



THE LIFE SKILLS OF OUTSTANDING INDEPENDENT READERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multiple case study was to describe the five different cases of outstanding independent readers in the public secondary schools in Davao del Norte in terms of their life skills. The unique cases revolved around a campus journalist, a volleyball athlete, a student leader, a consistent honor student, and a student with autism spectrum. The cases were identified using maximum variation sampling, and in-depth interviews were employed to explore and gather data in this research. Salient findings were noted as to the experiences of outstanding independent readers which include early reading opportunities and support, sharing of reading abilities to other students, allocation of time for reading, and utilization of gadgets for reading. More so, their coping strategies were summarized in the following themes: enrichment of vocabulary, adoption of reading tactics, development of set of values for reading, and application of leadership skills. In the cross-case analysis of research data, all cases were generally similar. Notably, the only difference is that the student with autism preferred reading by himself unlike the other cases of students who viewed reading as a collaborative experience. It was realized that while cognitive capacities are essential in learning reading, socio-emotional aspects of outstanding readers such as their life skills must also be considered in schools.

KEYWORDS: independent reading, life skills, public secondary schools, multiple case study, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Learning reading enables adolescent students to navigate their academic life successfully. Being able to read enables one to acquire more knowledge and learn more skills as they go through one grade level and proceed onwards (Lalicic & Dubravac, 2021). However, in the realm of secondary education, the challenge of cultivating strong reading skills and holistic development among students is a significant concern, with various factors impeding the success of students to develop such (Toste et al., 2020; Ramadhani et al., 2023). Pressing issues such as limited critical thinking, poor comprehension as well as socio-emotional skills, and inadequate communication abilities contribute to the complexity of this challenge (Rani & Neeraj, 2020). Recognizing that these mentioned components are subsumed under the life skills that high school students must typically have, there exists a potential avenue for developing the reading skills of struggling students by capitalizing on the improvement of their life skills as individuals.

In Indonesia, it was recently found that high school students ranked third from the bottom in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which aimed to assess high school students across numerous countries globally in terms of reading, mathematics, and natural science (Fenanlampir, 2019). Another study concluded that this poor performance in reading in international assessments such as PISA is grounded on the major

misconceptions of Indonesian teachers in the aspect of teaching reading. High school teachers viewed such endeavor as a shallow task which only focused on the pronunciation of words and literal meaning of texts (Fauzan et al., 2023). In contrary, Ahmed et al. (2021) posited that teaching reading among students is beyond the surface level, as it must involve the complex stimulation of different life skills such as critical thinking skills, socio-emotional empathy, and cultural awareness in order to aid students to effectively understand human emotions and cultural connotations in texts, obtain information, master knowledge, utilize this information to overcome any challenges, and construct new substantial ideas.

In the meantime, developing the reading skills of Filipino students have been a challenge for educators and policymakers alike. Despite government efforts to improve literacy rates in the Philippines, recent studies have shown that many students need help with reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and critical thinking skills. Aside from dwelling only on the surface meaning of texts, they could not also evaluate the factual information and infer meaning from certain texts (Idulog et al., 2023; Gulo & Deloy, 2022). The evidence of this phenomenon was further reinforced in the previous results of PISA Report in 2019 which illustrated that Philippines ranked lower than majority of its Southeast Asian counterparts, let alone in the global setting. In fact, it concluded that 80 percent of the students



around the age of 15 did not meet the minimum proficiency in reading (Manlapig, 2020). By extension, it was determined in the articles of the Philippine Exporters Confederation (2023) and Elmouhtarim (2018) that Filipino students lagged behind in terms of critical thinking and problem-solving, leading to the conclusion that these are few of the factors which make students struggle extensively in adapting to and overcoming reading challenges and in life in view of the information explosion in the 21st century.

Locally, the pervasiveness of reading skill problems in secondary schools is no less serious compared to international and national data. In fact, there exists a constant surge of non-readers and struggling readers in secondary level, which causes an alarm to teachers and educational leaders in the locality. In a public secondary school in Asuncion, Davao del Norte, it was reported in the study of Tan et al. (2019) that there were as many as 10 students under the frustration level. This one was already an improvement from the previous years which had at least 32 students under the frustration level. This study was extended by Magallanes (2021) in the same locale which claimed that there were as many as 34 students under the frustration level. Such situation led to many social-related problems, particularly because struggling students felt demotivated at school and they do not want to be engaged with the lesson and their classmates. These problems also call for concerned teachers and agencies to look for possible solutions to improve the reading skills of many high school students.

There was an evident explorable research gap in terms of the life skills and its relevance or intersection with the reading skills of high school students. Previous pieces of literature mostly concentrated on the topics of reading, struggling readers, phenomenon of non-readers in secondary schools, reading disabilities, and factors that are contributory to reading achievement in the international settings (Ziegler, 2020; Lilego & Decano, 2018; Barshay et al., 2021; MS & Rachmadtullah, 2018; Ardhan et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2022). More so, studies focusing on independent readers were likewise limited and underexplored, as most of the available studies only focused on the other side of the coin – the dilemmas and problems associated with the macro skill of reading and the toils of struggling readers (Nanda & Azmy, 2020; Albano, 2020; Sison & Tecson, 2019). Hence, a gap in literature was identified, and an opportunity to probe the life skills of outstanding independent readers was apparent in the case of this paper.

Grounded on this, I expressed my desire to conduct a study relative to this topic. Studying the experiences and best practices of outstanding independent readers could potentially help struggling readers, teachers, parents, reading coordinators, school administrators, officials of the Department of Education, and stakeholders in joining hands together to combat the phenomenon of struggles in reading. The findings of this study may be used as a baseline data in ideating programs and policies which can optimize the student learning outcomes, educational practices,

student development, assistance, and instruction extended to the struggling readers. There was also the urgency to conduct the study due to the fact that there was an increasing number of struggling readers and non-readers even in secondary level, which was supposed to be addressed already in the elementary level because this one was where the foundation for basic literacy is being strengthened. The fear of having more struggling readers in secondary level called for urgent research attention among the ranks of researchers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Demands in Reading

Reading as illustrated by Banditvilai (2020) is a sophisticated cognitive process that demands for a wide range of abilities and proficiencies from its users. One must have a clear reading goal to read nowadays. One must find out why they are reading a given material, be it academic inquiry, amusement, or simply for information collection. As proposed by Grindle et al. (2020), a well-defined goal allows readers to follow the content while also increasing comprehension by providing a foundation for comprehension and identifying main points.

Moreover, Halim et al. (2020) found that one of the fundamental prerequisites for reading is comprehension, and that refers to the ability to understand and interpret written material. Proficient readers employ critical thinking to unlock clues and implications buried inside the text instead of merely absorbing what is being said. Besides, Hashim and Yunum (2018) emphasized fluency as essential to reading because readers must master the ability to read rapidly and effortlessly. Fluent individuals may read at a quicker pace and speed, which boosts comprehension and enables them to engage with more material overall.

In addition, in accordance to Jamal and Dehraj (2018), reading also requires a range of analytical skills beyond basic decoding. Experts in reading can enhance their general understanding by analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information from various texts and other sources. The mentioned above kind of reading comprehension described by Karasu (2020) implies text interpretation. This involves the reader in activities to understand the relationship between concepts, draw inferences, and make judgments based on the data obtained. Fulfilling these reading requirements helps people succeed academically as well as develop critical thinking abilities, which help people navigate and comprehend the complexity of the world.

Life Skills

Life skills are a wide range of competencies that allow people to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life and contribute to the well-being of a person as well as the society, as mentioned by World Health Organisation (2020). As per Saravanakumar (2020), the skills are vital for success in different aspects of life and personal development and interactions with others, such as empathy and self-awareness, problems and critical thinking, talking and relating to others, and stress and emotions.



In consonance, interpersonal and communication skills are components of life skills that are vital and must be acquired. This is because, as per UNICEF (2019), life skills enable us to listen actively, communicate effectively, and meet and interact with other people in social contexts. Saravanakumar and Padmini (2020) also argued that these skills are beneficial for establishing and maintaining healthy relationships, both on a personal and professional level. Effective communication is also necessary to address any disputes that might arise and to cooperate which fosters peace and collaboration in the society due to the ability to help each other.

Further, Nair and Fahimirad (2019) introduced problem-solving and critical thinking as another crucial life skills that allow individuals to evaluate situations, analyze information, and make informed decisions. In the article by Lakshmana (2020), it is mentioned that such skills are essential for facing problems, adapting to changes, and developing creative solutions to difficult problems. The ability to think critically and solve problems is a critical factor in success in personal and professional life in a changing society.

Furthermore, empathy and self-awareness are another key element of life skills. Chung et al. (2020) define self-consciousness as self-awareness, including social skills and compassion. From the article by Purwanti et al. (2022), it is understood that self-conscious people understand their feelings, abilities, and lack of competence; therefore, they are able to make informed decisions and cope with life's difficulties. By contrast, empathy is the share and understanding of another person's feelings; thus, people can create a socially just world devoid of discrimination.

Meanwhile, Ozer et al. (2020) disclosed that the ability to cope with stress and emotions is a vital life skill that helps individuals successfully manage stressors and emotion regulation. To add, Koyuncu (2018) developed this notion that life skills include an ability to grow emotional intelligence and coping strategies and cultivate resilience against life's intended failures and obstacles. In fact, the success in many life spheres, personal growth, and life experience are determined by life skills and their components.

Regarding the relationship between life skills and reading, Ismail (2022) noted one significant aspect. Reading is the basis for acquiring life skills, as it develops critical thinking, knowledge-gathering skills, and effective communication. As shown by research, in particular by Klass (2023), reading skills help people access information at high speed and understand it, allowing them to make competent decisions quickly. At the same time, reading develops empathy, helping understand other people, or a different point of view. As one can see, life skills and reading are closely related since literacy ensures that people quickly master the necessary knowledge in various fields of life and easily navigate through life's difficulties.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This qualitative study multiple case study aimed to describe the challenges, life skills, and coping strategies of outstanding independent readers in the secondary schools in Davao del Norte. At this stage in research, the life skills of outstanding independent readers were defined as the adaptive and positive behaviors in an ever-demanding world of those outstanding students who passed the Group Screening Test (GST) of the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and were identified as successful readers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the experiences of outstanding independent readers in terms of their life skills in reading?
2. What are the coping strategies of outstanding independent readers in terms of their life skills in reading?
3. What explains the similarities and differences of each case?

METHODS

Research Design

This qualitative study utilized the multiple case study approach. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined multiple case study as a tradition of qualitative research which seeks to delve deeper into the varying realities of a specific phenomenon from the lens and different angles of the unique cases of the participants. The entire endeavor highlights the similarities and differences of all unique cases enjoined in the study, making the in-depth study of the research topic more comprehensive and insightful. Using multiple case study approach in this study granted me the lens to view the unique cases of the participants and gain understanding of the research topic which is the life skills of outstanding independent readers in public secondary schools.

Participants

The participants of this study were the five different cases of outstanding independent readers in three public secondary schools in the Division of Davao del Norte. They were selected as the participants of this study because they hold invaluable information about the life skills which can possibly contribute to their success in mastering the macro skill of reading. Moreover, each case differed in terms of the circumstances or fields wherein each participant excelled. The outstanding cases specifically include a Grade 7 student journalist, a Grade 8 volleyball athlete, a Grade 9 student leader, a Grade 10 consistent student achiever, and a Grade 9 student with autism spectrum.

Given that there was urgency to guarantee that the participants of the study must legitimately hold rich, valuable information of the phenomenon in question, purposive sampling, particularly maximum variation sampling, as espoused by Patton (2002) was utilized to select the participants of this study. In looking for my participants, I tapped the reading coordinators as reference persons.



In general, I had the following inclusion criteria. My participants must be outstanding junior high school students who excelled in academics and/or extra-curricular activities and who were identified by the reading coordinator of the public school as independent readers by using Group Screening Test (GST) in the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), a discrete-point reading assessment tool officially utilized by the Department of Education for the purpose of identifying non-readers, struggling readers, and independent readers in basic education. In almost all regions, GST was only utilized until Grade 8. However, the Division of Davao del Norte was an exception wherein the same tool was utilized in all grade levels until senior high school. For the exclusion criteria, this study did not include students from elementary, senior high school, and college departments. Private school students did not also take part in this study.

Procedure

Human participants were party to in this study, since they were the sources of data in this dissertation. Standard protocols were conformed to in this study. The first step was the obtainment of permission to implement the study. This document was gleaned from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the University of the Immaculate Conception in consonance with that of the Dean of the Graduate Studies. Simultaneously, the self-made interview guide was subjected to validation procedure which was spearheaded by the panel members who also functioned as expert validators. After this one, an endorsement letter was requested from my dissertation adviser.

The second step was to seek the permission of the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of the Department of Education (DepEd) – Division of Davao del Norte using the documents I obtained in the earlier process. Once I was granted permission by the aforementioned department, I also sought the permission of the concerned Public Schools Division Superintendent and school heads to give due courtesy to the authorities.

Three schools within the Division of Davao del Norte were randomly selected, and I contacted in advance the school head and the reading coordinators thereof to help me look for the study participants that fit my inclusion criteria. The unit of this study involved people, particularly the outstanding independent readers, who potentially had experiences and insights on how their life skills became integral in ensuring their success in developing and sharpening their reading skills. This one was important due to the fact that many struggling readers need support and intervention to improve their inferior skills in reading, and untangling the life skills of outstanding independent readers may facilitate another avenue for these poor performing students to be supported or scaffolded in reading.

As to the sampling method that was employed in this research, maximum variation sampling was applied, given that I looked for heterogeneous information-rich cases of outstanding independent

readers for my study. Once I shortlisted the prospect participants for my study, I proceeded to the next step.

For the third step, the participants together with their parents or guardians were given a comprehensive orientation about my study in person. Individual orientation was done for confidentiality purposes. I introduced myself to my participants and I was frank with my purpose of inviting each of them. I explained to them the purpose and details of my study. Then, I invited them to take part in this study, having met all the criteria that I was looking for among my prospect participants. Once they initially responded affirmatively to the invitation, the junior high school students, teachers, and parent signed the informed consent form as attestation to their voluntary participation. Meanwhile, the differently abled participant signed the informed assent form and his mother was provided with informed consent form for her to sign as attestation of the same. Of course, the young students and their parents or guardians were given the option to refuse in doing so as well as the options to ask questions. Giving them these options further enhanced the ethical criterion of voluntary participation in this study.

The interviews were scheduled at a time that was mostly convenient for the participants. Face-to-face interviews were done with the participants while adhering to health and safety standards. Still, they were afforded with utmost care and freedom to withdraw participation or ask questions while the interview was happening. This one was done to uphold the entitlements of the participants for ethical consideration. Coercion was avoided at all costs, and questions during the interview only focused on the life skills of outstanding independent readers. Their permission was also asked before the interview was recorded. I explained that the purpose of recording such was to help me recall the vital answers of the participants during the interviews. Moreover, the interviews were kept confidential in consideration to their safety and well-being.

After the interviews, I manually transcribed the responses of my participants during the interviews. Before I subjected the transcribed responses to thematic analysis, I proceeded first to the verification process wherein I went back to the participants and asked their aid to verify the accuracy of the transcripts against the responses that they made in the interview. Once they testified to the accuracy of the transcripts by signing the member checking certificate, the transcripts were subjected to data analysis with the supervision of my designated qualitative data analyst.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the interviews was subjected to thorough transcription, translation, and data analysis to enable the researcher to understand the complexities of the phenomenon in question. In consonance, Maguire and Delahunt (2017) espoused that one of the methods in analyzing qualitative research data is thematic analysis. This is summarized as the endeavor of identifying, analyzing, and presenting patterns that exist within a large amount of data. The thick, rich, and detailed descriptions of



the phenomenon will be unlocked through undergoing this process.

In applying the thematic analysis in this dissertation, the proposed model of Braun and Clarke (2006) was emulated in this context. This one indicated that I adhered to the intricate processes of thematic analysis which include the familiarizing of the data, formulating the initial codes, identifying the potential themes, double-checking the themes that were generated, deciding on theme labels, and completing the report.

Ethical Considerations

This paper was evaluated thoroughly by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Immaculate Conception based on the ten ethical tenets of research: social value; informed consent; vulnerability of the research participants; risks, benefits, and safety; privacy and confidentiality; justice; transparency, qualifications of the researcher; adequacy of facilities; and community involvement. As such, the study was subjected to careful scrutiny to affirm that the ethical principles were strictly applied in the research process at all times to protect human participants, most particularly those who belong in the vulnerable sectors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants’ Profile

As depicted in the Table 1, the five cases of outstanding independent readers were differentiated in terms of their demographics and unique aspects. The first case consists of a campus journalist who is a timid Grade 7 student who bagged a win in the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC) in the category of Science and Technology Writing, while the second case involves a Grade 8 student who has been part of a team of women volleyball players who conquered numerous competitions including those that are in national level. She is also a timid girl who has an evident passion for doing volleyball. The third case is a Grade 9 student who has a strong personality and excellent communication skills, certain manifestations of a student leader since elementary grades, while the fourth case centers on a bubbly and eloquent Grade 10 student who has been a consistent top 1 student since her kindergarten days. She shared with me her passion for watching Korean dramas and anime as well as her drive for excellence and competition, whether in curricular or extracurricular activities. The fifth case is a Grade 9 student who has an autism spectrum. While he has certain manifestations of such as his tendency to avoid eye contact, he speaks his immense love for reading and thirst for knowledge, particularly in politics and economy.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants in In-depth Interviews

	GRADE 7 CAMPUS JOURNALIST (Case A)	GRADE 8 VOLLEYBALL ATHLETE (Case B)	GRADE 9 STUDENT LEADER (Case C)	GRADE 10 ACADEMIC ACHIEVER (Case-D)	GRADE 9 STUDENT WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (Case-E)
AGE	13	14	15	16	16
SEX	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
SCHOOL	School A	School B	School B	School C	School A
GRADE LEVEL	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 9
UNIQUE ASPECTS	Winner in the National Schools Press Conference	Winner in Various National Women’s Volleyball Competitions	Consistent Classroom Leader and Student Government Official	Consistent Honor Student since Kindergarten	Voracious Reader with Autism Spectrum
PARTICIPANT CODE	P01	P02	P03	P04	P05

Presentation of Findings

Experiences. Using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) model of thematic analysis: four themes emerged which explained the experiences of outstanding independent readers in relation to their

life skills in reading. As shown in Table 2, these themes are: *early reading support and opportunities; sharing of reading abilities to other students; allocation of time for reading; and utilization of gadgets for reading.*



Table 2. Experiences of Outstanding Independent Readers in Secondary Schools

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Early Reading Opportunities and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being provided by parents with various reading materials - being taught and assisted by parents on how to read - parents teaching reading at home - using books and other reading gadgets enjoyably - receiving overwhelming support of the family in terms of reading - being exposed to school events that develops reading - receiving rewards and recognition for accomplishing something attributed to reading - learning to read together with siblings
Sharing of Reading Abilities to Other Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sharing strategies in reading with friends - helping students with difficulty in reading - sharing one’s understanding of the text happily - developing a sense of accomplishment by helping others read - teaching classmates on how to analyze using context clues
Allocation of Time for Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making reading a habit - setting time for reading at home - considering reading as a bonding moment with family and peers - making reading a part of home-routine - creating alone time for reading
Utilization of Gadgets for Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accessing the internet to read - using reading apps and e-books - using e-dictionaries for word meanings - gathering new ideas from the social media - researching summaries and meaning of a text in the internet

Early Reading Opportunities. The participants recognized that their journey towards reading began when they were reared by their parents to become readers early on at home. This journey also had its kick-off when the participants were taught by their siblings and exposed them to various reading materials provided by their parents at a young age. For all of the cases of outstanding independent readers, they had adequate opportunities to establish their firm foundation in reading. Pertinent to this idea, here is the statement of Case A:

It is how my mama and papa taught me how to read since I was 3 years old. They taught me how to read before I started going to school. They also taught me and even disciplined me to help me learn it. (P01_CQ1.S1)

Sharing of Reading Abilities to Other Students. Majority of the participants relayed that they also impart what they knew and learned about reading. In other words, majority of the participants attested that they share whatever tips and knowledge that they have about reading to their classmates and friends. This means that the case participants derive a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment in helping others on how to read. In connection, a pertinent statement of this idea was made by Case C below:

Perhaps, it is when I help my teacher teach reading or help my classmates read. As a leader in the classroom, I do not only focus on my own needs but I also see the needs of my classmates. I also ensure that my classmates succeed, especially those struggling with reading because I genuinely feel for them, Sir. I am not selfish, not boastful. It is just that I cannot stand idly by when I

see them having difficulty. That is why I also assist our English teacher in teaching them. (P03_CQ1.S3)

Allocation of Time for Reading. One of the typical practices of outstanding independent readers is the allocation of time for reading. This only means that all case participants already made reading as part of their routine and habits. They even set a schedule to read wherein they do this either by themselves or with their family. In consonance, here is a statement of Case E who has an autism spectrum that is relevant to the idea discussed above:

For me, I cannot get enough of reading because I love it. There are days when I just want to read and skip eating for the entire day because I enjoy it. I get upset if my parents disturb me while I am reading because I get absorbed in my reading. I enjoy reading because it brings me joy knowing that I learn a lot from it. (P05_CQ1.S9)

Utilization of Gadgets for Reading. All case participants have already utilized the power of internet to expand their respective horizons in reading. Being able to access various reading materials and resources online, all participants opened up that they read certain texts online. They were also able to accumulate vast amounts of information from different websites as well as search for summaries and meanings of text to aid them in their reading activities. In connection, Case D made a statement about this one:

On social media, it may not have a significant influence because it is not really about academics, but it is more



about fun. I spend a lot of time on apps like comics, manga, and watching K-dramas, where reading subtitles helps improve my vocabulary. While multitasking by listening and watching, it also greatly contributes to my learning. (P04_CQ1.S4)

Coping Strategies. Meanwhile, the coping strategies of outstanding independent readers in association to their life skills were also unveiled in this study. As shown in Table 3, four emerging themes were presented: *enrichment of vocabulary; adoption of reading tactics; development of set of values for reading; and application of leadership skills.*

Table 3. Coping Strategies of Outstanding Independent Readers in Secondary Schools

Essential Theme	Core Ideas on Coping
Enrichment of Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -using the dictionary on how to pronounce word -observing correct pronunciation of words -seeking guidance from teachers -gathering information from other people -humbly accepting help from others -using newly learned words and ideas in writing -applying ideas in the classroom -becoming updated with the trends in reading using technology
Adoption of Reading Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -relating what has been read to real-life, to another text or experience -developing questions while reading -exposing oneself to different reading genres -looking back for keywords and rereading in order to clarify or answer questions -dividing text into sections for understanding -highlighting important words or ideas
Development of Set of Values for Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -becoming diligent in comprehending the text -motivating oneself to improve reading skills -gaining eagerness to learn from what has been read -being humble in receiving feedbacks -having the willingness to help others
Application of Leadership Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -developing good communication skills, open-mindedness, sound organizational skills -leading the class or the group -developing the ability to discern and decide for others

Enrichment of Vocabulary. The participants were able to devise the coping strategy of enriching their vocabulary to effectively read different texts. As such, they adopted various means to add more items in their vocabulary such as seeking guidance from one’s teachers, using the dictionary to unravel the meaning of the words, and being humble enough to accept help from others, to name a few. Pertinent to this idea, Case A stated that:

I guess the practice which I alone have is that, I do not think that it is bad to ask questions if you cannot understand what you are reading. I do not pretend that I know everything because I know that there are people who can help me, such as my English teachers. That is why I really wonder why others are ashamed of asking questions. It is because for me, it is perfectly okay to ask. (P01_CQ2.S8)

Adoption of Reading Tactics. Another coping strategy that was attained by the participants is the adoption of different reading tactics. This in response the challenges about difficulty in understanding on what they are reading which they also mention in the interviews. Certain tactics such as relating what one has read to real-life experience, looking for keywords or rereading

texts to clarify or answer certain questions, or developing questions about the text that one is reading, to name a few, were noted among the responses of the participants. In relation to this idea, Case D has something to say:

I am also a critical thinker, capable of comprehending and evaluating things based on the information provided in what I read. I can organize my ideas and thoughts to better understand the story or literature I am reading. (P04_CQ2.S7)

Development of Set of Values for Reading. In response to the challenges presented by the endeavor of reading itself, outstanding independent readers were able to develop their own values which amplify their eagerness and willingness to see through the end of the reading process. All participants mentioned that they exercised due diligence in reading texts, in order for them to understand its meaning completely. They were also able to motivate themselves to read in the process so that they would find the journey to be fun and worthwhile. With regards to this idea, Case B cited that:

I found ways to learn how to read, Sir. If I have difficulty understanding a story. I always make an effort to find ways



to help myself. I do not give up immediately because I believe there is always a way. (P02_CQ2.S2)

strategy or practice that I have is what made me unique. (P03_CQ2.S8)

Application of Leadership Skills. Majority of the participants mentioned that they enhanced their reading skills in various ways. One of which is through using one’s leadership skills to influence and teach others how to read. By organizing one’s class section and helping them grasp the dynamics of reading using one’s leadership skills as a leverage, majority of the outstanding independent readers would not only develop their reading skills. In return, they are also honing the reading skills of their classmates and friends. Case C claimed that:

I can also utilize my leadership skills in reading because I teach my classmates who are not very knowledgeable. In this way, I have helped them and myself. Perhaps, that

Similarities and Differences. As part of the cross-case analysis, similarities and differences among cases are analyzed in the context of the life skills of outstanding independent readers. It can be generally inferred that most of the cases were similar, and only few differences were noted in this multiple case study. Only Case E who has an autism spectrum manifested a difference, given the fact that he preferred reading on his own, rather than associate closely with his peers during reading activities. These inferences can be better understood in Table 4, where the check mark (✓) indicates presence of the theme in a case and an X-mark (X) which indicates absence of the same.

Table 4. Similarities and Differences of Experiences and Coping Strategies of Outstanding Independent Readers in Secondary Schools

Themes on Experiences	GRADE 7 CAMPUS JOURNALIST (Case A)	GRADE 8 VOLLEYBALL ATHLETE (Case B)	GRADE 9 STUDENT LEADER (Case C)	GRADE 10 ACADEMIC ACHIEVER (Case-D)
Early Reading Opportunities and Support	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sharing of Reading Abilities to Other Students	✓	✓	✓	X
Allocation of Time for Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓
Utilization of Gadgets for Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓
Themes on Coping Strategies	GRADE 7 CAMPUS JOURNALIST (Case A)	GRADE 8 VOLLEYBALL ATHLETE (Case B)	GRADE 9 STUDENT LEADER (Case C)	GRADE 10 ACADEMIC ACHIEVER (Case-D)
Enrichment of Reading Vocabulary	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adoption of Reading Tactics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Development of Set of Values for Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓
Application of Leadership Skills	✓	✓	✓	X

IMPLICATIONS

The study has been regarded as a treasure trove of lessons that secondary school students, parents, language teachers, reading coordinators, head teachers, master teachers, and future researchers can use in resolving the problems that were part of the premise of this study. Thus, this section is dedicated to discuss the implications that can be derived by different authorities and agencies from this study to combat the phenomenon of the prevalence of struggling readers in public schools.

Students may find this study meaningful, as they can emulate the examples of the outstanding independent readers who were interviewed in this study. They may allocate more time for reading, enrich their vocabulary, as well as adopt productive and

positive socioemotional values to cultivate their love for reading and learning. Parents are also enjoined in this study, as they are the partners of teachers in providing early reading opportunities and support to the learners. As per the findings of this research, early reading support is crucial to develop the foundation of students in reading, which they can use in the long run to navigate the complexities and uncertainties of life in the future.

Moreover, the faculty composed of language teachers, reading coordinators, head teachers, and master teachers, may also find invaluable insights in this study, as they can use this one to devise programs, activities, and initiatives which are targeted to augment the life skills of students. Teachers may direct their focus in providing activities that are geared to enhance the vocabulary,



love for reading, and adaptive learning strategies to increase the odds of reading success among learners. The findings also deliver the fact that equal and adequate opportunities for reading must be provided to all students with no exception, in order to make a community inhabited by literate learners a reality. This may be challenging for teachers of today to realize, but this is a vision that is worth persevering for.

Also, the scholarly endeavor has managed to unveil the significant aspects of the life skills of outstanding independent readers, specifically the experiences and coping strategies adopted by the participants in the study. Findings were derived from the analysis which bore comprehensive accounts that describe the research topic in detail. Albeit, the study has not managed to cover all aspects of the investigated phenomenon, which merits further research by other interested scholars and researchers in the field of applied linguistics.

Given that the limitations of research participants and study sites were cited after this study is conducted, future research may be devoted to conducting more studies about the life skills of outstanding independent readers in different study sites and including different or more diverse cases of participants. College students or senior high school students may also be considered in the succeeding studies to be pursued. Moreover, future research may also be directed to conducting quantitative studies employing higher statistical methods such as structural equation modeling or path analysis to discover in what way does life skills significantly influence the reading skills of outstanding independent readers. Experimental studies on enhancing the life skills may be tested as well to determine which can affect the reading skills of students.

CONCLUSIONS

The study is concluded on a positive note, as this research was successful in unearthing the significant practices of outstanding independent readers which shaped them into who they are as students and as individuals. Thus, it is hoped that the scholars who received the information stipulated in this manuscript will be used by proper agencies, authorities, and professionals to solve the menace of reading difficulties among Filipino students in public schools.

One striking insight which caught my attention is the values that outstanding independent readers possess and apply in their reading and study pursuits. One can even tell that this aspect sets them apart from other Filipino readers, and it is, indeed, worthy of emulation among the students in the country. As it takes an entire village to raise a child properly, the community comprising of the parents, teachers, leaders, and stakeholders are urged to take action in proliferating the Filipino values to cultivate the students' love for study, which is now dying due to the emergence of globalization, information explosion, and the digital era.

As I close the page of this chapter, it is aspired that the life skills of students will be considered by the Department of Education, as another avenue to solve the plague of being unable to read. Future perspectives may be directed to exploring more innovations in

teaching reading, and one of which is on capitalizing on the socio-emotional aspects of students to enhance their reading capacities.

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