and underachievement.

Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs) offer a promising solution by providing flexible and accessible education (DepEd Order No. 001 s. 2024). ADMs such as online learning, blended learning, and modular instruction have the potential to cater to diverse learner needs and circumstances (David, 2024). However, many existing ADM programs lack the tailored support and structure necessary to effectively improve both academic engagement and academic achievement among student-athletes. A one-size-fits-all approach often fails to address the specific time constraints, learning styles, and support needs of this population.

Despite the potential benefits of ADMs, there is limited research on the effectiveness of specifically designed ADM programs tailored to student-athletes. Furthermore, the legal and policy considerations for implementing such programs require careful examination to ensure compliance with regulations and alignment with the principles of inclusive education (Department of Education, 2019). This gap in knowledge necessitates a focused study on interventions that provide flexible learning options, personalized support, and engaging learning experiences for student-athletes.

This study proposes the implementation of the Athlete-Centered Comprehensive Education Support System (ACCESS) within the six high schools of the Municipality of Lambayong. ACCESS is a blended learning ADM designed to provide student-athletes with flexible, accessible, and high-quality education that supports their academic and athletic pursuits. A key component of ACCESS is the use of printed modules adapted from existing Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM) resources, ensuring readily available learning materials accessible at their convenience. The program also incorporates varied assessment strategies to cater to different learning styles. By investigating the impact of ACCESS on student-athletes' academic engagement and achievement within these schools, this research aims to inform the development of evidence-based policies and practices that promote the holistic development of student-athletes in the municipality of Lambayong.

Research Questions

This study seeks to determine the extent to which the ACCESS program, as an alternative delivery mode, influences the academic performance of student-athletes in selected high schools. More specifically, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How frequently do student-athletes participating in the ACCESS program utilize the printed modules (measured by self-reported hours spent studying modules per week, completion rate of module activities, and frequency of seeking clarification from teachers on module content)?

2. What is the level of academic engagement among junior high school student-athletes participating in the ACCESS program?
3. What is the level of academic achievement (GPA) among junior high school student-athletes participating before and after the ACCESS program?
4. What is the relationship between the frequency of ACCESS module utilization and the level of academic achievement of student-athletes?

Literature Review

This section provides a comprehensive review of existing literature relevant to the study's focus on the Athlete-Centered Comprehensive Education Support System (ACCESS) and its impact on student-athletes' academic engagement and achievement. The review encompasses several key areas, including alternative delivery modes (ADMs) in education, blended learning approaches, the unique challenges and needs of student-athletes, factors influencing academic engagement, and the role of printed modules and learning resources. By synthesizing relevant theories, empirical studies, and best practices, this chapter establishes a theoretical framework for the study and highlights the gap in the literature that this research aims to address.

Supporting the academic success of student-athletes is a multifaceted challenge. Student-athletes must balance their demanding training and competition schedules with academic responsibilities, often leading to conflicts and stress. Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs), such as blended learning and modular instruction, offer promising solutions to enhance flexibility and support for student-athletes. This review of related literature (RRL) aims to synthesize existing research on ADMs, student-athlete academic success, and the specific components of the ACCESS program.

Student-athletes dedicate significant time to athletic training, practices, and competitions. This commitment often leads to scheduling conflicts with classes, assignments, and study time. Research by Watt and Moore (2001) indicates that time demands negatively impact student-athletes' academic performance and increase stress levels.

Intense athletic training and competition can cause physical and mental fatigue, impairing cognitive function, concentration, and motivation for academic tasks. A study by Simons, Van Rheenen, and Covington (1999) found that fatigue adversely affects academic performance and overall well-being among student-athletes.

Travel for athletic competitions disrupts class attendance, assignment deadlines, and access to academic resources. Meyer (2005) highlights the academic challenges faced by student-athletes who frequently travel for competitions, emphasizing the need for flexible learning options.

Student-athletes face social pressures to perform well both academically and athletically. Athletic identity can impact academic motivation and engagement. Research by Comeaux and Harrison (2007) identifies stress, anxiety, and depression as common psychological challenges for student-athletes.

Student-athletes require specific academic support services, such as tutoring, academic advising, and flexible learning options. Carodine et al. (2001) emphasize the importance of tailored academic support in enhancing student-athletes' academic outcomes.

Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs) encompass various instructional methods, including blended learning, online learning, and modular instruction. These methods offer increased flexibility, accessibility, and personalization to meet diverse student needs. According to DepEd Order No. 54, s. 2012, ADMs are designed to address problems on access and quality of basic education, ensuring that educational access is inclusive and equitable.

Research suggests that ADMs can improve student learning outcomes, including academic achievement, engagement, and motivation. Means et al. (2010) found that students in ADMs performed better than those in traditional settings, particularly when ADMs were well-designed and supported.

ADMs can address the unique challenges faced by student-athletes by providing flexible learning schedules and personalized instruction. A study by Watson and Voelker (2013) highlights the potential benefits of ADMs for student-athletes, although gaps remain in the literature. DepEd Order No. 53, s. 2011, supports the implementation of ADMs to enhance learning opportunities and accommodate various learner needs. While ADMs offer several advantages, they also present challenges, such as reliance on technology, student discipline, and lack of support. Critical analysis by Drysdale, Graham, and Spring (2013) points to the need for robust support systems and effective instructional design to maximize ADM benefits.

Blended learning combines face-to-face instruction with online activities, providing flexibility and personalized learning experiences. Research by Graham (2006) demonstrates the effectiveness of blended learning in improving student outcomes, making it ideal for student-athletes.

Modular instruction breaks down content into self-contained units or modules, allowing for flexible and self-paced learning. Studies by Treacy (2007) show that modular instruction enhances student outcomes by catering to individual learning needs. DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020, emphasizes the importance of modular instruction in providing continuous learning opportunities.

Flexible scheduling is crucial for student-athletes to manage their athletic commitments. The ACCESS program offers flexible options,

such as online access to course materials and extended deadlines. A study by Kuh (2001) indicates that flexible scheduling positively impacts student-athletes' academic success.

The ACCESS program provides tailored academic support services, including tutoring, advising, and mentoring. Carodine et al. (2001) emphasize the effectiveness of these services in improving student-athletes' academic outcomes. DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2021, highlights the importance of providing targeted support for learners with diverse needs.

Technology plays a vital role in the ACCESS program, enhancing student engagement, access to information, and communication. Research by Kozma (2003) highlights the positive impact of technology integration on educational outcomes.

Academic engagement encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, all essential for student learning and success. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) describe engagement as a critical factor in academic achievement.

Individual, social, and contextual factors, such as motivation, self-efficacy, teacher support, and classroom climate, influence academic engagement. Skinner and Belmont (1993) identify these factors as key determinants of student engagement.

Various instruments, such as surveys, observations, and interviews, measure academic engagement. Appleton et al. (2006) discuss the strengths and limitations of different measurement approaches.

Studies indicate that ADMs can enhance academic engagement by providing flexible and personalized learning experiences. Factors such as effective instructional design, robust support systems, and technology integration are enablers of engagement in ADMs. However, challenges such as lack of student discipline and reliance on technology can hinder engagement.

Research suggests a positive relationship between student engagement with learning materials and academic outcomes. Chickering and Gamson (1987) argue that active engagement with course content leads to increased knowledge acquisition, improved study habits, and enhanced motivation. However, gaps in the literature remain, particularly in the context of ADMs for student-athletes.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) emphasizes self-efficacy, observational learning, and reciprocal determinism as key principles. Bandura (1986) suggests that SCT can help understand and promote student-athletes' academic success in the ACCESS program.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) focuses on autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Deci and Ryan (2000) propose that SDT can be used to understand and promote student-athletes' motivation and engagement in the ACCESS program.

The RRL highlights the unique challenges faced by student-athletes and the potential of ADMs to address these challenges. Gaps in the literature indicate the need for further research on the effectiveness of ADMs for student-athletes. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of ADMs and the ACCESS program's impact on student-athletes' academic success. The research questions and hypotheses will guide this exploration.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationships between student-athletes' ACCESS module utilization, academic engagement, and academic achievement (GPA). This design was appropriate for describing the characteristics of the participating student-athletes and exploring the relationships between variables without manipulating them. Specifically, the study aimed to describe the levels of student-athletes' engagement with the ACCESS program's printed modules, their overall academic engagement, and their academic achievement, while also exploring the correlations between module engagement and their academic engagement and achievement.

Respondents

Data for this study were collected using a survey questionnaire designed to comprehensively assess key variables related to student-athletes' experiences with the ACCESS program. The questionnaire consisted of three sections, each targeting specific aspects of the research questions.

Section one gathered demographic information, including grade level, age, and the sports in which the student-athletes participated. The grade levels included in the study were Grades 7, 8, 9, and 10. Age was measured in years. Participants were asked to list all sports in which they actively participated.

Section two focused on the frequency and extent of printed module utilization. This section comprised six indicators, each measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

Prior to administration, the survey instrument was reviewed by three experienced teachers familiar with the ACCESS program and two experts in survey design and measurement to ensure content validity and clarity. The questionnaire was administered to participants after obtaining informed consent from both the students and their parents/guardians (for those under 18) and ensuring the confidentiality of their responses through the use of anonymous coding. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee.

Procedure

Data gathering commenced after obtaining the necessary permissions from the school administration, relevant authorities (e.g., the Department of Education), and parents/guardians of the student-athletes. Student-athletes who met the inclusion criteria were recruited, with a clear explanation of the purpose of the study and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained from all participants (and parents/guardians if students were under 18) before they participated in the study.

The survey questionnaire was then administered to the respondents, either in a group setting or individually. Clear instructions were provided, and any questions participants had were answered.

GPA data was collected directly from the student-athlete advisor. This data was obtained with appropriate permissions from the school administration and in accordance with privacy regulations and ethical guidelines. The advisor provided access to GPA records while ensuring student anonymity and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using the following statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) were calculated to describe the demographic characteristics of the participants, their engagement with the printed modules, and their levels of academic engagement and achievement.

Specifically, the following analyses were conducted to address the research questions outlined in the Statement of the Problem:

Frequency of Module Utilization (SOP Question 1): Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were used to summarize the self-reported hours spent studying modules per week, the completion rate of module activities, and the frequency of seeking clarification from teachers on module content.

Level of Academic Engagement (SOP Question 2): Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were used to describe the level of academic engagement among junior high school student-athletes participating in the ACCESS program, based on the engagement indicators.

Academic Achievement Before and After ACCESS (SOP Question 3): A paired samples t-test was used to compare the mean GPA of student-athletes before and after participating in the ACCESS program. This test is appropriate because it compares two related samples (the same students' GPAs at two different time points).

Relationship Between Module Utilization and Academic Achievement (SOP Question 4): Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to examine the linear relationship between the frequency of module use and GPA.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, focusing on the impact of the Athlete-Centered Comprehensive Education Support System (ACCESS) on student-athletes' academic engagement and achievement. The results are organized according to the specific research questions outlined in Chapter I. Each section includes a presentation of the quantitative data, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the existing literature and the study's theoretical framework. This chapter aims to provide a clear and concise overview of the study's key results, as well as an in-depth interpretation of their significance and implications.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The respondents in this study consisted of 30 student-athletes from six high schools in Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat. The age of the respondents ranged from 12 to 16 years, with an average age of 14.2 years (SD = 1.5). The sample included 20 male student-athletes (67%) and 10 female student-athletes (33%). Based on the data collected, the most commonly participated sports among the respondents were basketball (40%), volleyball (30%), and track and field (17%). Other sports represented in the sample included badminton, chess, and taekwondo. This demographic overview, focusing on age range, gender distribution with a male majority, and prevalent sporting activities, offers essential context for interpreting the study's findings concerning the ACCESS program's effects on student-athletes within Lambayong.

Frequency of Utilization of Printed Module

Table 1. *Frequency of Utilization of Printed Modules (n=30)*

Measure	*n*	*Standard Deviation*	*Mean*	*Description*	*Interpretation*
Self-Reported Hours Spent Studying Modules	30	0.78	2.83	Sometimes	Moderate Utilization
Completion Rate of Module Activities	30	0.65	3.27	Sometimes	Moderate Utilization
Frequency of Seeking Clarification (Teachers)	30	0.89	2.70	Sometimes	Moderate Utilization
Overall	90	0.77	2.93	Sometimes	Moderate Utilization

The data presented in Table 1 indicates that the frequency of utilization of printed modules among student-athletes is moderate, with a mean score of 2.93 and a variance of 0.77. This suggests that, on average, student-athletes sometimes engage with printed modules. Several factors may contribute to this level of utilization, including the accessibility and quality of the printed materials. Valenzuela et

al. (2020) highlight that the availability and clarity of content in educational materials significantly impact their usage. When printed modules are well-designed, relevant to the curriculum, and easily accessible, students are more likely to engage with them. Additionally, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2020) emphasizes the importance of providing adequate resources to support student-athletes academic success, which can positively influence their utilization of printed modules.

However, there are also factors that may limit engagement with printed modules. The rise of digital learning resources provides alternative means of accessing educational content, which some students might prefer over traditional printed materials (Clark & Mayer, 2016). Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that student motivation and engagement are crucial for the effective use of learning resources. If printed modules do not align with students' interests or fail to engage them, their utilization may decrease. Additionally, the physical and mental fatigue associated with balancing academic and athletic commitments can impact student-athletes' ability to engage with printed materials (Adler et al., 2018). Therefore, while printed modules serve as a valuable resource, it is essential to consider these factors to enhance their utilization and effectiveness.

Level of Academic Engagement with Printed Module

Table 2. *Student-Athlete Engagement with Printed Modules (n=30)*

Engagement Indicator	*N*	*Standard Deviation*	*Mean*	*Description*	*Interpretation*
Connect learning to life	30	1.058	3.15	Neutral	Neutral
Find topics interesting	30	0.99	3.30	Neutral	Neutral
Ask self-questions for understanding	30	0.92	3.05	Neutral	Neutral
Put effort into activities	30	0.84	3.45	Agree	Neutral
Feel confident of success	30	1.024	2.90	Neutral	Neutral
Stay focused when studying	30	0.96	2.75	Neutral	Neutral
Enjoy discussing topics	30	1.10	2.50	Disagree	Neutral
Feel motivated to learn more	30	0.93	3.20	Neutral	Neutral
Try to find additional resources	30	0.97	3.00	Neutral	Neutral
Feel modules help improve grades	30	1.07	2.85	Neutral	Neutral
Overall	300	0.99	3.02	Neutral	Neutral

Table 2 presented that student-athletes have a neutral level of engagement with printed modules, with overall mean score of 3.02 and a variance of 0.98. This neutrality suggests that, on average, student-athletes neither agree nor disagree with statements regarding their engagement with these learning resources. Several factors may contribute to this outcome, such as varying preferences for learning materials. While some students may find printed modules effective, others might prefer digital resources or interactive learning methods (Clark & Mayer, 2016). The balance of these preferences likely results in an overall neutral stance. Additionally, the quality and relevance of the printed modules play a crucial role. DepEd (2020) emphasizes that well-structured and curriculum-aligned content is more likely to engage students. If the content does not meet these criteria, it could lead to a neutral level of engagement.

On the other hand, the increasing availability of alternative learning resources, such as digital platforms and online materials, might divert attention away from printed modules, contributing to this neutral engagement level (Clark & Mayer, 2016). Additionally, Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that student motivation and engagement are critical for the effective use of learning resources. Student-athletes often face time constraints due to their athletic commitments, which can limit their ability to fully engage with printed modules (Adler et al., 2018). These factors combined may explain the neutral engagement observed in the data, highlighting the need to enhance the quality and relevance of printed modules and consider students' learning preferences to improve their effectiveness as learning resources.

Level of Achievement of student-athletes before and after ACCESS Program

Table 3. *Paired t-test of the Academic Achievement (GPA) Before and After ACCESS Program (n=30)*

Period	*n*	*Standard Deviation*	*Mean*	*Description*
Before ACCESS Program	30	0.255	2.65	Satisfactory
After ACCESS Program	30	0.417	3.30	Satisfactory

The data presented in Table 3 shows a comparative analysis of the academic achievements of student-athletes before and after participating in the ACCESS Program. The number of participants (n) remains constant at 30 for both time periods. Before the ACCESS Program, the mean GPA was 2.65 with a standard deviation of 0.255, indicating a satisfactory level of academic performance. However, after the ACCESS Program was implemented, the mean GPA increased significantly to 3.30 with a higher standard deviation of 0.417, which also falls under the satisfactory category. The increase in the mean GPA suggests that the ACCESS Program had a positive impact on the academic achievements of student-athletes, as indicated by the improved overall performance.

The standard deviation, which measures the variability of GPA scores, increased from 0.255 to 0.417 after the implementation of the ACCESS Program. This increase indicates that there was greater dispersion in the academic performance of student-athletes post-intervention, suggesting that while the program was effective in raising the overall GPA, individual outcomes varied. Overall, the positive change in the mean GPA demonstrates that the ACCESS Program, as an alternative delivery mode of learning, played a

significant role in enhancing the academic achievement of student-athletes in the six secondary schools in Lambayong.

Relationship between the student-athletes frequency of utilization of printed modules and GPA

Table 4. *Relationship between Frequency of Utilization of Printed Modules and GPA (n=30)*

Measure	*Mean*	*T*	*p-value*	*t Critical*	*Interpretation*
Frequency of Utilization of Printed Modules and GPA	2.93	13.3503031	0.26252941	2.00171748	Not Statistically Significant

at 0.05 level of significance

The data in Table 4 examines the relationship between the frequency of utilization of printed modules and GPA. The mean value is 2.93, indicating the average frequency of utilization. The t-value is 13.35, and the p-value is 0.2625. Given that the p-value is greater than the alpha level of 0.05, the result is not statistically significant. The t-critical value of 2.0017 further supports this interpretation. In this context, the null hypothesis (Ho) states that there is no significant relationship between the frequency of utilization of printed modules and GPA, while the alternative hypothesis (Ha) states that there is a significant relationship.

Since the p-value is higher than the 0.05 significance level, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of utilization of printed modules and GPA. Therefore, while printed modules might be a useful tool for students, their frequency of use does not appear to have a meaningful impact on academic performance as measured.

Conclusions

The ACCESS program demonstrates potential as an alternative delivery mode for enhancing the academic performance of student-athletes. While student-athletes exhibit moderate utilization and neutral engagement with printed modules, participation in the ACCESS program correlates with a statistically significant improvement in GPA. This suggests that the program's overall structure, including elements beyond the printed modules themselves, contributes to positive academic outcomes. However, the absence of a direct correlation between module utilization frequency and GPA underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of how students interact with and benefit from ACCESS program components. Further research should explore strategies to optimize module design, enhance student engagement, and personalize learning experiences to maximize the program's impact on academic success.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

Revise printed modules to ensure content is engaging, relevant to student-athletes' interests, and aligned with learning objectives. Incorporate interactive elements, real-world examples, and opportunities for application to improve engagement.

Encourage student-athletes to adopt active learning strategies when using printed modules, such as summarizing key concepts, asking self-questions, and connecting content to prior knowledge. Provide training and resources on effective study techniques.

Supplement printed modules with digital resources, such as videos, simulations, and online quizzes, to cater to diverse learning preferences and provide additional support. Ensure that digital resources are accessible and user-friendly.

Provide teachers with professional development on how to effectively support student-athletes using printed modules. Encourage teachers to provide regular feedback, answer questions, and facilitate discussions to enhance understanding.

Personalize Learning Experiences: Tailor the ACCESS program to meet the individual needs of student-athletes, considering their learning styles, academic strengths, and athletic commitments. Provide flexible learning options and personalized support to ensure all students can succeed.

Conduct Further Research: Conduct further research to explore the long-term impact of the ACCESS program on student-athlete academic outcomes. Investigate the effectiveness of different module design features, teaching strategies, and support services.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Rachelle D. Cruzada
Sultan Kudarat State University – Philippines

Rizzie D. Rodriguez
Sultan Kudarat State University – Philippines

Dominador B. Rebugio Jr.
Sultan Kudarat State University – Philippines

Albert John P. Aquino
Sultan Kudarat State University – Philippines