

Original Article

Beyond Rewards: An Examination of Reward Systems Used by BEED Pre-Service Teachers and their Perceived Pupil Engagement during Practice Teaching

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Received: 04 June 2026; Revised: 19 July 2026;

Accepted: 24 July 2026; Published: 28 July 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66074/X6N4P2W9>

Abstract

This study employed a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design to examine the reward systems used by BEED pre-service teachers and the level of pupil engagement as perceived by BEED pre-service teachers during classroom instruction. Specifically, it investigated the extent of tangible and intangible reward systems, the teacher-perceived level of pupil engagement during classroom activities, the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of reward systems, and the relationships among these variables. A total of 30 purposively selected BEED pre-service teachers participated in the study. Data were gathered using an adapted and modified questionnaire and analyzed using frequency counts, weighted means, ranks, and Pearson correlation analysis. Results revealed that intangible rewards were more highly utilized than tangible rewards. Pupil engagement was generally high, particularly in participation, attentiveness, and cooperation. Teachers also perceived reward systems as effective in promoting positive classroom behavior. However, the correlation analysis revealed no significant relationships among reward systems, pupil engagement, and teachers' perceptions of reward effectiveness. The study concludes that reward systems are commonly used classroom strategies that are positively perceived by pre-service teachers and are associated with reported engagement

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behaviors; however, no statistically significant relationships were found within the present sample.

Keywords: elementary education, pupil engagement, reinforcement strategies, reward systems

1. Introduction

Learning does not occur in isolation; rather, it is shaped by the responses, reinforcements, and experiences learners encounter in the classroom. In elementary education, pupil engagement plays a vital role not only in academic achievement but also in the development of positive behaviors such as attentiveness, cooperation, participation, and persistence. To promote these outcomes, teachers commonly use reward systems, such as verbal praise, token systems, classroom privileges, and tangible incentives, to motivate learners and reinforce desirable behaviors. Previous studies have shown that reward-based strategies can enhance pupils' participation, attentiveness, and overall classroom involvement (Anthony et al., 2023).

The use of reward systems is anchored in behaviorist learning theories, particularly the works of Skinner (1927) and Pavlov (1953), which emphasize that behavior can be shaped through reinforcement and stimulus-response associations. In classroom settings, rewards serve as external motivators that encourage pupils to engage actively in learning activities and exhibit desirable behaviors.

Reward systems are generally classified into tangible and intangible forms. Tangible rewards are physical or material incentives, such as stickers, tokens, certificates, small prizes, or classroom privileges, that learners can directly receive and recognize. These rewards are often effective at attracting attention and motivating younger learners because of their concrete, immediate nature. In contrast, intangible rewards include verbal praise, encouragement, recognition, constructive feedback, and positive gestures such as smiles or nods. Although less visible, intangible rewards contribute significantly to learners' self-esteem, sense of belonging, and intrinsic motivation by emphasizing the value of effort and achievement rather than material gain alone.

Several studies have reported positive outcomes of reward systems in improving pupil engagement and classroom participation (Phungphai & Boonmoh, 2021). However, some scholars caution that excessive reliance on external rewards may diminish intrinsic motivation due to the overjustification effect. Despite this concern, recent findings suggest that when reward systems are implemented appropriately, consistently, and meaningfully, they can support both active engagement and the gradual development of intrinsic motivation among learners (Maglasang & Codilla, 2022).

Despite the documented benefits of reward systems, limited research has examined how these strategies are implemented by Bachelor of Elementary Education

(BEEd) pre-service teachers during practice teaching and how teachers observe pupil engagement in classroom settings. Anchored in behaviorist principles, this study aimed to describe the reward systems utilized by BEEd pre-service teachers and determine the level of pupil engagement during classroom instruction as perceived by BEEd pre-service teachers. The study's findings may provide valuable insights into improving reinforcement strategies and enhancing classroom practices in elementary education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the reward systems used by BEEd pre-service teachers, the level of pupil engagement as perceived by BEEd pre-service teachers, and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of these reward systems. Specifically, the study seeks to determine: (1) the types of reward systems used by BEEd pre-service teachers in classroom instruction in terms of (a) tangible rewards and (b) intangible rewards; (2) the level of pupil engagement during the implementation of reward systems; (3) the perceptions of BEEd pre-service teachers regarding the effectiveness of reward systems; and (4) the significant relationship between (a) the types of reward systems used and pupil engagement and (b) the types of reward systems used and teachers' perceptions of reward system effectiveness.

1.3 Literature Review

Reward systems are widely recognized as instructional reinforcement strategies used to shape learner behavior and promote desirable classroom outcomes. In educational settings, these systems are commonly classified into tangible rewards (e.g., stickers, tokens, certificates, and material incentives) and intangible rewards (e.g., verbal praise, recognition, applause, and privileges). Tolero and Echaure (2021) emphasized that rewards may be used to recognize students' efforts and participation. Still, teachers should also help learners develop intrinsic motivation rather than relying solely on external rewards. Their findings suggest that while both tangible and intangible rewards can support learner motivation, the long-term effectiveness of reward systems depends on balancing external reinforcement with the development of self-motivation and personal responsibility. Both forms function as external motivators that reinforce desired behaviors and support classroom management, particularly in early grade levels where learners are highly responsive to immediate reinforcement.

The theoretical foundation of reward systems is anchored in behaviorist learning theories, particularly Classical and Operant Conditioning. Classical Conditioning posits that learners form associations between stimuli and responses through repeated experiences, thereby influencing their emotional and behavioral reactions in learning environments. In contrast, Operant Conditioning, particularly Skinner's principle of reinforcement and Thorndike's Law of Effect, emphasizes that behaviors followed by

favorable consequences are more likely to be repeated. In classroom contexts, this suggests that rewards can strengthen desirable behaviors, such as participation, attentiveness, and task completion, while discouraging undesirable behaviors.

Empirical evidence generally supports the positive effects of reward systems on learner motivation, participation, and classroom behavior. A study by Pleșoianu (2020) found that reward-based classroom strategies are associated with increased student engagement and attendance. Similarly, Javed and Muhammad (2021) found that reward systems improve behavior management and reduce classroom disruptions, while Urquiza-Fuentes (2023) emphasized their role in enhancing task completion and sustaining learner motivation in structured learning environments. Similarly, Wang (2021) suggested that reward systems may promote greater learner engagement by encouraging students to participate more actively in classroom interactions and learning activities. The study emphasized that external reinforcement can motivate learners to develop positive learning behaviors and become more involved in classroom tasks. Collectively, these findings suggest that reward systems function as effective motivational tools that can enhance both behavioral compliance and academic participation.

Reward systems are also closely linked to the multidimensional construct of pupil engagement, which includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Behavioral engagement is reflected in participation and on-task behavior, emotional engagement in interest and positive attitudes toward learning, and cognitive engagement in effortful thinking and persistence. Research by Chen (2023) and Anderson (2016) demonstrated that incentive-based strategies improve attentiveness and classroom participation, while DeJager et al. (2020) highlighted that structured reinforcement systems, such as token economies, promote sustained engagement by clarifying behavioral expectations and providing consistent feedback. These studies collectively indicate that reward systems contribute not only to immediate behavioral compliance but also to sustained engagement when systematically implemented.

In the Philippine educational context, reward systems are extensively utilized as both motivational and classroom management strategies in elementary education. Viray-Castillejos (2023) found that both tangible and intangible rewards are associated with increased learner motivation and participation. Yu (2018) further confirmed the effectiveness of token-based reinforcement systems in enhancing classroom engagement. These findings underscore the cultural and pedagogical relevance of reward systems in local classroom settings, particularly in supporting early-grade learners.

However, despite their documented benefits, literature also highlights important limitations of reward-based approaches. Excessive reliance on tangible rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation through the over justification effect. Ruzs et al. (2020) emphasized that the effectiveness of reward systems is highly context-dependent, varying according to implementation practices, learner characteristics, and classroom conditions. These findings suggest that while reward systems are effective in

promoting short-term engagement, their long-term impact depends on how they are structured and integrated into instruction.

Despite general agreement on the positive role of rewards, evidence on their strength and impact consistency remains mixed. For instance, Royer and Ennis (2024) reported that behavior-specific praise yields only small and sometimes unstable effects on engagement. In addition, Kalliisa et al. (2023) argued that engagement is more strongly influenced by overall instructional quality and classroom environment than by isolated reinforcement strategies. Lloyd et al. (2025) further noted that the effects of verbal reinforcement may diminish over time if not consistently supported by broader pedagogical strategies. These findings suggest that reward systems are most effective when used as part of a comprehensive instructional approach rather than as standalone interventions.

Teacher perception is another important dimension in understanding the effectiveness of reward systems. Studies by Javed and Muhammad (2021) and Viray-Castillejos (2023) indicate that teachers generally perceive reward systems as effective tools for improving learner motivation, engagement, and classroom behavior. However, Alrashood et al. (2026) noted that teacher perceptions of effectiveness are shaped not only by the type of reward used but also by observed learner outcomes, teaching experience, and contextual classroom factors. This implies that perceptions of reward effectiveness are interpretive and influenced by practical classroom realities rather than theoretical assumptions alone.

In synthesis, the reviewed literature demonstrates that reward systems are widely used and generally effective in enhancing pupil engagement and classroom behavior, particularly in early education settings. However, their effectiveness is influenced by implementation practices, contextual factors, and the balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. While existing studies provide substantial evidence on the general effects of reward systems, there remains limited research focusing specifically on how BEEd pre-service teachers implement these strategies in actual classroom practice and how such implementation relates to observed pupil engagement and teacher perceptions. This gap underscores the need for the present study, which seeks to examine the types of reward systems used by BEEd pre-service teachers, the level of pupil engagement during their implementation, and the perceived effectiveness of these strategies in elementary classroom settings.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the effectiveness of reward systems used by BEEd pre-service teachers and their relationship with pupil engagement. This research design is appropriate for describing variables and determining the extent to which relationships exist among them without inferring causality.

The descriptive component of the design was used to identify the types of reward systems implemented by BEED pre-service teachers, categorizing them into tangible and intangible rewards, to describe the level of pupil engagement, and to determine pre-service teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of reward systems. Meanwhile, the correlational component was employed to determine the presence and strength of a significant relationship between the reward systems used and pupil engagement. In this study, reward systems were the independent variable, and pupil engagement was the dependent variable.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at a college in a state university in Western Visayas. The university is a public higher education institution in the province of Aklan that offers various undergraduate and graduate programs, with teacher education as one of its flagship programs. The College is responsible for preparing pre-service teachers through academic coursework, field study experiences, and practice teaching, aiming to develop competent, reflective, and socially responsive educators.

2.3 Respondents of the Study and Sampling Technique

The participants in the study were BEED pre-service teachers currently engaged in practice teaching. A total of 30 respondents were selected through purposive sampling because they had direct experience in classroom instruction and the implementation of reward-based strategies. This sampling technique was deemed appropriate for the study, as it ensured the inclusion of participants with relevant, contextually appropriate exposure to classroom management practices necessary to address the research objectives.

2.4 Research Instrument

Data were collected using an adapted questionnaire aligned with the study's specific objectives. The instrument was derived and adapted from established tools used in prior studies, specifically Teachers' Use of Reward System: Inputs for Students' Motivation Enhancement by Viray-Castillejos (2023) and Effects of Tangible Reward Systems Towards Pupils' Engagement and Participation in School: A Mixed Methods Approach by Anthony, Albina, Yurfo, and Sanchez (2023). Items from these sources were carefully reviewed, modified, and contextualized to ensure relevance to the present study setting and population.

The final instrument was composed of four sections. Section I collected demographic information from the respondents. Section II assessed the extent of implementation of reward systems, operationalized into two dimensions: tangible rewards and intangible rewards. Section III measured teachers' perceptions of pupil engagement across behavioral indicators, including participation, attentiveness, and

involvement. Section IV described pre-service teachers’ perceptions regarding reward systems in relation to pupil engagement.

Content validity of the instrument was established through expert validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and congruence with the research objectives. Revisions were incorporated based on expert feedback prior to final administration.

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient based on the collected responses. Before analysis, negatively worded items in the Teachers’ Perception of Reward Effectiveness scale were reverse-coded to ensure consistent scoring direction. Cronbach’s alpha was computed for each subscale and for the overall instrument.

Results showed that the Tangible Rewards scale ($\alpha = 0.89$) and Intangible Rewards scale ($\alpha = 0.96$) both demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency. The Pupil Engagement scale ($\alpha = 0.82$) likewise showed good reliability, while the Teachers’ Perception of Reward Effectiveness scale ($\alpha = 0.61$) indicated acceptable internal consistency. Overall, the 40-item instrument yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.81, indicating good reliability and suitability for further analysis.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of the research instrument.

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability	Interpretation
Tangible Rewards	5	0.89	Good Reliability	Strong Internal Consistency
Intangible Rewards	5	0.96	Excellent Reliability	Very High Internal Consistency
Pupil Engagement	20	0.82	Good Reliability	Strong Internal Consistency
Teachers' Perceptions of Reward Effectiveness (reverse-coded)	10	0.61	Questionable Reliability	Questionable Internal Consistency
Overall Instrument	40	0.81	Good Reliability	Strong Internal Consistency

Table 2. Rating scale for reward systems, pupil engagement and teachers perception of reward effectiveness.

Rating Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
4	3.41 – 4.20	Agree	High
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral	Moderate
2	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree	Low
1	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection followed a structured and ethically compliant procedure. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate academic authority prior to data gathering. Upon approval, coordination with designated class

representatives facilitated access to the respondents. The validated questionnaire was administered electronically via Google Forms and distributed through Messenger. An informed consent statement, together with clear instructions, was provided at the beginning of the survey to ensure voluntary participation and informed understanding of the study. Respondents were given 48 hours to complete the questionnaire, and follow-up reminders were issued to increase the response rate. All collected data were retrieved, organized, and securely stored for analysis, with strict observance of confidentiality and anonymity.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using appropriate statistical tools consistent with the study's objectives. Specifically, frequency counts, mean, and rank were used to analyze and interpret the gathered data. Frequency was used to determine the number of responses under each category of reward systems, levels of pupil engagement and BEED pre-service teacher's perception of reward effectiveness. Moreover, the mean (weighted mean) was utilized to determine the average level of implementation of reward systems and the overall level of pupil engagement. This helped summarize respondents' perceptions and measure the central tendency of their responses using the Likert scale used in the study. Furthermore, Rank was employed to arrange the indicators of reward systems and pupil engagement from highest to lowest based on their weighted mean. This helped identify which specific reward strategies were most commonly practiced or most effective, as well as which aspects of pupil engagement were most evident in the classroom. Finally, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was used to determine the significance and direction of the relationship between reward systems and pupil engagement. All statistical interpretations were evaluated at the 0.05 standard level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$). All collected data were treated using descriptive statistical procedures to present clear patterns and interpretations of the responses. The data were computed and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Results were organized in tables showing frequency counts, weighted means, ranks, and corresponding verbal interpretations aligned with the study's objectives.

Table 3. Pearson R's correlation interpretation.

Correlational Size	Interpretation
± 0.90 to ± 1.00	Very high positive/ negative correlation
± 0.70 to ± 0.89	High positive/ negative correlation
± 0.50 to ± 0.69	Moderate positive/ negative correlation
± 0.30 to ± 0.49	Low positive/ negative correlation
± 0.00 to ± 0.29	Very weak positive/ negative correlation

3. Results

This section presents the analysis, interpretation and discussion of the data gathered in the study. The findings are organized according to the objectives of the study, focusing on the reward systems utilized by BEEd pre-service teachers, the level of pupil engagement as perceived by the respondents during classroom instruction, and BEEd pre-service teachers' perceptions of reward effectiveness. Descriptive analysis, particularly frequency counts, weighted means, and rankings, was used to determine the extent of reward system utilization and the level of pupil engagement. In addition, correlation analysis was employed to determine the relationship between: reward systems and pupil engagement; reward systems and BEEd pre-service teacher's perception of reward effectiveness. The results are presented in tabular form, along with their descriptions and interpretations, to provide a clearer understanding of the findings.

3.1 Level of Tangible Rewards

Table 4 presents the level of tangible rewards utilized by BEEd pre-service teachers. Tangible rewards are physical items given to pupils to reinforce positive behavior, participation, and classroom engagement. The data were analyzed using frequency counts, weighted means, and ranks to determine the most commonly used tangible rewards and their corresponding levels of utilization.

Table 4. Level of tangible rewards.

Tangible Rewards	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	F	M	Description	Interpretation	R
Stickers	12	6	5	3	4	30	3.63	Agree	High	2nd
Certificates	1	4	1	4	20	30	1.73	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	4th
Candies or Snacks	9	10	6	5	0	30	3.70	Agree	High	1st
School supplies (e.g., pencils, erasers, notebooks)	4	4	11	6	5	30	2.83	Neutral	Moderate	3rd
Toys	1	1	3	7	18	30	1.67	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	5th
Total Mean							2.71	Neutral	Moderate	

Note. 4.21-5.00 = Very High 3.41-4.20 = High 2.61-3.40 = Moderate 1.81-2.60 = Low 1.00-1.80 = Very Low

The results show that candies or snacks ($M = 3.70$) and stickers ($M = 3.63$) were rated as high and were commonly utilized as tangible rewards during classroom activities. In contrast, school supplies ($M = 2.83$) were rated as moderate, while certificates ($M = 1.73$) and toys ($M = 1.67$) were rated as very low and strongly

disagreed, indicating minimal use of these reward types. The overall mean of 2.71 indicates a moderate level of tangible reward use among BEEd pre-service teachers.

These findings imply that immediate, consumable rewards are more effective at encouraging participation and reinforcing desired classroom behaviors among young learners. Stickers and candies/snacks may be perceived as motivating because they provide instant gratification and are easily associated with positive classroom experiences. In contrast, formal rewards such as certificates and toys may not strongly influence engagement due to delayed reinforcement or limited relevance to pupils' immediate interests

3.2 Level of Intangible Rewards

Table 5 presents the level of intangible rewards utilized by BEEd pre-service teachers. Intangible rewards refer to non-material forms of reinforcement used to motivate and encourage pupils during classroom instruction, such as verbal praise, claps, points, and extra activity time. The data were analyzed using frequency counts, weighted means, and ranks to determine the most commonly used tangible rewards and their corresponding levels of utilization.

Table 5. Level of intangible rewards.

Intangible Rewards	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	F	M	Description	Interpre- tation	R
Points	10	13	3	2	2	30	3.90	Agree	High	3rd
Claps	20	5	2	3	0	30	4.40	Strongly agree	Very High	2nd
Extra activity time	8	9	7	4	2	30	3.57	Agree	High	4th
Verbal praise (recognition or acknowledgement)	0	27	2	1	0	30	4.63	Strongly Agree	Very High	1st
Classroom privileges (e.g., being a line leader, group leader, or helper)	4	18	13	5	0	30	3.37	Neutral	Moderate	5th
Total Mean							3.97	Agree	High	

Note. 4.21-5.00 = Very High 3.41-4.20 = High 2.61-3.40 = Moderate 1.81-2.60 = Low 1.00-1.80 = Very Low

The results show that verbal praise ($M = 4.63$) obtained the highest mean, followed by claps ($M = 4.40$), both interpreted as very high and strongly agreed, indicating that these forms of recognition are highly utilized in classroom instruction. Points ($M = 3.90$), extra activity time ($M = 3.57$), and classroom privileges ($M = 3.37$) were all rated as high, showing that these intangible rewards are also consistently applied by pre-service teachers to encourage pupil participation and engagement. The total mean of 3.97 indicates a high level of utilization of intangible rewards among BEEd pre-service teachers. The predominance of verbal praise and applause suggests

that pre-service teachers favor reinforcement strategies that are immediate, readily available, and capable of fostering positive teacher-pupil relationships without requiring material resources. This preference may reflect the practical realities of classroom instruction during practice teaching.

Intangible rewards such as verbal praise, encouragement, appreciation, and applause contribute significantly to creating a positive classroom environment where pupils feel acknowledged and valued. These forms of reinforcement are also cost-effective, sustainable, and easily integrated into daily classroom management practices, making them highly practical for teachers.

3.3 Level of Pupil Engagement

Table 6 presents the level of pupil engagement as observed by the respondents during classroom instruction. The data were analyzed using frequency counts, weighted means, and descriptive interpretations to determine the extent to which pupils demonstrate engagement in response to the reward systems utilized by BEEd pre-service teachers.

Table 6. Level of pupil engagement.

Variables	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	F	M	Description	Interpretation
Pupils enjoy participating in learning activities.	23	5	2	0	0	30	4.70	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils appear excited and motivated when rewards are introduced.	28	0	1	1	0	30	4.83	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils show visible enthusiasm (e.g., smiling, active movement, alert posture) during reward-based activities	24	4	1	1	0	30	4.70	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils focus on classroom discussions.	14	13	2	1	0	30	4.33	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils rush through tasks just to receive rewards.	14	4	8	1	3	30	3.80	Agree	High
Pupils rely on rewards as their main reason for completing tasks.	6	7	11	3	3	30	3.30	Neutral	Moderate
Pupils put effort into completing their tasks.	21	7	2	0	0	30	4.63	Strongly Agree	Very High

Pupils engage only in tasks that offer rewards.	3	7	6	9	5	30	2.70	Neutral	Moderate
Pupils show improved cooperation with their classmates.	21	4	4	0	1	30	4.47	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils raise their hands more often.	19	7	1	2	1	30	4.37	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils try hard to perform well in their tasks	20	7	3	0	0	30	4.57	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils actively contribute ideas during class activities	17	11	2	0	0	30	4.50	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils ask questions to better understand the lesson.	17	9	4	0	0	30	4.40	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils show improved attendance or punctuality when rewards are offered.	17	9	4	0	0	30	4.40	Strongly Agree	Very High
Pupils argue or show conflict with classmates when competing for rewards	5	7	10	3	5	30	3.00	Neutral	Moderate
Pupils may become overly dependent on rewards, reducing intrinsic motivation to learn.	3	4	9	6	8	30	2.47	Disagree	Low
Pupils may lose interest in learning when rewards are not provided.	1	4	8	8	9	30	2.20	Disagree	Low
Pupils persist in understanding difficult lessons.	7	16	7	0	0	30	3.97	Agree	High
Pupils focus more on rewards than on learning itself.	2	3	8	6	11	30	2.17	Disagree	Low
Pupils are pressured by the reward system to focus only on giving the correct answer.	2	4	6	9	9	30	2.27	Disagree	Low
Total Mean							3.79	Agree	High

Note. 4.21-5.00 = Very High 3.41-4.20 = High 2.61-3.40 = Moderate 1.81-2.60 = Low 1.00-1.80 = Very Low

Results show that the overall level of pupil engagement was high ($M = 3.79$), indicating that reward systems correspond positive learner behaviors in the classroom.

The highest-rated indicators were pupils appear excited and motivated when rewards are introduced ($M = 4.83$), pupils enjoy participating in learning activities ($M = 4.70$), and pupils show visible enthusiasm during reward-based activities ($M = 4.70$). These findings indicate that high engagement was observed in classrooms that used reward systems.

High mean scores were also observed in pupils put effort into completing tasks ($M = 4.63$), pupils try hard to perform well ($M = 4.57$), pupils actively contribute ideas ($M = 4.50$), pupils show improved cooperation with classmates ($M = 4.47$), and pupils rush through tasks just to receive rewards ($M = 3.80$). Collectively, these indicators suggest that reward systems extend beyond initial motivation and may support more sustained forms of engagement such as persistence, collaboration, and cognitive involvement. This may indicate that rewards, when consistently and appropriately applied, help reinforce not only compliance but also productive academic behaviors such as task persistence, peer interaction, and willingness to contribute ideas in class discussions. In classroom practice, this highlights the role of reinforcement in shaping both individual learning behaviors and social learning dynamics within group activities.

Furthermore, pupils were observed to raise their hands more often ($M = 4.37$), focus on classroom discussions ($M = 4.33$), ask questions to understand lessons ($M = 4.40$) better, and show improved attendance or punctuality when rewards are offered ($M = 4.40$). Moderate responses were observed regarding pupils' reliance on rewards as their main reason for completing tasks ($M = 3.30$) and pupils' engagement in only reward-based tasks ($M = 2.70$). These results suggest that while rewards enhance engagement, they may also encourage task-focused or external motivation in some instances.

On the other hand, low mean scores were recorded for pupils become overly dependent on rewards ($M = 2.47$), pupils lose interest when rewards are not provided ($M = 2.20$), pupils focus more on rewards than learning itself ($M = 2.17$), and pupils feel pressured by reward systems ($M = 2.27$). This indicates that negative effects such as dependency and reduced intrinsic motivation were not strongly evident. This is important because it suggests that reward systems, as implemented in this context, are more likely to function as supportive motivational tools rather than controlling mechanisms that undermine learner autonomy.

3.4 Level of Teachers Perception of Reward Systems Effectiveness

Table 7 presents the level of teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of reward systems. The table shows respondents' assessments of how effective reward systems are in promoting positive behavior, motivation, and pupil engagement in the classroom, based on the indicators provided in the study.

Table 7. Level of teachers perception of reward systems effectiveness.

Items	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	F	M	Description	Interpretation
When pupils expect rewards, they participate more actively.	18	7	3	1	1	30	4.33	Strongly Agree	Very High
I find that pupils become dependent on rewards to stay motivated.	2	9	12	7	0	30	3.20	Neutral	Moderate
I reward pupils when they demonstrate good behavior.	12	14	4	0	0	30	4.27	Strongly Agree	Very High
I reward pupils when they perform academically.	16	13	1	0	0	30	4.50	Strongly Agree	Very High
My pupils are motivated by tangible and verbal rewards.	19	10	1	0	0	30	4.60	Strongly Agree	Very High
I see the rewards system as time-consuming.	0	6	9	8	7	30	2.47	Disagree	Low
I notice that pupils lose interest in tasks when rewards are not provided.	6	12	7	4	1	30	3.60	Agree	High
I find that the reward system is not always effective in managing disruptive behavior over time.	1	7	12	8	2	30	2.90	Neutral	Moderate
Pupils are active learners when they foresee that their behaviors are rewarded	19	10	1	0	0	30	4.60	Strongly Agree	Very High
I find myself pressured to give rewards to maintain effective classroom management.	4	7	11	7	1	30	3.20	Neutral	Moderate
Total Mean							3.77	Agree	High

Note. 4.21-5.00 = Very High 3.41-4.20 = High 2.61-3.40 = Moderate 1.81-2.60 = Low 1.00-1.80 = Very Low

Table 7 presents an overall mean score of 3.77 (High), indicating that BEED pre-service teachers generally perceive reward systems as effective classroom management tools that promote pupil engagement, participation, and behavioral regulation. This suggests that reward systems are not only frequently used in

classroom instruction but are also widely regarded as supportive mechanisms that facilitate active learning environments.

A closer examination of the data reveals that the highest-rated indicators consistently reflect behavioral activation and motivational responsiveness among pupils. In particular, the items my pupils are motivated by tangible and verbal rewards ($M = 4.60$) and pupils are active learners when they foresee that their behaviors are rewarded ($M = 4.60$), obtained the highest means, both interpreted as very high. This indicates that pre-service teachers strongly observe a pattern where pupils increase their engagement when rewards are anticipated.

Similarly, the items I reward pupils for academic performance ($M = 4.50$) and for good behavior ($M = 4.27$) indicate that reward systems are not randomly applied but are intentionally integrated into both academic and behavioral reinforcement practices. This indicates that pre-service teachers use reward strategies in a structured, goal-oriented manner, reinforcing both cognitive performance and classroom discipline.

While teachers strongly recognize the positive behavioral outcomes of reward systems, the data also reveal critical awareness of potential unintended consequences. The item I notice that pupils lose interest in tasks when rewards are not provided ($M = 3.60$, High) suggests that teachers observe a degree of conditional engagement, where learner motivation may depend on the presence of rewards. This supports concerns raised in the motivational literature regarding the overjustification effect, in which external rewards may shift learners' focus from intrinsic interest to external reinforcement.

Contrary to this concern, items such as 'I find that pupils become dependent on rewards to stay motivated' ($M = 3.20$, Neutral) and 'Pupils engage only in tasks that offer rewards' ($M = 2.90$, Moderate) indicate that teachers do not strongly perceive deep or persistent reward dependency among pupils. This suggests that while some signs of extrinsic motivation are observed, they are not viewed as dominant or consistently disruptive within classroom practice. In other words, reward dependence is present but not yet perceived as a structural classroom problem.

Furthermore, the item I find myself pressured to give rewards to maintain effective classroom management ($M = 3.20$, Neutral) reveals a noteworthy finding regarding teacher experience. This indicates that pre-service teachers may occasionally feel situational pressure to sustain classroom order through rewards, but this pressure is not consistently experienced across all instructional contexts. This finding is important because it highlights the managerial role of rewards, where they are used not only as motivational tools but also as behavioral control mechanisms, especially during active or challenging classroom situations.

On the other hand, the relatively lower mean for I find that the reward system is not always effective in managing disruptive behavior over time ($M = 2.90$, Neutral) suggests that teachers have mixed perceptions regarding the long-term sustainability of reward systems in behavior management. While rewards are effective in short-term engagement, their diminishing influence over time may indicate a need for

complementary strategies, such as consistent classroom routines, the development of intrinsic motivation, and support for learner autonomy.

The pattern of responses suggests a dual perception structure among BEEd pre-service teachers. On the one hand, reward systems are clearly effective in increasing pupil participation, motivation, and on-task behavior. On the other hand, teachers also demonstrate emerging awareness of their limitations, particularly in relation to sustained motivation and long-term behavioral regulation. This duality reflects a balanced professional understanding, in which reward systems are seen not as standalone solutions but as part of a broader classroom management framework.

However, the findings also suggest that reward systems should be implemented as part of a broader pedagogical approach. Although rewards may stimulate participation and engagement, overreliance on external reinforcement may limit learners' opportunities to develop self-directed, intrinsically motivated learning behaviors. Therefore, rewards are best used alongside instructional practices that foster autonomy, curiosity, and sustained interest in learning.

3.5 Relationship between Tangible Rewards and Pupil Engagement

Table 8 presents the relationship between tangible rewards and pupil engagement. The table shows the correlation analysis conducted to determine the significance, strength, and direction of the relationship between the use of tangible rewards and the level of pupil engagement observed in the classroom.

Table 8. Relationship between tangible rewards and pupil engagement.

Variables	Pearson r	P value	Interpretation	Decision
Tangible Rewards and Pupil Engagement	0.094	0.62	Very weak positive correlation	Not significant

Note. $p < 0.05$ = Significant $p > 0.05$ = Not significant

± 0.90 to ± 1.00 = Very high correlation

± 0.70 to ± 0.89 = High correlation

± 0.50 to ± 0.69 = Moderate correlation

± 0.30 to ± 0.49 = Low correlation

± 0.00 to ± 0.29 = Very weak correlation

The analysis revealed a very weak positive correlation between tangible rewards and pupil engagement ($r = 0.094$, $p = 0.62$), indicating a statistically non-significant relationship. This finding suggests that tangible rewards, such as stickers, candy, tokens, and similar material incentives, were not significantly associated with pupil engagement among the respondents.

Tangible rewards remain a commonly used reinforcement strategy in elementary classrooms because they can encourage participation, recognize desirable behaviors, and provide immediate feedback to learners. Nevertheless, the present findings suggest that pupil engagement may be shaped by a combination of instructional, interpersonal, and environmental factors rather than by material incentives alone. Effective teaching

practices, positive teacher–student relationships, and meaningful learning experiences may play a more substantial role in sustaining engagement than rewards alone.

Collectively, these studies suggest that tangible rewards may contribute to classroom engagement under certain conditions, but their effectiveness is likely influenced by how they are implemented and integrated with broader instructional practices. Therefore, the weak, non-significant relationship observed in the present study should be viewed as an indication that the relationship between rewards and engagement is complex and may require further investigation with larger samples and additional measures of pupil engagement.

3.6 Relationship between Intangible Rewards and Pupil Engagement

Table 9 presents the relationship between intangible rewards and pupil engagement. The table shows the correlation analysis conducted to determine the significance, strength, and direction of the relationship between the use of intangible rewards and the level of pupil engagement observed in the classroom.

Table 9. Relationship between intangible rewards and pupil engagement.

Variables	Pearson r	P value	Interpretation	Decision
Intangible Rewards and Pupil Engagement	0.119	0.531	Very weak positive correlation	Not significant

Note. $p < 0.05$ = Significant $p > 0.05$ = Not significant
 ± 0.90 to ± 1.00 = Very strong correlation
 ± 0.70 to ± 0.89 = High correlation
 ± 0.50 to ± 0.69 = Moderate correlation
 ± 0.30 to ± 0.49 = Low correlation
 ± 0.00 to ± 0.29 = Very weak correlation

The analysis revealed a very weak positive correlation between intangible rewards and pupil engagement ($r = 0.119$, $p = 0.531$), indicating a statistically non-significant relationship. This suggests that intangible rewards such as verbal praise, applause, recognition, points, and classroom privileges were not significantly associated with pupil engagement.

Despite high ratings for intangible rewards in classroom instruction, the findings indicate that these strategies alone may not be sufficient to sustain pupil engagement. The result implies that engagement extends beyond reinforcement practices and may depend more heavily on the overall quality of instruction, classroom interaction, and learners’ emotional and cognitive involvement in classroom activities.

This highlights the importance of employing a holistic approach to engagement, wherein reinforcement strategies are complemented by effective pedagogy, supportive teacher–student relationships, and learning experiences that foster active participation and deeper involvement in classroom activities.

3.7 Relationship between Tangible Rewards and teacher Perception of reward effectiveness

Table 10 presents the relationship between tangible rewards and teachers' perceptions of reward effectiveness. The table presents the correlation analysis conducted to assess the significance, strength, and direction of the relationship between the use of tangible rewards and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of reward systems in the classroom.

Table 10. Relationship between tangible rewards and teacher perception of reward effectiveness.

Variables	Pearson r	P value	Interpretation	Decision
Tangible Rewards and Teacher Perception	-0.289	0.121	Very weak negative correlation	Not significant

Note. $p < 0.05$ = Significant $p > 0.05$ = Not significant

± 0.90 to ± 1.00 = Very strong correlation

± 0.70 to ± 0.89 = High correlation

± 0.50 to ± 0.69 = Moderate correlation

± 0.30 to ± 0.49 = Low correlation

± 0.00 to ± 0.29 = Very weak (negligible) correlation

The analysis revealed a very weak negative correlation between tangible rewards and teachers' perceptions of reward effectiveness ($r = -0.289$, $p = 0.121$), indicating a non-significant relationship. This finding suggests that tangible rewards were not significantly associated with BEED pre-service teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of reward systems in promoting classroom management and learner engagement.

Pre-service teachers may evaluate the effectiveness of reward systems based on a broader range of classroom experiences rather than solely on the frequency of tangible rewards. Teachers often consider how reward systems contribute to learner participation, classroom behavior, motivation, and the overall learning environment. As such, perceptions of effectiveness may be shaped by the quality of implementation and classroom outcomes rather than by the specific form of reinforcement employed. This suggests that teachers may place greater value on how rewards support learning and classroom management than on whether rewards are material.

Perceptions of reward effectiveness are grounded in practical classroom experiences and observable educational outcomes. Therefore, the weak, non-significant relationship observed in the present study may reflect the complex nature of teachers' evaluative judgments rather than the absence of a meaningful connection between tangible rewards and perceived effectiveness. Future studies involving larger samples may provide a clearer understanding of this relationship.

3.8 Relationship between Intangible Rewards and teacher Perception of reward effectiveness

Table 11 presents the relationship between intangible rewards and teachers’ perceptions of reward effectiveness. The table presents the correlation analysis conducted to assess the significance, strength, and direction of the relationship between the use of intangible rewards and teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of reward systems in the classroom.

Table 11. Relationship between intangible rewards and teacher perception of reward effectiveness.

Variables	Pearson r	P value	Interpretation	Decision
Intangible Rewards and Teacher Perception	-0.008	0.966	Very weak negative correlation	Not significant

Note. $p < 0.05$ = Significant $p > 0.05$ = Not significant

± 0.90 to ± 1.00 = Very strong correlation

± 0.70 to ± 0.89 = High correlation

± 0.50 to ± 0.69 = Moderate correlation

± 0.30 to ± 0.49 = Low correlation

± 0.00 to ± 0.29 = Very weak correlation

The analysis revealed a very weak negative correlation between intangible rewards and teacher perception of reward effectiveness ($r = -0.008$, $p = 0.966$), indicating a statistically non-significant relationship. This finding suggests that the use of intangible rewards, such as verbal praise, applause, recognition, and classroom privileges, was not significantly associated with teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of reward systems.

The result indicates that teachers’ perceptions of reward effectiveness may remain relatively stable regardless of the frequency or type of intangible reinforcement used. This further suggests that intangible rewards may be perceived as routine pedagogical practices embedded within normal classroom interaction rather than as distinct factors influencing judgments of instructional effectiveness.

These findings imply that intangible rewards alone are weakly associated with teachers’ evaluative judgments of the effectiveness of the reward system. Instead, teacher perceptions appear to be influenced more substantially by broader instructional experiences, classroom interactions, and observable learner outcomes within the teaching-learning process.

4. Discussion

The findings of the study provide important insights into the use of reward systems implemented by BEEd pre-service teachers and teacher-observed levels of pupil engagement in classroom settings. Descriptive results revealed that intangible rewards were more frequently used and rated higher than tangible rewards, indicating a preference for verbal praise, recognition, and other non-material forms of reinforcement. This suggests that pre-service teachers tend to favor cost-effective, immediately applicable, and easily integrated reward strategies. These findings are supported by the study by Anthony et al. (2023), which reported that tangible rewards,

such as stickers and treats, significantly increase pupil engagement and participation, particularly among younger learners. The study further emphasized that rewards are more effective when they are simple, immediate, and enjoyable. Similarly, Rulona et al. (2025) found that sticker-based reward systems positively influence classroom engagement in basic education settings. The results suggest that while tangible rewards can effectively encourage pupil participation and engagement, their effectiveness depends on the type and immediacy of reinforcement provided. Additionally, Tas et al. (2019) reported that perceived teacher support plays a significant role in enhancing students' motivation and engagement in learning. Their study highlighted that positive teacher-student interactions contribute to greater participation and involvement in classroom activities.

In terms of pupil engagement, results showed generally high levels of participation, enthusiasm, cooperation, and attentiveness during classroom activities that used reward systems. Similar findings were reported by Chen (2023), Anderson (2016), DeJager et al. (2020), and Anthony et al. (2023), all of whom found that reward systems promote classroom participation, attentiveness, and engagement when implemented consistently. Collectively, these studies support the present findings by suggesting that rewards can encourage active classroom involvement; however, the descriptive findings alone do not establish that rewards were solely responsible for the observed engagement among pupils. Some moderate and low indicators were also observed, such as dependence on rewards, rushing through tasks, and reduced expressions of intrinsic motivation, suggesting that reward systems may also coincide with unintended behavioral patterns when not carefully regulated. However, similar observations were noted by Urquiza-Fuentes (2023) in studies on reward-based learning environments, who suggested that although engagement may increase in reward-based learning environments, it may become conditionally dependent on reinforcement. This contrasts with Fitriati et al. (2020), who cautioned that excessive use of tangible rewards may reduce intrinsic motivation over time.

Overall, the descriptive findings indicate that reward systems were widely used and generally perceived positively by both teachers and pupils. Nevertheless, pupil engagement is a multidimensional construct that may be influenced by numerous factors beyond reward practices, including teaching strategies, classroom climate, instructional design, learner motivation, and teacher-student interaction. Therefore, the observed engagement levels cannot be attributed solely to the use of rewards.

The findings also align with behaviorist principles, which emphasize reinforcement as a means of shaping observable behavior. Operant conditioning principles posit that behavior is strengthened when followed by reinforcing stimuli, suggesting that reward anticipation itself functions as a powerful motivator in classroom settings. Similarly, Pleșoianu (2020) emphasized that teacher-directed reward systems enhance participation and instructional responsiveness when systematically implemented. At the same time, motivational literature has raised concerns about the overjustification effect, in which external rewards may shift learners' focus from intrinsic interest to external reinforcement. Viray-Castillejos

(2023) also viewed reward systems as valuable instructional tools that enhance learner motivation and engagement but emphasized that they should be implemented as part of a broader pedagogical approach. Therefore, rewards are best used alongside instructional practices that foster autonomy, curiosity, and sustained interest in learning. While rewards may support desirable classroom behaviors and participation, the present findings do not provide evidence that they are significantly associated with higher levels of pupil engagement.

Despite these positive descriptive outcomes, the correlational analysis revealed that all relationships between reward systems and pupil engagement were very weak and statistically insignificant. This finding implies that while reward systems are commonly used and perceived positively, they do not significantly predict or determine the level of pupil engagement among BEEd pre-service teachers in this study. Within the present sample, both tangible and intangible rewards showed negligible correlations with teacher-observed pupil engagement. This finding is consistent with the study of Eckert et al. (2023), who reported that token-based reward systems may initially increase participation and attention; however, their effects tend to diminish over time and vary across learners and instructional settings. Similarly, Anthony et al. (2023) also found that tangible rewards may temporarily enhance classroom participation but do not necessarily translate into sustained cognitive engagement once rewards are reduced or removed.

Moreover, Royer and Ennis (2024) found that behavior-specific praise generally produces small, inconsistent effects on student engagement, while Lloyd et al. (2025) observed that verbal reinforcement may temporarily increase participation and attentiveness. However, these effects often decline once reinforcement is withdrawn. This perspective supports the view that a single classroom strategy cannot adequately explain pupil engagement. It underscores the importance of examining multiple factors that may contribute to learners' active participation in classroom activities. Supporting this view, Cents-Boonstra et al. (2021) explained that engagement develops through emotional, behavioral, and cognitive processes embedded within the classroom environment. However, the findings should not be interpreted as conclusive evidence that reward systems have little influence on engagement, as the possibility of a Type II error cannot be ruled out. These findings should be interpreted cautiously because the small sample size may have limited the statistical analysis's ability to detect meaningful relationships. Consequently, the non-significant correlations may reflect insufficient statistical power rather than the absence of an actual relationship between reward systems and pupil engagement.

The results therefore suggest that reward systems should not be viewed as primary determinants of engagement, based on the evidence from this study. Instead, they appear to function as supportive classroom management and motivational tools whose effectiveness may depend on other instructional and environmental conditions. The findings align with Alrashood et al. (2026), who found that teachers' perceptions of reward effectiveness are more strongly influenced by instructional experience, classroom context, and observable learner outcomes than by the specific type of

reward used. Javed and Muhammad (2021) also emphasized that teacher perceptions are more closely associated with classroom management outcomes and learner responsiveness than with the form of reinforcement itself.

Similarly, Viray-Castillejos (2023) noted that teachers tend to evaluate reward systems based on observable improvements in learner behavior, participation, and responsiveness rather than on whether rewards are tangible or material. Kaliisa et al. (2023) further emphasized that perceptions of effective classroom practice are shaped more strongly by instructional quality, classroom environment, and learner responsiveness than by isolated reinforcement strategies. Existing literature likewise suggests that teachers often evaluate instructional effectiveness based on broader classroom outcomes such as sustained participation, learner behavior, classroom atmosphere, and academic responsiveness rather than on the mere presence of a particular reward mechanisms or recognition strategies.

The absence of significant relationships does not necessarily indicate that reward systems are ineffective. Rather, the findings suggest that no statistically significant relationship was detected among the respondents included in this study. Future investigations involving larger samples and direct classroom observations may provide clearer evidence regarding these relationships. Furthermore, pupil engagement is a multifaceted construct influenced by various psychological, environmental, and pedagogical factors that extend beyond external reinforcement alone. Therefore, reward systems may serve as supportive motivational tools whose perceived effectiveness depends on the broader instructional and classroom context.

5. Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study should be interpreted with caution due to several methodological and contextual limitations. The study used a relatively small sample of 30 BEEd pre-service teachers. This limited number of respondents may restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of pre-service teachers across different institutions and educational contexts. The study was confined to a specific group of BEEd pre-service teachers engaged in practice teaching within a limited setting. As a result, variations in teaching environments, school resources, and learner characteristics that may influence the use of reward systems were not fully captured. Additionally, data on pupil engagement were obtained through pre-service teachers' observations of their pupils during practice teaching and recorded via questionnaire responses rather than through systematic, direct classroom observation by independent observers. As such, the findings reflect pre-service teachers' observational judgments and may not fully capture all aspects of actual pupil behavior during classroom instruction. Lastly, the study focused only on selected variables, specifically tangible rewards, intangible rewards, teacher perception, and pupil engagement. Other potentially influential factors, such as teaching strategies, classroom environment, learner motivation, and socio-emotional factors, were not included, which may have affected the strength of the observed relationships.

6. Conclusion

The study's findings revealed that BEEd pre-service teachers moderately used tangible rewards and highly used intangible rewards during classroom instruction. Among the reward strategies employed, intangible rewards such as verbal praise, recognition, and applause were more commonly practiced and positively perceived than material incentives. The results further showed that pupil engagement was generally high, particularly in terms of participation, cooperation, enthusiasm, attentiveness, and involvement during reward-based classroom activities. In addition, BEEd pre-service teachers generally perceived reward systems as effective tools in motivating pupils and encouraging active classroom participation.

However, correlational findings revealed very weak, statistically non-significant relationships between reward systems and teacher-observed pupil engagement in the present sample ($n=30$) of BEEd pre-service teachers. While reward systems were widely used and positively perceived, the results did not detect a statistically significant relationship between reward systems and pupil engagement among the respondents included in this study. Given the limited sample size and the teacher-reported nature of the data, these findings should be interpreted with caution and not generalized to broader educational settings. Furthermore, the absence of a significant relationship in this study does not necessarily indicate that reward systems do not influence pupil engagement, as the study may have lacked sufficient statistical power to detect existing relationships.

Therefore, the study concludes that, within this specific sample, reward systems were commonly used classroom practices but were not significantly associated with teacher-observed pupil engagement. The findings suggest that pupil engagement may be influenced by multiple factors, including instructional practices, the learning environment, learner characteristics, and teacher–student interactions, as well as the use of rewards.

Overall, the study indicates that reward systems are commonly used classroom practices observed alongside positive levels of pupil engagement. These findings suggest that reward systems are among the instructional strategies used by BEEd pre-service teachers to support classroom management and learner participation, alongside other teaching approaches that foster student involvement in learning activities.

7. Recommendations

The findings indicate that although BEEd pre-service teachers moderately to highly utilized reward systems, particularly intangible rewards such as verbal praise, clapping, and recognition, and pupil engagement was generally high, the correlational analysis revealed very weak and statistically non-significant relationships between reward systems and pupil engagement. Since the study involved only 30 respondents,

future researchers are encouraged to include larger and more diverse samples of pre-service teachers from different institutions and year levels to improve the generalizability of the findings. Direct classroom observations and mixed-method approaches may also be employed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how reward systems relate to pupil engagement. Teacher education programs and cooperating schools may continue to provide training and professional development on classroom management strategies, including the appropriate use of reward systems, while emphasizing instructional approaches that foster intrinsic motivation, learner autonomy, and meaningful engagement. BEED pre-service teachers are likewise encouraged to use reward systems thoughtfully, alongside evidence-based instructional practices such as active learning, positive teacher–student interactions, and learner-centered activities, rather than relying primarily on rewards to sustain pupil engagement and participation.

Acknowledgment

The researchers sincerely express their gratitude to all the individuals and institutions whose support and assistance made this study possible. Special thanks are extended to the faculty members of the College of Teacher Education for their guidance, expertise, and valuable suggestions throughout the conduct of this research. The researchers also express their appreciation to the Program Chair of the Bachelor of Elementary Education and the cooperating teachers for granting permission to conduct the study and for their continued support during the data-gathering process.

The researchers are especially grateful to the BEED pre-service teachers who willingly participated in this study. Their time, cooperation, and honest responses were invaluable to the successful completion of this research. The researchers also acknowledge their classmates, friends, and family members for their encouragement, understanding, and unwavering support throughout the research process.

Finally, and above all, the researchers offer their deepest gratitude to God Almighty for His wisdom, strength, guidance, and countless blessings throughout the completion of this study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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