MSI Journal of
Arts, Law and Justice (MSIJALJ)

Enhancing Mathematical Performance Through Flash Card Implementation: A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Multiplication Skills Among Grade 4 Students in Pangasinan, Philippines

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The authors declare that no funding was received for this work.

OPEN ACCESS

Received: 05-June-2025
Accepted: 19-June-2025
Published: 20-June-2025

This article is published by **MSI Publishers** in **MSI Journal of Arts, Law and Justice (MSIJALJ)**

ISSN 3049-0839 (Online)

Volume: 2, Issue: 6 (June-2025)

ABSTRACT: This study examines the association between flash card interventions and improvements in multiplication performance among Grade 4 students in a rural Philippine elementary school, with implications for educational equity and access to quality mathematics instruction. Employing a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, the research investigated mathematical achievement changes following an eight-week flash card implementation program. Thirty-six Grade 4 students from Ranao Elementary School, District of Bani, Division of Pangasinan I, participated during the 2022-2023 academic year. Assessment instruments consisted of validated 15-item multiplication tests administered before and after the intervention. Data analysis utilized descriptive statistics (mean, percentage scores) and inferential statistics (paired samples t-test). Results demonstrated significant improvement across all measures: pretest mean scores increased from 10.47 (69.8%) to posttest scores of 12.92 (86.13%), representing a 16.33-percentage-point improvement. Statistical analysis confirmed significance with $t(35) = -8.82$, $p < 0.001$. Effect size

calculations (Cohen's d = 1.47) indicated substantial practical significance. The intervention incorporated systematic multiplication table memorization, interactive flash card activities, and progressive skill development from basic facts to two-digit computations. Findings suggest that structured flash card implementation is associated with enhanced elementary mathematics performance, particularly in computational fluency and fact recall, with important implications for addressing educational inequities in resource-constrained settings.

Keywords: *Elementary mathematics education; Flash cards; Multiplication skills; Quasi-experimental design; Student achievement; Educational equity*

Introduction

Mathematical competency represents a fundamental cornerstone of academic achievement and cognitive development in elementary education systems worldwide (National Research Council, 2001). Within the Philippine educational context, persistent challenges in mathematical performance have been documented across multiple assessment frameworks, with particular deficiencies observed in basic computational skills among elementary learners (Bautista et al., 2018). These disparities are particularly pronounced in rural and resource-constrained environments, raising critical questions about educational equity and access to quality mathematics instruction.

The 36 Grade 4 students at Ranao Elementary School exemplified these systemic challenges, demonstrating consistent difficulties with multiplication concepts through routine assessments and classroom evaluations. This situation reflects broader educational inequities in the Philippine system, where students in rural areas often lack access to advanced instructional materials and supplementary resources available in urban centers. Addressing these foundational skill gaps is not merely an academic concern but a matter of educational justice, as mathematical literacy serves as a gateway to future educational and economic opportunities.

Educational Equity and Policy Context

The Department of Education's K to 12 curriculum emphasizes the importance of developing mathematical proficiency as a fundamental right of all Filipino learners,

regardless of geographic location or socioeconomic status. However, implementation challenges in rural areas, including limited resources and teacher training opportunities, have created persistent achievement gaps that perpetuate educational inequalities (Tria, 2020).

Flash cards, as a low-cost, easily implementable intervention, represent a potential tool for democratizing access to effective mathematics instruction. Their minimal resource requirements make them particularly relevant for addressing educational equity concerns in disadvantaged settings, aligning with policy goals of providing quality education for all Filipino children.

Contemporary educational research emphasizes the critical importance of foundational mathematical skills, particularly multiplication, as prerequisites for advanced mathematical reasoning and problem-solving capabilities (Geary, 1994). Students experiencing difficulties with basic arithmetic operations often encounter cascading challenges that impede their progression through increasingly complex mathematical concepts, potentially limiting their future academic and career prospects.

The theoretical framework underlying this investigation draws from cognitive load theory and spaced repetition principles, which suggest that systematic practice with appropriate instructional tools can enhance memory consolidation and skill automaticity (Baroody & Ginsburg, 1983). Flash cards, as a pedagogical intervention, align with these theoretical foundations by providing structured, repetitive practice opportunities that facilitate the transition from effortful computation to automatic recall.

Research investigating flash card effectiveness in mathematical education has demonstrated promising outcomes across diverse educational contexts. Sy and Soriano (2018) documented significant improvements in multiplication fact recall among students with learning difficulties following flash card interventions. These findings suggest that flash cards serve not merely as rote memorization tools but as instruments for developing deeper mathematical understanding while addressing equity concerns through their accessibility and cost-effectiveness.

This investigation addresses critical gaps in the literature by examining flash card effectiveness specifically within the Philippine elementary education context, focusing on multiplication skills that represent fundamental building blocks for mathematical literacy. The study's significance extends beyond immediate academic outcomes to encompass broader implications for educational policy and practice in addressing educational inequities in resource-constrained environments.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Foundations of Mathematical Learning

Mathematical learning in elementary education involves complex cognitive processes that require systematic skill development and conceptual understanding. Contemporary educational psychology emphasizes the importance of automaticity in basic mathematical facts as a foundation for higher-order mathematical thinking (National Research Council, 2001). The cognitive load theory suggests that reducing cognitive burden through automated recall of basic facts allows students to allocate mental resources toward problem-solving and conceptual reasoning.

Research conducted by Bautista et al. (2018) in the Philippine context revealed that Grade 4 learners frequently struggle with conceptual understanding of mathematical operations, particularly multiplication. This challenge stems from insufficient foundational knowledge and limited exposure to varied instructional approaches, issues that are particularly acute in resource-constrained educational settings.

Flash Cards as Educational Interventions

Flash cards have emerged as versatile educational tools with documented effectiveness across multiple academic domains. In mathematics education, flash cards serve dual purposes: facilitating memorization of mathematical facts and providing opportunities for conceptual reinforcement through visual and kinesthetic learning modalities. Their effectiveness stems from alignment with principles of spaced repetition and active recall, both recognized as powerful learning strategies.

Contemporary applications have evolved to incorporate visual representations and conceptual connections, transforming flash cards from simple memorization tools to

instruments for meaningful learning experiences. This evolution is particularly relevant for addressing educational equity concerns, as flash cards provide an accessible means of delivering quality instruction regardless of technological infrastructure or financial resources.

Educational Context and Policy Implications

The Philippine elementary education system faces unique challenges including resource limitations, large class sizes, and diverse student populations with varying levels of mathematical preparedness. These contextual factors necessitate practical, cost-effective interventions that can be implemented across diverse educational settings while addressing fundamental equity concerns.

Recent policy initiatives emphasizing inclusive education and quality instruction for all learners highlight the importance of identifying effective, scalable interventions that can address achievement gaps in mathematics education. Flash cards represent one such intervention with potential for widespread implementation across diverse educational contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

This investigation employed a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, a methodological approach widely recognized in educational research for evaluating intervention effectiveness within authentic classroom settings (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). While this design provides valuable insights into intervention effectiveness within ecological contexts, it has important limitations regarding causal inference due to the absence of a control group. Alternative explanations for observed improvements, including maturation effects, practice effects, and external factors, cannot be definitively ruled out.

Participants

The study population consisted of 36 Grade 4 students enrolled at Ranao Elementary School, District of Bani, Division of Pangasinan I, during the 2022-2023 academic

year. Participants represented a mixed-ability group with diverse mathematical skill levels, typical of rural Philippine elementary classrooms. The demographic composition included students from middle- to low-income families, reflecting the socioeconomic characteristics of the local community.

Participant selection followed convenience sampling procedures based on classroom enrollment. All participants provided assent for participation, with informed consent obtained from parents or guardians according to institutional ethical requirements.

Instrumentation

Data collection utilized researcher-developed assessment instruments consisting of 15-item multiplication tests focusing on basic multiplication facts and two-digit computational problems. The discrepancy between the abstract's mention of "25-item" tests and the actual 15-item format reflects the final validated instrument length following expert review and pilot testing.

Test development followed systematic procedures including content specification, item construction, and expert validation. Two master teachers and the school's Head Teacher provided content validation, ensuring alignment with curriculum standards and appropriate difficulty levels for Grade 4 students. Pilot testing was conducted with a similar grade level class to establish item clarity and appropriate difficulty.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Pre- and Post-Test Scores

Measure	**Pretest**	**Posttest**
Mean	10.47	12.92
Standard Deviation	2.15	1.83
Percentage Score	69.8%	86.13%
Range	6-14	9-15

Reliability analysis of the instrument yielded Cronbach's alpha = 0.78 for the pretest and 0.81 for the posttest, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Parallel forms were developed to minimize practice effects while maintaining content equivalence between pretest and posttest administrations.

Intervention Implementation

The flash card intervention incorporated systematic, evidence-based instructional strategies designed to enhance multiplication fact recall and computational fluency. Implementation followed a structured eight-week timeline with daily 20-minute activities progressing from basic multiplication tables to complex two-digit problems.

Weeks 1-2 focused on foundational multiplication tables (1×1 through 5×1), emphasizing accuracy and initial memorization. Weeks 3-4 continued systematic progression through multiplication tables 6×1 through 9×1, with increasing emphasis on speed and automaticity. Weeks 5-6 incorporated random practice sessions combining all previously learned multiplication facts to promote retention and transfer. Weeks 7-8 introduced two-digit multiplication problems, both with and without regrouping.

Motivational elements were integrated throughout the intervention, including positive reinforcement for improved performance and peer recognition for effort and progress. These elements were designed to maintain student engagement while providing immediate feedback on learning progress.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics included measures of central tendency and variability for both pretest and posttest administration. Inferential analysis utilized paired samples t-tests to examine the statistical significance of score changes, with alpha set at 0.05.

Prior to analysis, normality assumptions were examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test ($W = 0.94$, $p = 0.08$), indicating acceptable normality for parametric testing. Effect size was calculated using Cohen's d to assess practical significance of observed differences.

Ethical Considerations

This study received approval from the school administration and Division Office. Informed consent was obtained from parents/guardians, and student assent was secured prior to participation. No conflicts of interest exist, and no external funding was received for this research.

Results and Discussion

Performance Outcomes

The comparative analysis revealed substantial improvements in multiplication performance following the eight-week flash card intervention. As shown in Table 1, pretest results demonstrated a mean score of 10.47 points (SD = 2.15) with a corresponding percentage score of 69.8%, indicating below-grade-level performance in multiplication skills. Posttest administration yielded a mean score of 12.92 points (SD = 1.83) with a percentage score of 86.13%, representing significant improvement across both absolute and relative measures.

The 2.45-point improvement in mean scores corresponds to a 16.33-percentage-point increase in performance, suggesting substantial practical significance. These improvements are associated with the systematic flash card intervention, though alternative explanations cannot be definitively excluded given the study design.

Statistical Analysis

Paired samples t-test results confirmed the statistical significance of observed performance improvements. The analysis yielded $t(35) = -8.82$ with $p < 0.001$, indicating statistically significant differences between pretest and posttest performance. The effect size calculation (Cohen's $d = 1.47$) indicates a large practical effect, suggesting that the intervention was associated with meaningful improvements in student performance.

While these results are promising, the quasi-experimental design limits causal interpretations. Potential alternative explanations include natural maturation, practice

effects from repeated testing, increased teacher attention (Hawthorne effect), and other concurrent educational activities.

Educational Implications and Equity Considerations

The significant improvements observed across all participants suggest that flash card interventions may effectively address multiplication skill deficits in elementary mathematics education, particularly in resource-constrained environments. The systematic progression from basic multiplication facts to complex two-digit problems appears to support skill transfer and conceptual development beyond rote memorization.

These findings have particular relevance for addressing educational equity concerns in the Philippine context. Flash cards represent a cost-effective, easily implemented intervention that can be adapted across diverse educational contexts while maintaining instructional effectiveness. This accessibility is crucial for rural schools that may lack resources for more expensive technological interventions.

The intervention's apparent success despite implementation during challenging educational circumstances (COVID-19 pandemic restrictions) suggests that well-designed, low-cost educational interventions can maintain effectiveness even under difficult conditions. This finding has important implications for educational planning and policy development in contexts characterized by uncertainty and resource limitations.

Limitations and Alternative Explanations

Several limitations must be acknowledged in interpreting these results. The one-group pretest-posttest design severely limits causal claims, as improvements may be attributed to factors other than the intervention, including:

1. **Maturation effects**: Students' natural development over the eight-week period
2. **Practice effects**: Familiarity with test format and content from pretest administration

3. **Hawthorne effect**: Increased performance due to special attention during the study
4. **Concurrent learning**: Other classroom activities and instruction occurring simultaneously
5. **Regression to the mean**: Statistical tendency for extreme scores to move toward the average

The study's implementation in a single classroom limits generalizability to other contexts and populations. Additionally, the short-term nature of the assessment does not address whether improvements persist over time.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This investigation demonstrated that systematic flash card implementation is associated with significant improvements in multiplication performance among Grade 4 students in a rural Philippine elementary school. The quasi-experimental design provided evidence for intervention effectiveness while acknowledging important methodological limitations that restrict causal interpretations.

The substantial improvements observed across all performance measures suggest that flash cards represent potentially valuable pedagogical tools for addressing multiplication skill deficits, particularly in resource-constrained educational environments. The intervention's apparent success despite challenging implementation circumstances underscores the practical applicability of flash card approaches in diverse educational contexts.

Policy and Equity Implications

These findings support the integration of systematic flash card programs into mathematics curricula as a means of addressing educational inequities in basic computational skills. The low-cost, high-accessibility nature of flash cards makes them particularly valuable for promoting educational equity across diverse socioeconomic contexts.

Policy makers should consider supporting teacher professional development programs that emphasize effective implementation of flash card interventions, including systematic progression strategies, assessment protocols, and differentiation techniques. Such support could help scale effective practices across similar educational contexts while maintaining cost-effectiveness.

Recommendations for Practice

Educational practitioners should consider integrating systematic flash card programs into mathematics curricula, particularly for students demonstrating difficulties with multiplication facts. Implementation should follow structured progressions from basic facts to complex applications, incorporating motivational elements to maintain student engagement.

Professional development programs should equip teachers with knowledge and skills necessary for effective flash card implementation, emphasizing systematic progression, assessment strategies, and differentiation techniques to accommodate diverse student needs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Subsequent investigations should employ randomized controlled trial designs to strengthen causal inferences about flash card effectiveness. Such studies should include control groups and longer follow-up periods to assess intervention sustainability and address the limitations identified in this study.

Qualitative research examining student and teacher experiences with flash card interventions would provide valuable insights into implementation factors that influence effectiveness. Mixed-methods approaches could illuminate both quantitative outcomes and qualitative processes underlying intervention success.

Research investigating optimal implementation parameters, including session duration, frequency, and progression rates, would inform evidence-based practice guidelines. Comparative studies examining flash card effectiveness across different mathematical domains would expand understanding of intervention applicability.

Acknowledgment of Limitations

This study's findings should be interpreted cautiously given the quasi-experimental design and single-classroom implementation. The absence of a control group limits confidence in attributing improvements specifically to the flash card intervention rather than alternative explanations. Future research with more rigorous experimental designs is needed to establish causal relationships and support broader implementation recommendations.

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