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Distinctive Features of Pisa-Type Assessment Tasks and Challenges Encountered by Junior High School Students in Araling Panlipunan At Payao District, Schools Division of Zamboanga Sibugay

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the distinctive features of PISA-type assessment tasks and the challenges encountered by Junior High School students in Araling Panlipunan in Payao District, Schools Division of Zamboanga Sibugay, during the first term of School Year 2026–2027. Using a survey-based descriptive-correlational design, the study involved 319 students selected through stratified random sampling from a population of 1,851. Data were analyzed using weighted mean, standard deviation, and Spearman rank-order correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. Students rated the distinctive features of PISA-type tasks at a very high level and reported a very low level of challenges. A significant, moderate negative relationship was found between ratings of the tasks' distinctive features and perceived challenges. Thus, students who rated these features more highly tended to report fewer challenges; the correlational design does not establish that familiarity with the tasks reduced those challenges. The study recommends sustained teacher training and instructional support for contextualized, evidence-based, and higher-order assessment in Araling Panlipunan, alongside further research across other settings and student groups.

KEYWORDS: Araling Panlipunan, assessment challenges, Junior High School, PISA-type assessment tasks

INTRODUCTION

PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan are distinguished by their use of authentic, socially relevant, and real-life situations that require learners to apply knowledge rather than merely recall facts. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) explained that PISA assessments measure learners' capacity to interpret information, reason critically, and transfer their knowledge and skills to unfamiliar contexts. Similarly, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2016) emphasized that Araling Panlipunan should develop learners' abilities in inquiry, data and source analysis, critical and creative thinking, informed decision-making, and the practical application of concepts to issues affecting society. To achieve this, PISA-Type Tasks in Araling Panlipunan commonly use historical documents, maps, graphs, statistics, news reports, and contemporary social problems that encourage students to examine evidence, recognize different perspectives, establish relationships between causes and consequences, and propose reasonable solutions to civic, economic, political, cultural, and environmental concerns.

Junior high school students face various challenges in learning Araling Panlipunan because the subject requires them to understand complex historical events, geographical concepts, political systems, economic issues, and contemporary social concerns. Many learners experience difficulty comprehending technical vocabulary, lengthy expository texts, unfamiliar concepts, timelines, and cause-and-effect relationships, which may limit their ability to interpret information and connect lessons with real-life situations. İlter (2017) observed that social studies learners may struggle because of inadequate vocabulary knowledge, weak reading comprehension, and limited use of higher-level learning strategies. Similarly, Wanzek and Vaughn (2016) explained that students in secondary social studies classes encounter difficulties in critically reading texts, acquiring content knowledge, and applying learned information, particularly when appropriate instructional support is insufficient. These challenges may reduce students' participation, motivation, and academic performance, highlighting the need to identify their specific learning difficulties and develop suitable instructional strategies that make Araling Panlipunan more understandable, engaging, and relevant.

Examining the distinctive features of PISA-type assessment tasks and the challenges faced by junior high school students in Araling Panlipunan is important because it provides a basis for developing assessments that measure not only the recall of historical and social facts but also learners' ability to interpret information, evaluate evidence, reason critically, and apply knowledge to authentic social issues. Klijnstra et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of assessing students' social scientific reasoning by examining how learners analyze social problems, use relevant knowledge and evidence, establish relationships among information, and construct reasoned conclusions. Similarly, **Steiss et al. (2024)** highlighted that carefully designed assessment prompts can elicit students' historical thinking by requiring them to engage with historical sources, evaluate information, and construct evidence-based responses rather than simply reproduce factual knowledge. These perspectives support the use

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of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan as a means of evaluating higher-order thinking while also identifying areas in which students may require additional instructional support. The distinctive features of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks may be related to the challenges faced by junior high school students in Araling Panlipunan because tasks that use real-life contexts, multiple information sources, unfamiliar situations, and higher-order questions require greater reading comprehension, critical thinking, evidence evaluation, and knowledge application. Nachtigall et al. (2022) explained that authentic learning and assessment environments commonly involve complex real-world problems, inquiry and investigation, authentic materials, and tasks that require learners to actively use knowledge rather than simply reproduce information. Their review also emphasized that the effectiveness of authentic tasks depends on how their cognitive demands and design elements are structured. In addition, McCarthy et al. (2022) found that performance in multiple-document integrated reading and writing tasks is influenced by students' academic knowledge, reading ability, and writing skills, demonstrating the difficulty learners may encounter when they must select, integrate, and communicate information from several sources. These findings suggest that students may experience greater difficulty with PISA-Type Araling Panlipunan tasks when assessment activities simultaneously require interpretation of multiple sources, application of prior knowledge, and higher-order reasoning.

Although previous studies have examined PISA-Type Assessments, higher-order thinking skills, reading comprehension, and students' difficulties in learning social studies, limited research has directly investigated how the distinctive features of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks are associated with the specific challenges experienced by junior high school students in Araling Panlipunan. Existing literature commonly focuses on international assessment performance or general instructional difficulties, but it provides insufficient evidence regarding students' experiences in answering contextualized, information-rich, and real-life assessment tasks involving maps, graphs, historical sources, social issues, and evidence-based reasoning. Moreover, few localized studies have been conducted in public secondary schools within the Division of Zamboanga Sibugay, particularly at Bulawan National High School, where learners may encounter distinct linguistic, academic, technological, and contextual challenges. Hence, this study seeks to address this gap by determining the distinctive features of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks and the challenges faced by junior high school students in Araling Panlipunan, providing a basis for developing appropriate instructional strategies, assessment materials, and learner-support interventions.

LITERATURE

Distinctive Features of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks

PISA-Type Assessment Tasks are distinguished by their use of authentic situations that require learners to apply acquired knowledge and skills beyond routine classroom exercises. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) explained that PISA assesses whether students can use their learning to address problems encountered in personal, educational, occupational, scientific, and societal contexts rather than merely reproduce memorized information. Similarly, Schleicher (2018) emphasized that effective educational assessments should focus on complex and higher-order thinking skills and their application to real-world problems. In Araling Panlipunan, this feature may be reflected in assessment tasks involving current social issues, community concerns, historical events, economic situations, political decisions, and environmental problems that require students to connect classroom concepts with actual conditions.

Real-Life Or Context-Based Problem Scenarios

Real-life or context-based problem scenarios are essential features of PISA-type assessments because they require learners to apply classroom knowledge to situations that may occur in personal, social, educational, and community settings. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) explained that PISA assesses students' capacity to use acquired knowledge and skills in different contexts rather than merely reproduce memorized information. Similarly, Garcia et al. (2024) emphasized that PISA-like items are situated within realistic personal, occupational, societal, or scientific contexts and require careful alignment between the situation, content, and cognitive process being assessed. In Araling Panlipunan, such scenarios may involve elections, poverty, migration, environmental problems, cultural diversity, human rights, and community decision-making, enabling learners to understand the relevance of social studies concepts to actual societal conditions.

Information Processing and Interpretation

Information processing and interpretation are central features of PISA-type assessment tasks because students must locate relevant details, understand presented information, and connect ideas before constructing an appropriate response. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) explained that PISA reading tasks measure learners' ability to understand, evaluate, reflect on, and engage with information from different texts and contexts. Similarly, Wang et al. (2021) emphasized that performance in contemporary scenario-based reading depends on students' topic knowledge and general academic knowledge, which help them recognize relevant information and understand relationships among ideas. In Araling Panlipunan, these competencies enable students to process passages, historical accounts, maps, graphs, tables, timelines, and other sources to form accurate interpretations of social events and issues.

Evidence-Based Reasoning and Decision-Making

Evidence-based reasoning and decision-making are distinctive features of PISA-type assessment tasks because learners must examine information, determine its relevance, and use it to formulate logical conclusions. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) explained that PISA assesses students' ability to reason, interpret information, solve contextualized problems, and make well-founded judgments and decisions. Similarly, Du and List (2022) described evidence-based reasoning as the capacity to identify, interpret, evaluate, and draw conclusions from different forms of evidence. In Araling Panlipunan, this competency is demonstrated when students analyze historical records, statistical data, maps, news reports, and contrasting viewpoints before selecting and justifying an appropriate answer.

The Application of Knowledge

The application of knowledge is a central feature of PISA-type assessment tasks because it requires students to use previously acquired concepts and skills in new, unfamiliar, and practical situations rather than merely recall factual information. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) emphasized that PISA determines how well students can extend what they have learned and apply their

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knowledge in contexts encountered both inside and outside school. Similarly, Welsandt et al. (2024) explained that authentic assessments use dynamic, real-life problems that require learners to exercise judgment and demonstrate abilities relevant to everyday life. In Araling Panlipunan, the application of knowledge may involve using historical, geographical, political, economic, and cultural concepts to interpret contemporary issues, examine community problems, and formulate appropriate responses.

Challenges Encountered by Students In Responding To PISA-Type Assessment Tasks

Students may experience difficulty responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks because these activities commonly contain lengthy informational texts, unfamiliar situations, specialized vocabulary, and questions requiring both literal and inferential comprehension. Ronconi et al. (2025) found that lower-secondary students experienced cognitive demands when reading lengthy informational texts, indicating that reading medium, comprehension strategies, and self-efficacy may influence how learners process assessment materials. Similarly, Casado-Ledesma and Tarchi (2024) observed that expository texts were more challenging than narrative texts in multiple-text comprehension and that the type of text affected the number of arguments students included in their written responses. These findings suggest that junior high school students may struggle with PISA-type tasks in Araling Panlipunan when they must understand complex passages, interpret unfamiliar concepts, retain important details, and formulate answers within a limited period.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. Part I highlights the independent variable, distinct features of PISA-Type Assessments Task which is measured through four indicators, namely, real-life or context-based problem scenarios, information processing and interpretation tasks, evidence-based reasoning and decision-making, and application of knowledge. Part II presents the dependent variable, challenges encountered in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan, which is evaluated based on ten (10) items.

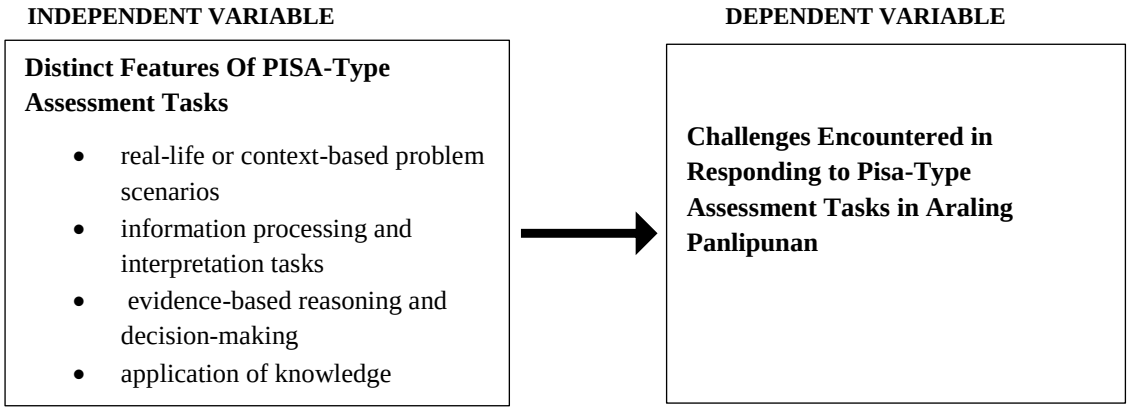


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the distinct features of PISA-Type Assessments Task and the challenges encountered by Junior High School Students in Araling Panlipunan in Payao District, Schools Division of Zamboanga Sibugay, during the First Term of the School Year 2026-2027. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the respondents' perceived level of distinct features of PISA-Type Assessment Task in terms of:
   - 1.1. real-life or context-based problem scenarios;
   - 1.2. information processing and interpretation tasks;
   - 1.3. evidence-based reasoning and decision-making; and
   - 1.4. application of knowledge
2. What is the respondents' perceived level of challenges encountered in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the perceived level of the distinct features of pisa-type assessment task and the level of challenges encountered in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between the perceived level of the distinct features of PISA-Type Assessments Task and the level of challenges encountered in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to examining the distinct features of PISA-Type Assessments Task of three hundred nineteen (319) junior high school students and its influence on their challenges encountered in responding to PISA-type assessment tasks in Araling Panlipunan at Schools Division of Payao, Zamboanga Sibugay, during the first semester of the school year 2026-2027.

The study examined the key indicators of the distinctive features of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks, namely; real-life or context-based problem scenarios, information processing and interpretation, evidence-based reasoning and decision-making, and the application of knowledge. These indicators constituted the independent variable and collectively represented the overall distinctive features of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks that may influence students' learning experiences in Araling Panlipunan. Meanwhile, the dependent variable referred to the challenges encountered by students in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan, which were assessed through ten (10) questionnaire items.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Method Used

The study utilized survey and descriptive-correlational research methods. The researcher utilized the survey method to collect data on the distinct features of PISA-Type Assessments Task and challenges encountered in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan through a questionnaire. According to Check and Schutt (2017), survey research is a systematic method of collecting information from a sample of individuals through the use of questionnaires or interviews to measure attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and characteristics. They emphasize that surveys allow researchers to gather large amounts of data efficiently and are often used alongside experiments and observational methods to validate findings." Creswell and Guetterman (2019) define correlational research as the systematic investigation of relationships among two or more variables, conducted without any experimental manipulation of those variables. Correlational research is a non-experimental approach in which a researcher quantifies variables and assesses the statistical relationship between the distinct features of PISA-Type Assessments Task and challenges encountered in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan, without the influence of extraneous variables.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire used in the study consisted of two parts: Part I: distinct features of PISA-type assessments task adopted from Espiritu, J. V. (2026) with four indicators, namely: real-life or context-based problem scenarios, information processing and interpretation, evidence-based reasoning and decision-making, and the application of knowledge; Part II: The challenges encountered by students in responding to PISA-type assessment tasks in Araling Panlipunan, which were assessed through ten (10) questionnaire items.

Scoring Procedure

Distinct Features Of PISA-Type Assessments Task and challenges encountered by students in responding to PISA-type assessment tasks in Araling Panlipunan

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
4	3.25–4.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
3	2.50–3.24	Agree	High
2	1.75–2.49	Disagree	Low
1	1.00–1.74	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Ethical Consideration

This study obtained consent from the Research and Ethics Committee at Andres Bonifacio College, Inc. The researcher reviewed the application of the principle of respect for persons by securing informed consent from the institution to distribute a research questionnaire free from technical terms that make it easier for the respondents to understand. The researcher also solicited consent from the individual respondent during the conduct of the study. Respondents' identities are protected, and their active participation is guaranteed. This research ensured the confidentiality of the respondents, which means that the respondents' identities would remain anonymous to everyone. At the end of the research, the researcher preserves essential information that can support further research.

Statistical Treatment of the Data

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the responses of the 319 students. The **weighted mean** summarized respondents' ratings of the distinctive features of PISA-type assessment tasks and the challenges encountered in answering them. The **standard deviation** described the variation in ratings within each measure; a smaller value indicated more closely clustered responses. No fixed cutoff was used to classify responses as homogeneous or heterogeneous.

Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient (ρ) was used to examine the direction and strength of the association between students' ratings of the tasks' distinctive features and their perceived challenges. This nonparametric measure was used for the ordinal rating data. The absolute value of ρ was interpreted using the following guide, while its sign indicated whether the association was positive or negative:

Absolute value of ρ	Interpretation
0.00–0.09	Negligible
0.10–0.29	Weak
0.30–0.49	Moderate
	Strong

Data were encoded and checked in Microsoft Excel, and the statistical analyses were performed in jamovi. The correlation test was evaluated at a **0.05 level of significance**. These interpretations describe associations and do not imply a causal relationship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

`The findings are presented in the order of the study's research questions. This section reports students' ratings of the distinctive features of PISA-type assessment tasks, the challenges they encountered in answering these tasks in Araling Panlipunan, and the relationship between the two variables.

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1. What is the respondents' perceived level of distinct features of PISA-Type Assessment Task in terms of:

1.1. real-life or context-based problem scenarios;
1.2. information processing and interpretation tasks;
1.3. evidence-based reasoning and decision-making; and
1.4. application of knowledge?

Table 1: Respondents' perceived level of distinct features of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks.

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
A. Real-life or context-based problem scenarios	3.60	0.29	Strongly Agree	Very High
B. Information processing and interpretation tasks	3.57	0.23	Strongly Agree	Very High
C. Evidence-based reasoning and decision-making	3.57	0.23	Strongly Agree	Very High
D. Application Knowledge	3.57	0.20	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall	**3.58**	**0.16**	**Strongly Agree**	**Very High**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 1 summarizes the respondents' perceived level of the distinctive features of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks. The finding reveals an overall average weighted value (AWV) of 3.58 with a standard deviation of 0.16, described as *Strongly Agree* and interpreted as Very High. Among the four dimensions, real-life or context-based problem scenarios obtained the highest AWV of 3.60 (SD = 0.29). Meanwhile, information processing and interpretation tasks (AWV = 3.57, SD = 0.23), evidence-based reasoning and decision-making (AWV = 3.57, SD = 0.23), and application of knowledge (AWV = 3.57, SD = 0.20) obtained identical average weighted values and were likewise interpreted as Very High. The results indicate that all four dimensions were strongly perceived by the respondents as distinctive characteristics of PISA-type assessment tasks, with contextualized and real-life problem situations emerging as the most prominent feature. This means that the respondents strongly recognized PISA-type assessment tasks as activities characterized by authentic real-life situations, information analysis and interpretation, evidence-based reasoning, decision-making, and the transfer of acquired knowledge to practical or unfamiliar contexts. The slightly higher rating for real-life or context-based scenarios suggests that students particularly noticed the connection between assessment tasks and situations encountered in everyday life and society. The relatively low overall standard deviation of 0.16 further indicates a high degree of consistency among the respondents in their perceptions of these distinctive features. This implies that PISA-Type Assessment Tasks used in Araling Panlipunan are perceived as going beyond conventional recall-based examinations by requiring students to analyze information, reason from evidence, make informed judgments, and apply classroom learning to authentic situations. Such assessment characteristics may encourage the development of higher-order thinking and help students recognize the relevance of Araling Panlipunan concepts to historical, political, economic, cultural, environmental, and community concerns. The findings further suggest that teachers may sustain and strengthen the use of contextualized, information-rich, and application-oriented assessment activities while providing appropriate scaffolding to help students manage their cognitive demands.

The overall finding is consistent with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023), which emphasized that PISA assesses students' capacity to apply acquired knowledge and skills to unfamiliar, real-world situations rather than merely reproduce memorized information. PISA-Type Tasks require learners to interpret information, reason, solve contextualized problems, and make well-founded judgments. In a similar manner, the present result is reinforced by Nachtigall et al. (2022), who explained that authentic learning and assessment environments commonly involve complex real-world problems, authentic materials, inquiry, and activities that require learners to actively use knowledge instead of simply recalling information. These perspectives substantiate the present finding that real-life contexts, information processing, evidence-based reasoning, decision-making, and knowledge application collectively constitute highly evident characteristics of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks.

2. What is the respondents' perceived level of challenges encountered in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan?

Table 2: Respondents' perceived level of Challenges Encountered in Responding PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan.

Statements	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I find that the reading passages or problem situations are too long to understand.	1.52	0.53	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
2. I find that I have difficulty relating the given situation to what I learned in class.	1.48	0.53	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
3. I find that it is difficult to understand some words or terms used in the test.	1.34	0.49	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
4. I find that I get confused when interpreting graphs, maps, or tables.	1.47	0.56	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
5. I find that I struggle to identify what the question is really asking.	1.51	0.57	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
6. I find that it is challenging to choose the best answer when the options look similar.	1.44	0.53	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

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7. I find that I have a hard time locating evidence from the given material to support my answer.	1.45	0.54	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
8. I find that I feel anxious or pressured while answering the PISA-type questions.	1.43	0.53	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
9. I find that it is hard to apply my prior knowledge to unfamiliar or new situations.	1.40	0.52	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
10. I find that I need more time to analyze and answer each question carefully.	1.35	0.53	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
Overall	**1.44**	**0.18**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Very Low**

AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 2 presents the respondents' perceived level of challenges encountered by junior high school students in answering PISA-type assessment tasks in Araling Panlipunan. The salient finding reveals an overall average weighted value (AWV) of 1.44 with a standard deviation of 0.18, described as *Strongly Disagree* and interpreted as Very Low. Among the ten indicators, the statement that the reading passages or problem situations are too long to understand obtained the highest AWV of 1.52 (SD = 0.53), followed by difficulty identifying what the question is really asking with an AWV of 1.51 (SD = 0.57) and difficulty relating the given situation to classroom learning with an AWV of 1.48 (SD = 0.53). In contrast, difficulty understanding some words or terms obtained the lowest AWV of 1.34 (SD = 0.49), followed by needing more time to analyze and answer each question with an AWV of 1.35 (SD = 0.53). All ten indicators were interpreted as Very Low, indicating that the respondents generally did not perceive the identified difficulties as serious challenges when answering PISA-type assessment tasks. This means that the junior high school respondents generally experienced minimal difficulty in dealing with PISA-type assessment tasks in Araling Panlipunan. They largely disagreed that lengthy passages, unfamiliar vocabulary, graphs and maps, similar answer choices, evidence identification, anxiety, knowledge application, and time requirements hindered their ability to answer the assessment tasks. Although lengthy reading passages obtained the highest rating among the indicators, its value remained within the Very Low category. The relatively small overall standard deviation of 0.18 further suggests that the respondents were generally consistent in reporting a low level of difficulty. This implies that the respondents may possess adequate familiarity, comprehension, and confidence in handling contextualized and higher-order assessment activities in Araling Panlipunan. Their very low perceived level of challenges suggests that they are generally capable of interpreting information, relating new situations to previous learning, locating relevant evidence, and applying prior knowledge to unfamiliar contexts. Nevertheless, teachers should continue providing opportunities for students to practice PISA-type tasks, particularly those involving lengthy texts and interpretation of complex questions, since these obtained comparatively higher challenge ratings even though they remained very low overall.

The present finding contrasts with Ronconi et al. (2025), who reported that lower-secondary students may experience considerable cognitive demands when processing lengthy informational texts, with comprehension strategies and reading self-efficacy influencing how successfully learners manage such materials. In the present study, however, respondents generally rejected the view that lengthy passages constituted a substantial difficulty. Similarly, the observed result differs from Steiss et al. (2024), who found that secondary students encountered difficulties interpreting task requirements, integrating evidence, constructing arguments, and supporting claims in source-based historical writing. These contrasting findings suggest that challenges associated with PISA-type and source-based tasks may vary according to students' prior exposure, instructional support, familiarity with assessment formats, comprehension skills, and learning context.

3. Is there a significant relationship between the perceived level of the distinct features of pisa-type assessment task and the level of challenges encountered in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks?

Table 3: Test of relationship between perceived level of distinct features of PISA-type assessment task and level of challenges encountered in responding to PISA-type assessment tasks in Araling Panlipunan.

Variables Correlated	rho-value	p-value	Interpretation
Distinctive Features of PISA-Type Assessments Tasks and challenges encountered in responding to PISA-Type Assessment Tasks in Araling Panlipunan.	-0.372	0.001	Moderate Negative Correlation Significant

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level*

Table 3 presents the test of relationship between the respondents' perceived level of distinctive features of PISA-Type Assessment Tasks and the level of challenges encountered in responding to PISA-type assessment tasks in Araling Panlipunan. The finding reveals a Spearman rho value of -0.372 with a p-value of .001. The magnitude of the correlation indicates a moderate negative relationship, while the p-value is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the relationship is statistically significant. Accordingly, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between the perceived level of distinctive features of PISA-type assessment tasks and the level of challenges encountered is rejected. This means that as respondents' perceptions of the distinctive features of PISA-type assessment tasks increase, their perceived level of challenges tends to decrease. In other words, students who more strongly recognize real-life or context-based scenarios, information processing and interpretation, evidence-based reasoning and decision-making, and application of knowledge as features of PISA-type assessment tasks tend to report fewer difficulties in answering such tasks. However, the correlation is moderate rather than strong, indicating that other factors may also contribute to the challenges experienced by students.

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This implies that meaningful exposure to the distinctive characteristics of PISA-type assessment tasks may help students become more familiar and comfortable with contextualized and higher-order assessment activities. When learners regularly engage with authentic situations, multiple sources of information, evidence-based questions, and knowledge-application activities, they may develop greater competence and confidence in responding to these assessment demands. Thus, teachers may continue providing structured practice, appropriate scaffolding, and contextualized learning experiences to further reduce students' difficulties in answering PISA-Type Tasks.

The observed relationship is consistent with Aini et al. (2022), who found that contextualized PISA-like tasks using familiar historical settings were practical and potentially beneficial to students' interest and ability to understand and answer assessment questions. Their findings suggest that meaningful and familiar contexts can facilitate learners' engagement with PISA-like activities. Similarly, this pattern is reinforced by Nachtigall et al. (2022), who explained that authentic learning environments involving real-world problems and meaningful tasks can promote active knowledge use when their cognitive demands are appropriately structured. These findings support the present result by suggesting that greater familiarity with authentic and contextualized assessment features may be associated with fewer perceived difficulties in completing cognitively demanding tasks.

DISCUSSION

Students perceived real-life scenarios, information interpretation, evidence-based reasoning, and knowledge application as prominent features of PISA-type assessment tasks in Araling Panlipunan. Contextualized scenarios were the most noticeable feature, suggesting that students recognized the connection between assessment questions and situations beyond the classroom. Students generally reported very few challenges in answering the tasks. Nevertheless, lengthy reading passages and identifying what a question required were the most frequently perceived difficulties. Teachers may therefore continue using contextualized tasks while giving students practice in reading source materials and interpreting questions. The low level of reported difficulty reflects students' perceptions and does not establish their actual performance on the tasks. A significant, moderate negative relationship was found between students' ratings of the tasks' distinctive features and their perceived challenges. Students who recognized these features more strongly tended to report fewer difficulties. Familiarity with contextualized and evidence-based questions may help explain this pattern, although the study did not test that explanation. Because the findings are correlational, they do not establish that recognizing the tasks' features reduces the challenges students experience.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that junior high school students in Payao District perceived the distinctive features of PISA-type assessment tasks in Araling Panlipunan as highly evident and reported a very low level of challenges. Students strongly recognized real-life scenarios, information interpretation, evidence-based reasoning, and knowledge application as characteristics of these tasks. The significant, moderate negative relationship indicates that students who recognized these features more strongly tended to report fewer difficulties. These findings support the continued use of contextualized assessment alongside instructional support for understanding lengthy passages and interpreting task requirements. However, the results reflect students' perceptions and do not establish their actual assessment performance or demonstrate that recognizing the tasks' features reduces the challenges they experience.

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Conflict of interest statement: All authors declare no conflict of interest.
Ethical review statement: the research is submitted to the ethical review committee and approved for the conduct of the study. It does not involve human-sensitive issues.
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