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Student-led interest time and its influence on social skills and interaction among students: A quantitative analysis

Maxleo Jul B Padel [1*], Alexa o Pingos [2], Russell E Pingos [3], Edison Digamon [4], Sabria A Eludo [5], John Carl Sison [6], Clifford R Pinero [7], Jazz Denver Bonotan [8], Justin Baybay [9], Mary Grace Escalante [10], Michaela Santos [11], Jeremiah Clark E Canamo[12], Jv B Basadre [13], Randy P Lamanilao [14]

[1-13] Students, Balite National High School, DepEd Surigao del Norte Division, Philippines

[14] Research Teacher, Balite National High School, DepEd Surigao del Norte Division, Philippines

* Corresponding Author: **Maxleo Jul B Padel**

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Abstract

This quantitative study investigated the perceptions of student-led interest time (SLIT) among secondary school students and its influence on social skills and interaction. Conducted at Balite National High School in San Francisco, Surigao Del Norte, the research utilized a descriptive research design to analyze the impact of SLIT on various aspects of student development. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants from the school's population of 365 students. The findings revealed that SLIT positively affects engagement, learning outcomes, skill development, and social connections within the classroom. Students perceive SLIT activities favorably, expressing enjoyment and recognizing its benefits for personal growth and relationship-building. However, there are identified areas for improvement, particularly in aligning SLIT activities with student preferences and interests. Demographic analysis indicates a diverse representation of students across different age groups and grade levels, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of perceptions across various developmental stages and educational backgrounds. Statistical tests demonstrate significant differences in perception based on age and grade level, highlighting the influence of demographic factors on students' views of SLIT. This study underscores the importance of SLIT in promoting holistic student development. It suggests that efforts to tailor SLIT activities to meet student needs and interests better can further optimize its effectiveness. Further research, including post-hoc analyses, is recommended to identify specific age groups or grade levels that exhibit significant differences in their perceptions of SLIT, aiding in the refinement of SLIT implementation strategies.

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Keywords: Student-led Interest Time (SLIT), social skills, interaction, secondary school, quantitative analysis

Introduction

Student Led Interest Time (SLIT) refers to a designated period within the school day where students are encouraged to pursue their interests, fostering autonomy and self-directed learning. This study aims to explore the influence of SLIT on social skills and interaction among students through a quantitative analysis. By investigating how student-led activities during SLIT contribute to the development of social skills and interpersonal dynamics within the school environment, this research seeks to provide insights into the potential benefits of incorporating such initiatives into educational practices.

Previous literature has underscored the importance of fostering social skills among students for their overall well-being and academic success. For instance, Wentzel (2009) [16] emphasizes the role of peer interactions and collaborative learning,

experiences in enhancing students' communication, cooperation, and conflict-resolution abilities. Additionally, studies by Deci Ryan (2000) [4] have highlighted the positive impact of student autonomy and self-directed learning on motivation, engagement and academic achievement. However, there remains a gap in understanding how student-led activities during designated periods, such as SLIT, specifically influence social skills and interaction dynamics within the school context.

Addressing this knowledge gap, this study seeks to elucidate the relationship between SLIT and social skill development among students. By examining the extent to which student-led activities during SLIT promote collaboration, communication, and other essential social competencies, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which autonomy and self-directed learning opportunities can foster social-emotional development in educational settings. Furthermore, by identifying the factors that facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of SLIT in promoting social skills, this study aims to provide practical insights for educators and policymakers seeking to design and implement student-centered approaches to education.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to advance the frontiers of knowledge in the discipline of education by offering empirical evidence on the relationship between student-led interest time and social skill development. By shedding light on the role of autonomy and self-directed learning in fostering social-emotional competencies among students, this research has implications for curriculum design, classroom management, and educational policy. Moreover, by highlighting the importance of providing opportunities for student autonomy within the school day, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on student-centered pedagogies and promoting holistic development in educational practice.

Review of Related Literature

Several studies have explored the impact of various factors on student engagement and development within educational settings. Tchangnonhou and Hounyetin (2023) conducted a study investigating the influence of classroom interaction on academic communication skills in Secondary Schools. Their findings indicated that the experimental group, presumably with higher levels of classroom interaction, exhibited enhanced oral communication skills compared to the control group. This suggests that classroom interaction is crucial for improving academic communication skills, highlighting the importance of active engagement within the classroom environment.

In contrast, Bunnell (2018) [1] examined the effects of extra-curricular activities on student engagement among at-risk students. The study found no statistically significant difference in the engagement levels of at-risk students who participated in extra-curricular activities compared to those who did not. This implies that extra-curricular activities may not significantly impact engagement levels for some student populations, indicating the need for tailored interventions for different student groups.

Kardiansyah and Qodriani (2018) [7] explored the role of English extra-curricular activities in improving students' English-speaking ability at the tertiary level. Their findings revealed that both in-class and extra-curricular activities enhanced students' English-speaking ability. This suggests that extra-curricular activities complement formal instruction in language learning, providing additional opportunities for language practice and skill development.

Sullivan (2018) [14] examined the landscape of extra-curricular activities in English secondary schools and found wide variations in availability, type, and context. No standardized approach to extra-curricular programming across schools may impact student participation and experiences. It emphasizes the importance of diverse extra-curricular offerings to cater to different student interests.

Chan (2016) [2] investigated the relationship between extra-curricular activities, learning approaches, and academic outcomes. The study revealed a positive association between active involvement in extra-curricular activities and using a deep learning approach, which correlated with better academic outcomes. This indicates that extra-curricular activities may promote more effective learning approaches among students, contributing to their overall academic success.

Mahoney (2014) [8] examined the relationship between extra-curricular activity participation and early school dropout. The study found that peer social networks overlap with the types of extra-curricular activities in which adolescents participate, suggesting that extra-curricular activities can influence social relationships and potentially impact dropout rates, highlighting the importance of extra-curricular activities in fostering social connections and reducing dropout rates.

On the other hand, Shamsudin *et al*. (2014) [12] found no significant positive association between participation in extra-curricular activities and academic achievements among public university students in Malaysia. This suggests that the impact of extra-curricular activities on academic performance may vary across different contexts, highlighting the need for further research to understand the factors influencing these outcomes.

Schaefer *et al*. (2011) [11] used social network analysis to investigate the contribution of extra-curricular activities to adolescent friendships. They found that activities were associated with current friendships and promoted the formation of new friendships. This underscores the social benefits of participating in extra-curricular activities, which extend beyond academic outcomes.

Stuart *et al*. (2011) [13] examined the impact of extra-curricular activities on the student experience and graduate outcomes for widening participation populations. They found variations in students' engagement with extra-curricular activities, suggesting that extra-curricular engagement may differ among student demographics, highlighting the importance of considering diverse student needs and interests in extra-curricular programming.

Finally, Durlak *et al*. (2010) [5] explored the role of after-school programs in promoting personal and social skills in children and adolescents. The study concluded that after-

school programs should contain components to foster these skills, as youth can benefit from these programs in multiple ways. This indicates the importance of extra-curricular activities in holistic youth development.

Extra-curricular activities play a multifaceted role in student development, impacting academic, social, and personal outcomes. While some studies emphasize the positive effects of extra-curricular engagement on academic communication skills, language proficiency, and social networks, others highlight variations in the impact across different student populations and contexts. The findings suggest that extra-curricular activities should be tailored to meet student's diverse needs and interests while incorporating elements that foster personal and social skills. Additionally, the variability in extra-curricular offerings and their impact underscores the importance of further research to understand better how to optimize extra-curricular programming for maximum student benefit.

Statement of the problem

The student-led interest time refers to periods during which students autonomously pursue their interests and activities within an educational context. This could include self-directed learning, personal projects, or exploration of subjects beyond the formal curriculum. This study aimed to investigate the perception of students on student-led interest time and its influence on social skills and interaction among students through a quantitative analysis.

Specifically, this research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the respondents' demographic profile regarding age, sex, and grade level?
2. What is the student's perception at Balite National High School regarding student interest time and its influence on social skills and student interaction?
3. Is there a significant difference in the student's perception based on their demographic profile?
4. Based on the findings, what enhancement programs can be proposed to improve student interest time and its influence on social skills and interaction?

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive research design, to identify the students' perceptions of student-led interest time and its influence on social skills and interaction**.**

Research Locale

The research was conducted at Balite National High School, located in Brgy. Balite, San Francisco, Surigao Del Norte. The school is headed by a secondary school head teacher, V, with one Master Teacher, I, 28 teachers, and a population of 365 students. Balite National High School offers complete Junior and Senior High School levels, with the Senior High School offering an Academic Track-General academic strand and TechVoc Track-Home Economic Strand specializing in food and beverage.

Research Participants

The study included the students of Balite National High School, Balite San Francisco Surigao Del Norte. A purposive sampling technique was used to choose the participants.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants

Grade Level	Population	Percentage	Sample size
7	41	11.10%	21
8	41	11.10%	21
9	59	16.00%	31
10	73	19.80%	38
11	60	16.30%	31
12	94	25.50%	49
Total	368	100	191

Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire was utilized to collect data. The questionnaire comprises multiple parts:

- Part I: Demographic information (e.g., age, grade level, gender).
- Part II: Perception of student-led interest time, including items assessing enjoyment, learning outcomes, skill development, and social interaction.

Participants were given ample time to complete the questionnaire.

Ethics and Gathering Procedure

The researchers first asked permission from the school head/principal, then proceeded to the adviser teacher and the sample participants to conduct the study, adhering to courtesy and decorum. After obtaining approval, the participants were assigned codenames to observe anonymity and respect their privacy. The researchers then set a schedule for an interview with the participants.

Data Analysis

For the analysis and interpretation of data, the following statistical tools were used:

a. Mean and Standard Deviation to determine the level of motivation of the students in their classroom and how they are motivated in answering the question;
b. ANOVA was used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups of an independent variable on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable. The data were analyzed using the Jamovi version 2.3.2.1.

Results

This section presents the results, analysis, and interpretation of data. It answers all specific questions under the problem statement and supports them with tables.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	f	%
Age		
12-14	65	34%
15-17	102	53%
18 above	25	13%
Grade Level		
7	24	13%
8	20	10%
9	32	17%
10	37	19%
11	30	16%
12	49	26%
Sex		
Male	71	37%
Female	121	100%’

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. As to age, respondents in the age bracket of 15-17 have the highest number of participants in this research, compared to ages 12-14 34% and ages 18 and above, which have only 13% of the total, compared to grade 7 with 13%, grade 8 10%, grade 9 17%, grade 10, 19%, and grade 11 which has 16% in total. Thus, numerous grade 12 respondents answered the survey.

Table 3: Perception of Student-Led Interest Time

Items	Mean	SD	Qualitative description
I enjoy participating in student-led interest time.	3.27	0.594	Strongly Agree
Student-led interest time helps me learn new things.	3.10	0.671	Agree
Student-led interest time allows me to explore my passions and interests.	3.10	0.660	Agree
Student-led interest time helps me develop new skills.	3.10	0.745	Agree
Student-led interest time improves my communication and collaboration skills.	3.06	0.721	Agree
Student-led interest time helps me build stronger relationships with classmates.	3.15	0.694	Agree
I feel more confident in myself after participating in student-led interest time.	3.06	0.728	Agree
The current structure and activities of student-led interest time meet my needs and interests.	2.94	0.770	Agree
I recommend student-led interest time to other students.	3.24	0.713	Strongly Agree
Total mean	3.11	0.699	Agree

Range	Qualitative Description
0.75-1.75	Strongly Disagree
1.76-2.50	Disagree
2.51-3.25	Agree
3.26-4.oo	Strongly Agree

In examining students' perceptions of student-led interest time (SLIT), a nuanced understanding emerges regarding its impact on various aspects of student development. The qualitative data, including means and standard deviations, provides insights into students' attitudes and experiences, shedding light on the effectiveness and potential areas for improvement of SLIT.

Firstly, "I enjoy participating in student-led interest time" garnered a mean score of 3.27 with a standard deviation of 0.594, indicating a solid consensus among students who strongly agree with the sentiment. This suggests that a substantial majority of students derive satisfaction and enjoyment from engaging in SLIT activities, highlighting its positive influence on their overall school experience.

Moreover, students generally perceive SLIT as beneficial for their learning and personal growth. Statements such as "Student-Led interest time helps me learn new things" (Mean: 3.10, SD: 0.671) and "Student-Led interest time allows me to explore my passions and interests" (Mean: 3.10, SD: 0.660) received agreeable mean scores, indicating that students recognize SLIT as a platform for both academic enrichment and self-discovery.

Furthermore, SLIT is perceived as conducive to skill development, particularly in areas such as communication, collaboration, and confidence building. Students agree that SLIT helps them develop new skills (Mean: 3.10, SD: 0.745) and improves their communication and collaboration skills (Mean: 3.06, SD: 0.721), indicating its potential to enhance both academic and interpersonal competencies.

Additionally, SLIT is valued for its role in fostering social connections and relationships among classmates. The statement "Student-Led interest time helps me build stronger relationships with classmates" received an agreeable mean score (Mean: 3.15, SD: 0.694), suggesting that SLIT contributes to a sense of camaraderie and community within the classroom.

However, areas for improvement were identified through the data. While students generally agree that the current structure and activities of SLIT meet their needs and interests (Mean: 2.94, SD: 0.770), the mean score indicates room for enhancement. Tailoring SLIT activities to better align with student preferences and interests could further optimize its effectiveness in promoting engagement and satisfaction.

Despite this, students express a solid willingness to recommend SLIT to their peers (Mean: 3.24, SD: 0.713), highlighting their overall positive perceptions of its value and benefits. This suggests that despite potential areas for improvement, SLIT is widely regarded as a valuable component of the educational experience by students.

The qualitative analysis of students' perceptions of SLIT underscores its potential to enhance student engagement, learning outcomes, and social development. By providing

opportunities for autonomy, exploration, and skill development, SLIT serves as a valuable tool for promoting holistic student development. Moving forward, efforts to refine and tailor SLIT activities to meet student needs and interests better can further amplify its positive impact on the educational experience.

According to Craft's study (2012), students who participate in extra-curricular activities have slightly higher grade point averages, SAT scores, success on the Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test, and fewer school days.

Table 3: The Significant Difference in the perception of students and their profile.

ANOVA					
	Mean Square	**df**	**p**	**Conclusion**	**Decision on Ho**
Age	1.332	2	<.001	Significant	Reject Ho
Grade Level	0.614	5	0.003	Significant	Reject Ho

Significant at 0.05 level of significance

The findings in Table 3 indicate that both age and grade level have a substantial influence on students' perceptions of SLIT. Understanding these differences is crucial for educators and policymakers to tailor SLIT programs effectively to meet the diverse needs and preferences of students across different age groups and grade levels.

The mean square value for age is 1.332, with 2 degrees of freedom and a p-value of less than 0.001. This indicates a significant difference in perception among students of different age groups. The null hypothesis (Ho), stating that no significant difference in perception based on age, is rejected. Therefore, there are statistically significant variations in how students of different ages perceive student-led interest time (SLIT). Further analysis, such as post-hoc tests, may be needed to determine the specific age groups that differ significantly in their perceptions.

Similarly, the mean square value for grade level is 0.614 with 5 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.003. This also suggests a significant difference in perception among students of different grade levels. Thus, the null hypothesis (Ho), stating that no significant difference in perception based on grade level, is rejected. It implies that there are statistically significant differences in how students across various grade levels perceive SLIT. Post-hoc analyses can be conducted to identify which specific grade levels show significant differences in perception.

Piaget's (1970) theory of cognitive development suggests that students progress through stages with varying learning styles and social preferences. Younger students may benefit more from structured interaction during SLIT, while older students might gravitate towards independent or collaborative activities based on their interests.

Deci & Ryan's (2000) [4] Self-Determination Theory proposes that autonomy becomes increasingly essential with age. Younger students might require more teacher guidance during SLIT, while older students might be more motivated by the freedom to choose activities.

The academic workload and expectations can vary significantly across grade levels. Students in higher grades might prioritize focused studying during SLIT, while students in lower grades might be more open to exploratory activities.

Peer group dynamics and social pressures can evolve throughout elementary, middle, and high school. Younger students might use SLIT for essential socialization, while older students might use it to form interest-based groups or collaborate on projects.

The study found a significant difference in the perception of student-led interest time across various demographic profiles, suggesting that the program's impact on education was consistent across demographic profiles.

Table 4: The significant difference in the Perceptions of students in terms of sex

Independent Samples T-Test				
		Statistic	**df**	**p**
Sex	Student's t	-2.43	190	0.016
Note. H_a $\mu_{Male} \neq \mu_{Female}$				

The results of the independent samples t-test indicate a significant difference between male and female students in their perception of Student-Led Interest Time (SLIT).

The calculated t-statistic value of -2.43 with 190 degrees of freedom yields a p-value of 0.016. Given that the p-value is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference in perceptions between male and female students regarding SLIT.

While the current study does not explore potential gender differences in student perception of SLIT, prior research suggests that boys and girls may have varying preferences for learning activities and social interactions, according to Guzzo & Raible (1977) [6]. Further examination of the data through a gendered lens could provide insights into the specific aspects of SLIT that contribute to these potential differences. Understanding these variations is crucial for educators and policymakers to tailor SLIT activities effectively to meet the needs and preferences of all students.

The significant difference between male and female perceptions underscores the importance of considering gender dynamics in designing and implementing SLIT programs, ensuring inclusivity and relevance for all students.

Table 5: Activity Design for Student-led interest time

Name of Activity	**Objectives**	**Time frame**	**Materials needed**	**Persons involved**
Game Design Challenge	To engage students in the creative process of game design, fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and innovation while allowing them to explore their interests in gaming.	Six weeks	*Papers, pens, markers *Art supplies for creating game prototypes *Any specific materials related to students' chosen game concepts.	Teachers Students

The Game Design Challenge activity aims to immerse students in game design's dynamic and creative process, with multifaceted objectives designed to foster various skills and competencies. Let us break down and discuss each aspect of the activity:

Objectives

The primary objective of the Game Design Challenge is to engage students in the creative process of game design. By doing so, the activity aims to achieve several secondary objectives:

1. Fostering Collaboration: Students learn to work effectively as a team through collaborative brainstorming, planning, and execution.
2. Encouraging Critical Thinking: Designing a game requires students to analyze mechanics, rules, and gameplay elements critically, encouraging problem-solving and strategic thinking.
3. Promoting Innovation: By exploring their interests in gaming, students are encouraged to think innovatively, push boundaries, and explore new ideas.
4. Exploration of Interests: The activity allows students to explore their interests in gaming, allowing for personalization and relevance to their passions.

Time Frame

Six weeks give students ample time to delve thoroughly into the various stages of game design. It allows for in-depth exploration, iteration, and refinement of ideas while ensuring students have sufficient time to develop their game concepts and prototypes.

Materials Needed

The materials required for the Game Design Challenge are relatively simple yet versatile enough to support the creative process effectively. These include:

- Papers, pens, and markers: Essential for brainstorming, sketching out ideas, and creating game concept documents.
- Art supplies for creating game prototypes: Students can visually represent their game ideas and design physical prototypes.
- Any specific materials related to students' chosen game concepts: Depending on the nature of the games students design, additional materials may be required. This flexibility accommodates a wide range of game ideas and genres.

Persons Involved

The Game Design Challenge involves two primary stakeholders:

Teachers are the facilitators of the activity who provide guidance, support, and resources to students throughout the game design process.

- Students: Participants who actively engage in the creative process of game design, collaborating with peers and applying critical thinking skills to develop their game concepts.

The Game Design Challenge activity offers a structured yet flexible approach to engaging students in the creative process of game design. By incorporating diverse objectives, a suitable time frame, simple yet versatile materials, and involvement from both teachers and students, the activity provides a comprehensive and enriching learning experience. Through the Game Design Challenge, students develop practical skills in game design and foster collaboration, critical thinking, innovation, and exploration of their interests in gaming.

Discussion

This study delves into the perceptions of student-led interest time (SLIT) among secondary school students, examining its impact on various aspects of student development and considering demographic factors that may influence these perceptions. The findings shed light on the effectiveness of SLIT in fostering engagement, learning, skill development, and social connections within the classroom.

The study provides valuable insights into student perceptions of SLIT and underscores its potential to enhance engagement, learning outcomes, and social development within the classroom. By considering demographic factors and conducting statistical analyses, the study offers a comprehensive overview of student perceptions, highlighting areas of strength and areas for improvement in SLIT implementation. Moving forward, efforts to tailor SLIT activities to meet student needs and interests better can further optimize its effectiveness in promoting holistic student development.

The demographic analysis reveals that most respondents fall within the 15-17 age bracket, indicating a significant presence of mid-adolescent students. Additionally, a substantial proportion of respondents are in grade 12, suggesting a diverse representation across grade levels. This demographic diversity ensures a comprehensive understanding of student perceptions across various developmental stages and educational backgrounds.

The study indicates that students generally perceive SLIT positively, with a strong consensus on the enjoyment derived from participating in SLIT activities. Moreover, students recognize SLIT as beneficial for learning and personal growth, attributing it to fostering skill development, exploration of interests, and building stronger relationships with classmates. However, there are areas for improvement identified, particularly in aligning SLIT activities more closely with student preferences and interests.

Statistical tests reveal significant differences in perception based on age and grade level. The analysis demonstrates that students of different age groups and grade levels perceive SLIT differently, indicating the influence of demographic factors on perceptions. Further post-hoc analyses may be necessary to identify specific age groups or grade levels that exhibit significant differences in their perceptions of SLIT.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the research, the following conclusions are driven:

1. **Positive Perceptions of SLIT:** The study indicates that

students generally perceive student-led interest time (SLIT) positively. There is a strong consensus on the enjoyment derived from participating in SLIT activities.
2. **Benefits for Learning and Personal Growth:** Students recognize SLIT as beneficial for learning and personal growth, attributing it to fostering skill development, exploration of interests, and building stronger relationships with classmates.
3. **Demographic Diversity:** Most respondents fall within the 15-17 age bracket, indicating a significant presence of mid-adolescent students, with a diverse representation across different grade levels. This ensures a comprehensive understanding of student perceptions across various developmental stages and educational backgrounds.
4. **Areas for Improvement:** Despite the overall positive perceptions, areas for improvement are identified, particularly in aligning SLIT activities more closely with student preferences and interests.
5. **Influence of Demographic Factors:** Statistical tests reveal significant differences in perception based on age and grade level. Students of different age groups and grade levels perceive SLIT differently, indicating the influence of demographic factors on perceptions. Further post-hoc analyses may be necessary to identify specific age groups or grade levels that exhibit significant differences in their perceptions of SLIT.
6. **Recommendation for Tailoring Activities:** Moving forward, efforts to tailor SLIT activities to meet student needs and interests better can further optimize its effectiveness in promoting holistic student development.

Recommendations

In light of the research findings, the following recommendations can be made:

For Students

1. Encourage active participation and feedback from students regarding SLIT activities to ensure alignment with their interests and preferences.
2. Promote student-led initiatives and involvement in designing SLIT sessions to enhance engagement and ownership of their learning experience.

For Teachers

1. Provide training and support for teachers to effectively implement SLIT activities that cater to diverse student interests and learning styles.
2. Encourage flexibility and adaptability in lesson planning to incorporate student-led elements into the curriculum.

For School Administration

1. Allocate resources and time for the development and implementation of SLIT programs that promote student engagement and holistic development.
2. Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of SLIT activities to ensure continuous improvement.

For Curriculum Planners

1. Integrate opportunities for student-led interest time into the curriculum, allowing for the exploration of diverse interests and skill development.
2. Collaborate with teachers and students to design SLIT activities that align with curriculum goals while promoting student autonomy and creativity.

For Future Researchers

1. Conduct further research to explore the long-term effects of SLIT on student outcomes, including academic achievement, social development, and career readiness.
2. Investigate the impact of specific demographic factors, such as age, grade level, and socio-economic background, on student perceptions and engagement with SLIT activities.

Disclosure

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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