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Grade 6 Transition Readiness and the Learning Adjustment Bridge to Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated Grade 6 transition readiness and the learning adjustment bridge to junior high school among learners and teachers in Santa Maria, Isabela. Using a cross-informant predictive survey design, data were gathered from 123 Grade 6 learners and 20 Grade 6 teachers through a validated transition readiness and learning adjustment questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, intraclass correlation analysis, and elastic net regression with 10-fold cross-validation were employed to determine readiness levels, teacher-learner agreement, and the dimensions that best predicted learning adjustment. Findings showed that learners demonstrated generally high transition readiness, with academic preparedness receiving the highest mean, while self-management and transition familiarity emerged as weaker areas. Teacher and learner assessments showed moderate overall agreement, although learners tended to perceive their readiness more positively than teachers did. Elastic net regression indicated that self-management was the strongest predictor of the learning adjustment bridge, followed by transition familiarity and social-emotional readiness. The predictive model explained 52% of the variation in learning adjustment, while academic preparedness contributed the least unique predictive influence. The findings indicate that successful movement to junior high school depends not only on academic competence but also on learners' capacity to manage responsibilities, adapt to unfamiliar routines, and respond confidently to changing learning demands. Strengthening transition orientation, independent learning behaviors, organizational skills, and readiness monitoring during Grade 6 may support a smoother and more responsive progression to junior high school.

Keywords: *academic preparedness, grade 6 learners, learning adjustment, self-management, transition familiarity, transition readiness*

INTRODUCTION

Grade 6 marks more than the completion of elementary education. It is a point at which learners prepare to leave a familiar classroom structure and enter junior high school, where they encounter new teachers, increased academic demands, different routines, and a wider social environment. Such changes can affect how learners participate, perform, and relate to others once they enter secondary education. A systematic review of school-based transition interventions found that movement from primary to secondary school involves substantial changes in physical, organizational, social, and pedagogical conditions, making purposeful preparation important for both educational and social-emotional adjustment (Beatson et al., 2023).

Readiness for this transition therefore extends beyond mastery of elementary competencies. Learners also need to manage academic tasks with greater independence, sustain engagement, respond to unfamiliar expectations, and maintain confidence as school demands become more complex. Evidence following learners

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from Grade 6 into Grades 7 and 9 showed that academic achievement, behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, burnout, and teacher relationships were closely connected during the transition period. In particular, conflict in teacher-student relationships was associated with lower behavioral engagement, while stronger achievement supported later cognitive engagement (Engels et al., 2019). These findings suggest that transition readiness should be viewed as a combination of academic preparedness and the learner's capacity to adjust to changing learning conditions.

The quality of relationships surrounding learners also matters. A review of 96 international studies found that relationships with teachers and peers strongly shaped whether learners experienced the move to secondary school positively or negatively. Changes in educational outcomes were also linked with changes in well-being, showing that learning adjustment cannot be separated from learners' social and emotional experiences (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020). For Grade 6 teachers, this gives transition preparation a broader responsibility. Instruction during the final elementary year should not only consolidate learning but also strengthen independence, confidence, classroom participation, and the ability to cope with the expectations of the next school level.

Motivation may likewise shift as learners cross this educational boundary. Raufelder et al. (2022) found changes in motivational profiles as students moved from Grade 6 to lower secondary school, with some learners who were initially positively engaged becoming more likely to move toward disengaged patterns. This makes the final elementary year an important period for identifying learners who may be academically capable but less prepared for the motivational, behavioral, and organizational demands of junior high school.

In the Philippines, this transition is clearly defined within the basic education structure. The Department of Education identifies Grades 4 to 6 as Key Stage 2 under elementary education and Grades 7 to 10 as Key Stage 3 under junior high school (Department of Education, 2024). The movement from Grade 6 to Grade 7 therefore represents a formal shift between key stages as well as a change in learners' educational experiences. In Santa Maria, Isabela, examining the transition readiness of Grade 6 learners together with the perspectives of their teachers can provide a clearer picture of how well learners are prepared for this shift. Understanding their academic readiness, learning adjustment, independence, engagement, and capacity to respond to new school demands can help establish a stronger learning adjustment bridge between elementary education and junior high school. Guided by this concern, the study seeks to generate evidence that can support more deliberate preparation of learners before they leave elementary school.

Literature Review

Academic Readiness for Secondary School

Academic readiness is an important foundation for learners approaching the end of elementary education because junior high school introduces greater workload, subject specialization, and expectations for independent learning. Evans et al. (2018) explained that the primary-to-secondary transition may influence academic achievement as learners adjust to larger learning environments, multiple teachers, stronger performance expectations, and new classroom routines. Their review further showed that changes in academic self-concept, engagement, and perceived competence can accompany the transition. These conditions suggest that Grade 6 readiness should include not only mastery of expected competencies but also confidence in handling more demanding academic tasks. Preparing learners to organize their work, sustain effort, and respond to unfamiliar learning expectations can provide a stronger academic foundation before entry into Grade 7.

Learner Adjustment and Transition Concerns

Adjustment during school transition involves how learners respond to changes in expectations, relationships, routines, and their wider learning environment. Van Rens et al. (2020), in a study involving 371 children transitioning from primary to secondary school, found that learners experienced concerns connected with both academic requirements and the social environment. Their findings also indicated that some children were more vulnerable to transition difficulties than others, highlighting the value of identifying concerns before transfer

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occurs. For Grade 6 learners, readiness can therefore be strengthened when schools recognize what learners expect, fear, or find difficult about junior high school. Giving attention to these concerns allows transition preparation to respond to actual learner needs rather than relying only on academic performance as an indication of preparedness.

Social and Emotional Readiness

The movement to secondary school can alter learners' friendships, sense of identity, emotional security, and relationships with adults in school. Mumford and Birchwood (2021) identified relationships, emotions, identity, and the unfamiliar school environment as major themes in pupils' experiences of primary-to-secondary transition. Their systematic review emphasized that learners' adjustment is strongly shaped by how supported and connected they feel throughout the transition process. Social and emotional readiness is therefore relevant to Grade 6 preparation because learners who can establish relationships, seek assistance, manage uncertainty, and adapt to new social settings may be better positioned to participate confidently in junior high school. These dimensions complement academic readiness by recognizing that successful transition involves the whole learning experience of the child.

Teacher Support for the Learning Adjustment Bridge

Grade 6 teachers occupy an important position in helping learners prepare for the expectations they will encounter in junior high school. Hopwood et al. (2016) found that teachers viewed effective transition preparation as requiring attention to academic, organizational, and social aspects of schooling rather than treating transition as a single transfer event. Their findings showed the value of communication between primary and secondary educators, familiarization with secondary school expectations, and deliberate preparation of learners for greater independence. This perspective supports the idea of a learning adjustment bridge in which Grade 6 instruction gradually develops behaviors and competencies that learners will need in Grade 7. Teacher practices that encourage responsibility, organization, confidence, and adjustment may therefore reduce the gap between elementary learning routines and the demands of junior high school.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a cross-informant predictive survey design that examined Grade 6 transition readiness through two complementary sources of evidence. Learners provided self-assessments of their academic preparedness, self-management, social-emotional readiness, familiarity with junior high school expectations, and learning adjustment, while Grade 6 teachers assessed comparable behaviors based on classroom observation. The design went beyond simple description by determining which dimensions of transition readiness carried the strongest predictive contribution to the learning adjustment bridge. Teacher and learner responses were also examined for convergence to determine whether perceived readiness was consistently observed across the two respondent groups.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Santa Maria, Isabela, a municipality under the Schools Division of Isabela. The locale was selected because learners completing Grade 6 moved from the elementary setting into junior high school, making the area suitable for examining preparedness for this educational transition.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants consisted of 123 Grade 6 learners and 20 Grade 6 teachers. The learner sample was derived from the recorded population of 680 Grade 6 enrollees using a finite-population sample calculation at a 95% confidence level and an 8% margin of error. Proportional systematic sampling was applied so that learners

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were selected according to their representation in the available enrollment lists rather than concentrated in one part of the municipality. Only officially enrolled Grade 6 learners who had attended elementary classes during the data-gathering period were included. The 20 teachers were selected through criterion sampling and were required to be actively teaching Grade 6 and to have sufficient classroom interaction with the participating learners. Teacher and learner responses were linked only through anonymous classroom codes to permit cross-informant comparison without revealing individual identities.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using the researcher-developed Grade 6 Transition Readiness and Learning Adjustment Questionnaire, which contained parallel learner and teacher forms. The instrument consisted of 32 statements distributed across academic preparedness, self-management, social-emotional readiness, transition familiarity, and learning adjustment bridge. Responses were recorded through a four-point scale ranging from 1, representing the lowest manifestation of the indicator, to 4, representing the highest manifestation.

Content validation was conducted by five specialists in elementary education, educational psychology, research methodology, and measurement and evaluation. Each item was evaluated for relevance, clarity, construct alignment, and developmental appropriateness. Of the 32 items, 27 obtained an I-CVI of 1.00, while five obtained an I-CVI of .80. The resulting S-CVI/Ave was .97, indicating strong content validity. Minor revisions in wording were made to the five items with an I-CVI of .80 before pilot administration.

The revised instrument was pilot tested with 30 Grade 6 learners and 10 Grade 6 teachers who were excluded from the main investigation. Cronbach's alpha yielded .88 for academic preparedness, .86 for self-management, .90 for social-emotional readiness, .85 for transition familiarity, and .91 for the learning adjustment bridge. The learner form obtained an overall Cronbach's alpha of .93, while the teacher form produced .92. The combined 32-item instrument registered an overall Cronbach's alpha of .94, demonstrating strong internal consistency and supporting its use in the main data collection.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate education authorities before participant recruitment. After approval, the researcher coordinated the distribution schedule with authorized personnel while avoiding disruption of regular classes. Parents or guardians received informed-consent forms for participating learners, and learner assent was obtained before questionnaire administration. Teacher participants completed the parallel form separately. The learner questionnaires were administered in a supervised setting using standardized instructions, while teacher responses were collected independently to limit influence between the two respondent groups. Completed instruments were checked for completeness, coded anonymously, and encoded into a secured dataset. Classroom codes were used only to match teacher assessments with aggregated learner responses and were removed after the analytical file had been prepared.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics consisting of the mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation were used to establish the level and consistency of transition readiness and learning adjustment across the measured dimensions. Cross-informant agreement between teachers and the aggregated responses of learners under their instruction was examined using the intraclass correlation coefficient, providing an estimate of the extent to which classroom observations corresponded with learner perceptions.

To identify the readiness dimensions that contributed most strongly to learning adjustment, the study applied elastic net regression with 10-fold cross-validation. This technique combined ridge and lasso regularization, allowing correlated readiness dimensions to remain in the model while reducing the influence of weak predictors. The optimal penalty parameter was selected through cross-validation rather than predetermined manually. Standardized regression coefficients, cross-validated coefficient of determination, and root mean square error were examined to determine predictive strength and model accuracy. This approach provided a more stable

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assessment of the readiness factors that formed the learning adjustment bridge to junior high school than reliance on separate bivariate correlations.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed voluntary participation, informed consent, learner assent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw without penalty. No learner names, teacher names, or identifying school information were entered into the analytical dataset. Data were used solely for research purposes, stored securely, and reported only in aggregated form. Particular care was exercised because Grade 6 learners were minors, and participation or nonparticipation had no bearing on their grades, classroom standing, or access to school services.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Grade 6 Learners' Transition Readiness and Learning Adjustment*

Dimension	Mean	SD	CV (%)	Interpretation
Academic Preparedness	3.08	0.43	13.96	High
Self-Management	2.47	0.52	21.05	Moderate
Social-Emotional Readiness	2.76	0.48	17.39	High
Transition Familiarity	2.34	0.55	23.50	Moderate
Overall Transition Readiness	2.66	0.41	15.41	High
Learning Adjustment Bridge	2.58	0.49	18.99	High

Scale: 3.25–4.00 = Very High; 2.50–3.24 = High; 1.75–2.49 = Moderate; 1.00–1.74 = Low.

Table 1 presents the readiness of Grade 6 learners for movement into junior high school. The overall transition readiness mean of 2.66 indicated that learners generally possessed a workable foundation for the next school level. Academic preparedness received the highest mean at 3.08, suggesting that learners felt more secure with academic demands than with the organizational and adjustment requirements surrounding the transition. In contrast, transition familiarity obtained the lowest mean of 2.34, followed by self-management at 2.47. The larger coefficient of variation for transition familiarity also indicated that exposure to junior high school routines and expectations was uneven across learners. The result points to a specific problem: academic preparation appeared stronger than learners' understanding of schedules, movement across subject areas, greater independence, and new classroom arrangements. Bagnall et al. (2022) similarly observed that children approaching secondary education faced simultaneous academic, environmental, relational, and organizational changes, and that limited opportunities to become familiar with these changes could intensify uncertainty.

The learning adjustment bridge registered a mean of 2.58, which was high but only slightly above the moderate range. This suggests that many learners could adjust when demands remained familiar, but some were not yet consistently prepared to manage the greater autonomy associated with junior high school. The finding supports the need for Grade 6 transition activities that move beyond academic review and deliberately develop independent task management, schedule awareness, help-seeking, and familiarity with junior high school routines.

Table 2. *Agreement Between Learner and Teacher Assessments of Transition Readiness*

Dimension	Learner Mean	Teacher Mean	ICC	95% CI	p-value	Agreement
Academic Preparedness	3.08	2.96	.68	.45–.83	<.001	Moderate
Self-Management	2.47	2.39	.59	.30–.78	.002	Moderate
Social-Emotional Readiness	2.76	2.68	.63	.36–.80	.001	Moderate
Transition Familiarity	2.34	2.27	.48	.10–.72	.018	Poor
Learning Adjustment Bridge	2.58	2.49	.61	.33–.79	.001	Moderate

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Overall Agreement	2.77	2.66	.60	.34–.79	<.001	Moderate

Table 2 presents the convergence between learner self-assessments and teacher observations. The overall intraclass correlation coefficient was ICC = .60, indicating moderate agreement between the two sources. Academic preparedness produced the strongest agreement at ICC = .68, while transition familiarity yielded the weakest agreement at ICC = .48. Following the interpretation proposed by Koo and Li (2016), ICC values from .50 to .75 represent moderate agreement, while values below .50 indicate poor agreement.

Learners consistently rated themselves slightly higher than teachers did. The difference was not large, but it suggests that some learners may have viewed their readiness more positively than what teachers observed in day-to-day classroom behavior. The weakest correspondence occurred in transition familiarity, indicating that learners' perceived understanding of junior high school may not always translate into observable readiness. This distinction is important because transition preparation should not depend exclusively on learner confidence. Teacher judgment can provide an additional indicator of whether learners can actually follow routines, manage responsibilities, and respond to new expectations. Rice et al. (2021) found that primary teachers' expectations concerning how well pupils would settle into secondary school were associated with several later indicators of successful adjustment, supporting the value of teacher assessment before transition.

Table 3. *Elastic Net Predictors of the Learning Adjustment Bridge*

Predictor	Standardized Coefficient	Relative Rank	Model Status
Self-Management	.36	1	Retained
Transition Familiarity	.31	2	Retained
Social-Emotional Readiness	.22	3	Retained
Academic Preparedness	.09	4	Retained

Model Performance	Result
Mixing Parameter	0.70
Selected Lambda	0.041
10-Fold Cross-Validated R^2	.52
Cross-Validated RMSE	0.34

Table 3 presents the elastic net regression results identifying the dimensions that contributed most strongly to the learning adjustment bridge. The cross-validated model explained 52% of the variation in learning adjustment, with an RMSE of 0.34, indicating useful predictive accuracy without relying on an overly complex model. All four readiness dimensions were retained, although their contributions differed considerably.

Self-management emerged as the strongest predictor with a standardized coefficient of .36, followed by transition familiarity at .31. Social-emotional readiness contributed .22, while academic preparedness showed the smallest unique contribution at .09. This finding is particularly important because academic preparedness had the highest descriptive mean, yet it was not the strongest factor explaining adjustment. Learners who could organize tasks, regulate their effort, manage responsibilities, and function with less direct teacher supervision were more likely to demonstrate stronger readiness for the learning conditions expected in junior high school.

The prominence of self-management suggests that transition difficulty was not primarily a question of whether learners knew enough academic content. Rather, adjustment depended more strongly on whether they could use their competencies independently when routines and expectations changed. Marušić et al. (2020) found that educational transition affected learning self-efficacy and school achievement and that successful adaptation was shaped by a combination of individual and environmental factors. Their findings reinforce the view that adjustment cannot be explained by achievement alone.

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Transition familiarity was the second strongest predictor, confirming that knowing what to expect before entering junior high school carried practical value. Learners who understood changes in schedules, subject arrangements, classroom responsibilities, and learning routines appeared better positioned to adjust. This result also complements the finding that transition familiarity was the weakest readiness area in Table 1. It therefore represents both a vulnerability and a promising point for intervention. Grade 6 transition programs may produce greater benefit when learners are given structured exposure to the routines they will encounter rather than receiving only general orientation information.

Social-emotional readiness also remained meaningful in the predictive model. Learners who were confident in seeking support, forming relationships, coping with unfamiliar situations, and maintaining a sense of belonging showed better adjustment prospects. Ratelle et al. (2023) reported that competence, autonomy, and relatedness during the Grade 6 to secondary school transition were associated with later motivation, adjustment, and educational outcomes. Learners with generally stronger satisfaction of these needs demonstrated more favorable patterns across the transition.

Taken together, the findings identified a clear learning adjustment bridge between elementary and junior high school. Grade 6 learners in Santa Maria showed adequate academic and social foundations, but readiness was weakened by inconsistent self-management and limited familiarity with junior high school structures. The strongest result of the analysis was that these actionable readiness dimensions accounted for a substantial share of learning adjustment. This means that preparation for Grade 7 can be strengthened while learners are still in Grade 6 through deliberate development of independence, organization, transition knowledge, and confidence in navigating new learning demands.

CONCLUSION

Grade 6 learners generally possessed adequate transition readiness, particularly in academic preparedness and social-emotional readiness, but notable gaps remained in self-management and familiarity with junior high school expectations. Teacher and learner assessments were moderately aligned, suggesting that readiness was visible across both self-perception and classroom observation, although learners tended to rate themselves slightly higher. The predictive analysis further established that self-management and transition familiarity were the strongest contributors to the learning adjustment bridge, while academic preparedness alone did not guarantee smooth adjustment. It was therefore recommended that Grade 6 transition preparation in Santa Maria, Isabela place greater emphasis on independent task management, organization, responsibility, help-seeking, and structured exposure to junior high school routines. Schools may also strengthen transition activities through coordinated orientations, simulated junior high school learning experiences, teacher-guided readiness monitoring, and targeted support for learners who show difficulty in managing changing academic and social demands. These measures can help make the movement from elementary to junior high school more deliberate, supportive, and responsive to the actual adjustment needs of learners.

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