# UNFOLDING BARRIERS: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF NON-READERS INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF READING INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

*This qualitative multiple case study explored the experiences and challenges of junior high school non-readers involved in the reading intervention programs. The experiences and the navigating strategies of non-readers of the five cases were examined using in-depth Interviews. Triangulation of the gathered data was done in each case by interviewing the parents, guardians, and teachers of the non-readers. The cross-analysis of the five study cases revealed eight common themes, with four highlighting positive experiences and four highlighting negative experiences. The four emergent themes for navigating the challenges included Engaging in Relaxation Activities, Seeking Help from Teachers and Parents, Involving Parents or Guardians in Doing the Tasks, and Following a Structured Reading Schedule. The five cases were generally similar except for the supportive familial environment and gaining progress in reading for Cases 3 and 5. Anent to navigating the challenges of their experiences, all cases show significant advancements in their reading skills over time except for Case 5 who exhibited minimal improvement due to lack of parental support and a learning disability, necessitating tailored interventions and support strategies to address her unique needs.*
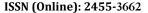
**KEYWORDS**: *Applied linguistics education, non-readers, reading intervention, multiple case studies,Philippines*

## INTRODUCTION

Reading intervention programs are designed to support students who struggle with reading comprehension and fluency, aiming to improve their literacy skills and academic performance (Tomas et al., 2021). It is observed that in many schools, improving their reading programs and practices is not part of their school action plan and priority improvement areas. According to a study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2020), students with reading difficulties continue to struggle with reading comprehension and fluency despite receiving reading intervention programs, giving educators difficulties in identifying the most effective strategies for improving student reading outcomes. Some possible factors for the failure of reading programs include not being tailored to the specific needs and skills of the students they are intended to serve and teachers are not adequately trained or supported in implementing these programs effectively (Kilpatrick, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to provide opportunities for individuals with inadequate reading skills to enhance their abilities through targeted interventions and evidence-based reading programs.

Despite recognizing the importance of reading, many schools have neglected reading initiatives, instead prioritizing other subjects and activities, leaving non-readers struggling with their reading abilities without any sufficient and tailored support or guidance (Tomas, 2021). In Belgium, a significant reading proficiency gap among students is being faced, leading educators to manage diverse student capacities by focusing on supporting struggling readers through reading intervention (Mullis et al., 2017). Specifically, the findings from said study which indicates that reading supplements in the said country are not effective in enhancing learners' reading performance, raise important considerations for educators and policymakers. Notably, global literacy rates have continued to show positive trends, with an estimated 86.3% of the population literate as of September 2021, according to UNESCO. However, regional disparities persist, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where literacy rates remain a significant challenge. A learning crisis is threatening entire generations in Sub-Saharan Africa where almost 80% of children do not meet the necessary standards for reading competence. Similarly in Vietnam, SEA-PLM (Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics) in 2019 revealed that it had low rates of extra reading support in the language of instruction to non-readers signaling that the implemented reading practices have not been sufficient to address the reading difficulties of children.

A status quo more depressing than Belgium, Sub-Africa, and Vietnam is being confronted by the Philippines. With a 340 on the reading scale on average, the Philippines falls more than 200 points short of China's score of 555 and more than 100 points short of the average of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is 487. The Philippines scored the lowest for both boys' and girls' reading abilities out of all 79 participating nations in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (San Juan, 2019). This suggests that the slow readers among the 15-year-old population, who may not have read at all in Grade 7, are responsible for the lowest PISA reading comprehension score. Recently, Department Order 014, s. 2023, National Learning Camp of the Department of Education, a recovery program was designed to help K to 12 learners in public elementary and secondary schools and aimed to help improve learning outcomes and reading ability of the learners. The NLC is a reading program that started its phased implementation with Grades 7 and 8 aimed to create a camp-like environment by implementing fun and engaging activities to foster learner interests, socio-emotional skills, personal growth, and character development.

Additionally, schools initiated a variety of programs and activities dedicated to boosting students' reading skills and fostering a passion for reading, but they often face challenges in implementing these initiatives (Borbon & Ylagan, 2021). According to Dinoro et al.'s study from 2023, which looked at how teachers felt about the reading programs that were put in place in Lanao del Norte's public schools and evaluated student performance on the Philippine – Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL–IRI) for the final three years of the 2017–2020 school year, teachers who used the guided-reading approach helped their students read more fluently and with greater comprehension, but they still had problems with alphabetic comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Meanwhile, the Schools Division of Aurora according to the study of Tomas et al. (2021), launched a reading program for junior high schools to address the reading issues and provide guidance on the kind of environment, intervention, and support that should be implemented. The reading environments were created with students' reading challenges in consideration, allowing them to feel at ease and free to express themselves. In addition to this, students' learning was supplemented with materials in consonance with their interests and abilities coupled with support from the teacher and students' family members.

Several studies have been accomplished about reading particularly on the reading performance of the primary grade non-readers. For instance, Lantaka (2022) indicated that deficient instruction related to the development of reading proficiency was caused by a lack of education and a language barrier. According to Aguana (2018), none of the programs implemented in a public secondary school in Zamboanga are effective as his study revealed that parents provide weak support for their children to improve their reading abilities. Therefore, I intend to investigate the learners' experiences as junior high school students who still struggle with reading, their coping strategies to get by in school, and their experiences as they participate in their schools' reading intervention programs.

Accordingly, there have been several studies on the different strategies used for reading and cases of non-readers for primary-level learners, but the researcher has not encountered reading studies that aim to offer well-rounded and informed multiple case studies and their experiences in participating in reading intervention programs, and the identification of similarities and differences of cases in the context of junior high school non-readers. Alternatively, there is a sense of urgency in conducting this study considering that schools all over the world specifically in the Philippines' junior high schools reported a percentage of students with reading difficulties in content knowledge and comprehension (Vaughn, 2019). Thus, this study explored the experiences and challenges of the five cases of junior high school non-readers involved in the reading intervention programs.
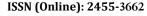
To maximum impact, the research findings will be shared via different media. Academic publications in reputable journals will target the scholarly community, ensuring that the research contributes to the existing body of knowledge. Additionally, presentations at relevant conferences and seminars will provide opportunities for direct engagement with educators, policymakers, and researchers. Through these diverse dissemination channels, the research aimed to inform and influence educational practices, contributing to the ongoing efforts to enhance reading intervention programs for junior high school students in the Philippines.

## LITERATURE REVIEW
### Reading and Reading Difficulties Across Countries
The issue of reading difficulties across different countries is a multifaceted challenge. Reading is not a passive endeavor but rather an intricate process that involves several cognitive activities, including drawing inferences, accurately recognizing sounds, and comprehending text (Jensen & Elbro, 2022). The effectiveness of this process is contingent upon various factors, including the reader's attitude towards reading, their purpose for reading, their familiarity with the content, the text's structure, and their vocabulary knowledge. Importantly, comprehension according to Follmer and Sperling (2018) is significantly influenced by how the reader interacts with the text itself.

Particularly in the field of reading skills, learners in Thailand according to the study conducted by Nation (2018), considered reading the most difficult skill compared to other English skills: listening, speaking, and writing, because they have difficulties trying to understand English text as the correct reading strategies could not be practically applied. Thai learners are not often experienced with utilizing reading strategies because they do not frequently read a lot of texts and are not trained on how to use reading strategies. Moreover, the classroom is entirely facilitated by a teacher-directed approach while the students only learn the lessons passively. The teacher mostly translates the passage for the students which later causes the students to rely on a dictionary,

which gives no true comprehension and makes them take more time on reading.

The findings of the study by Indrayadi (2021) conducted in Indonesia on the reading comprehension proficiency of learners learning English as a second language also showed that the components of phonological awareness, working memory, syntactic awareness, and morphological awareness were the main concerns of the students. Also, assessing the program's impact on students' attitudes and motivation toward reading is equally important (Amin, 2019). Surveys, interviews, or focus group discussions can be utilized to collect qualitative data on learners' perceptions, interests, and feelings about reading after participating in the intervention.

Additionally, non-readers encountering these reading difficulties tend to become easily distracted and anxious when reading. The primary goal of reading is comprehension, and as reading difficulties heighten individual anxiety levels, they further impede reading comprehension (Moncayo-Herrera, 2022). Consequently, these individuals have limited reading experience, hindering the improvement of their vocabulary and collection of information. To acquire operative reading skills and cultivate a strong reading habit, individuals must possess fundamental prerequisites such as exact perception, recognition of sound, identification of words, discrimination of word, semantics, syntax, linguistic processes, and comprehension (Jensen & Elbro, 2022). Establishing reading environments that adhere to these prerequisites can be instrumental in overcoming reading challenges. Tailoring teaching methodologies to individual differences can also help mitigate these difficulties.

Estremera (2018) cites an article from the Philippine Star which states that most Filipino learners lack the skills and willingness to read. 70% of our students, according to a 2021 Department of Education report, are unable to read at grade level. According to Scholastic Inc., the largest publisher and distributor of children's books in the world, this is the state of reading achievement in the Philippines. It is undeniable that in today's ever-evolving world and ever-evolving technological landscape, reading is sometimes taken for granted. Furthermore, a student's academic success can be negatively impacted by a reading handicap. It's possible that he will not be included in any of the school's events, making him feel inferior all the time (Pineda, 2018). Accordingly, "Every Child A Reader Program" (ECARP) was implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd) to increase reading literacy in schools. No student should be allowed to advance to the next grade level unless they have demonstrated competence in reading and writing at the level they are currently in, according to government standards.

In many countries, disparities in reading proficiency persist, affecting learners of all ages. These disparities are often influenced by a multitude of factors, including socioeconomic status, access to quality education, language barriers, and cultural attitudes toward reading (Boakye & Linden, 2018).

Consequently, understanding the commonalities and distinctions in the reading challenges faced by diverse nations becomes crucial in crafting effective interventions.
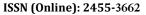
*Reading Intervention Program*
Studies conducted in underdeveloped nations have demonstrated the efficacy of reading intervention programs (Linden, 2022). The majority of programs are very similar to reading initiatives in developed nations in that they aim to increase reading frequency, improve reading education, or do both. For example, reading programs that provided books and efficient reading instruction had a favorable influence on Rwandan students' reading achievement (Friedlander and Goldenberg, 2022). Similar outcomes were observed by Kumler, and Linden (2016) when Filipino learners received instruction from qualified teachers together with adequate reading resources. These results are critical for developing nations since research indicates that reading difficulties might cause developmental delays in impoverished children (Roskos et al., 2021). Programs might offer a way for nations to promote future educational growth if they could break the vicious cycle that early reading issues bring about.

However, literature underscores various challenges in reading intervention programs, especially for struggling readers. One critical issue is the identification of students in need of intervention. Research by Zainudin (2020) emphasizes the importance of early identification to provide timely and targeted interventions. Furthermore, studies highlight the challenge of sustaining student engagement, addressing diverse learning needs, and ensuring the transfer of intervention gains to real-world reading tasks.

Moreover, Phonics-based interventions, such as the Orton-Gillingham approach, have demonstrated effectiveness in improving decoding skills (Hill, 2016). Additionally, comprehension-focused strategies, such as reciprocal teaching and explicit instruction, are widely explored in the literature. The incorporation of technology, as seen in computer-assisted reading interventions, is also gaining attention for its potential to engage and individualize instruction. Also, understanding the impact of reading intervention programs on diverse populations is also a key focus. Studies explore interventions tailored for English language learners (ELLs), students with learning disabilities, and those from low socio-economic backgrounds (Bippert & Harmon, 2016). The research underscores the need for culturally responsive interventions that consider linguistic diversity and socio-cultural factors influencing reading development.
Likewise, teacher knowledge and expertise are integral to the success of reading intervention programs. The literature emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development for educators to implement evidence-based practices effectively (Lynch & Prins, 2023). Research examines how collaborative learning communities, coaching models, and teacher training programs may improve reading intervention instructional approaches. Additionally, examining the long-term effects and

sustainability of reading intervention programs is a critical aspect of the study. Studies track students' progress over time, investigating the persistence of intervention gains and potential fade-out effects (Saine et al., 2017). Additionally, research explores the scalability and sustainability of successful intervention models to inform educational policies and practices.

Notably, recent research has reaffirmed that reading intervention programs have a positive effect on reading skills, reading comprehension, reading awareness, and expressive abilities. The importance of improving the reading experience through pre-, during-, and post-reading activities is emphasized by the research of Lee et al. (2021). Enriching the reading environment and improving reading comprehension may be achieved by a variety of reading-related activities, such as applying past knowledge to the reading context, interacting with a variety of texts and text structures, generating predictions and inferences, setting objectives, and using techniques. Moreover, it offers valuable insights into students facing reading difficulties and underscores the effectiveness of enrichment reading programs in addressing these challenges.

Locally, beginning the school year 2022–2023, the Department of Education–Zamboanga del Sur Division introduced the Care for the Non-Readers (CNR) Program, which was previously known as the ANR Program (Arrest for Non-Readers Program), in accordance with the aforementioned department instructions. This division-wide reading program offers beginning and developmental reading to enable children who fall behind in writing and reading to make up lost ground by providing them with specialized one-on-one reading instructor help. The project's objective is to assist children who have been labeled as non-readers and frustrated in becoming independent readers in English, Filipino, and their home tongue (Department of Education, 2022). The difficulties teachers have in putting the program into practice, their suggested solutions, and the stark differences in the assessments of respondents on the program's efficacy were highlighted in this program.

*Experiences of Non-Readers Relative to Reading Intervention Programs*
One fundamental aspect of assessing a reading intervention program is analyzing the non-reader's progress in specific reading skills (Baki, 2020). This includes measuring improvements in fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition. Pre- and post-intervention assessments, such as standardized tests, reading comprehension exercises, and vocabulary tests, provide quantitative data on individual and group-level advancements. Furthermore, one-on-one assessments that require students to read aloud a passage for a predetermined amount of time—typically one minute—are frequently used to measure reading fluency, which is described as the capacity to read related information rapidly, accurately, and expressively (Rasinski, 20019). However, caution is advised by Valencia et al. (2017), suggesting that assessing oral reading of non-readers within a short timeframe might lead to an overestimation of students'
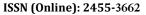
reading rates. In contrast, Hale et al. (2017) found that secondary students prefer silent reading, citing challenges in comprehension when reading orally.

Many tactics, such as partnered reading, reading while listening, and aided reading, have been used to alleviate reading issues. However, individual implementation of these strategies shows mixed results, while reading intervention programs combining these strategies prove more effective in enhancing reading fluency and comprehension (Yapp et al., 2021). Ala and Derequito (2022) have identified several other elements that can lead to enhanced reading skills. These aspects include the use of suitable grouping techniques, instructional strategies, longer practice opportunities with feedback, and task decomposition into reduced components. These factors collectively result in extensive growth in reading skills.

From another point of view, individuals struggling with reading skills may struggle to grasp the intended meaning of the text (Cheng, 2019). Poor readers, who grapple with reading challenges related to perceiving meaning coherently, using strategies, and connecting prior knowledge to new information, often face significant reading difficulties. Additionally, non-readers encountering these reading difficulties tend to become easily distracted and anxious when reading. The primary goal of reading is comprehension, and as reading difficulties heighten individual anxiety levels, they further impede reading comprehension (Moncayo-Herrera, 2022). Consequently, these individuals have limited reading experience, hindering the development of their vocabulary and accumulation of information.

In the Philippines, one of the main challenges facing the education system is the reading proficiency of Filipino students, especially in public school settings. According to UNICEF (2020), with an efficiency score of just 10%, the Philippines had the second-lowest performance in reading, just above Laos, which had an efficiency score of only 2%. The Philippines employed various institution-level strategies, such as PHIL-IRI and EGRA, to address reading challenges (Pouezevara, 2019). This study seeks to delve into how teachers implement these strategies at both micro- and macro-management levels. It aims to understand how educators employ the data, design programs, and incorporate specific reading guidelines to improve the reading abilities of their students, particularly the non-readers. In the country, addressing the challenges of reading programs and interventions is a complex endeavor. One of the foremost hurdles is the limited access to quality reading materials, particularly in underprivileged schools and remote areas. Many schools lack a sufficient variety of reading resources, including books suitable for different age groups and interests.

Furthermore, the advent of digital technology has introduced a new challenge, as students increasingly divert their attention from physical books to screens (Pavek & Vaughan, 2023). This shift in reading habits, coupled with excessive screen time, can

negatively impact students' reading comprehension abilities. Also, parental involvement, a critical component of a child's reading development, can be problematic. Many parents lack the time, education, or resources to effectively support their children's reading habits, leaving a gap in their reading development (Benting & Valle, 2023). Infrastructure and resource allocation in schools can hinder reading programs. The absence of libraries and reading corners, along with inadequate resources for these programs, can affect both the quality and reach of reading interventions.

The literature underscores the critical necessity of research to evaluate the experiences and challenges faced by non-readers in their involvement in reading programs and interventions, emphasizing the complexities of reading challenges and the need for tailored strategies. Despite the global implementation of diverse reading programs, there exists a gap in understanding their impact. Factors contributing to improved reading skills, including grouping practices, instructional strategy, practice opportunities, and task breakdown, underscore the necessity of understanding their interactions. The persistent challenges in addressing reading difficulties globally emphasize the need for nuanced research, guiding the development of targeted interventions. Limited access to quality reading materials, inadequately trained teachers, and socioeconomic disparities underscored the urgency of research to inform targeted interventions, particularly in resource-constrained contexts. This literature emphasizes the pressing need for research to comprehensively investigate the journey of non-readers to being readers.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The main purpose of this multiple case study is to explore the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of Junior High School non-readers enrolled in the Davao Region for SY 2023-2024 who are involved in the Reading Intervention Programs.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. What are the experiences of junior high school non-readers involved in reading intervention programs?
2. How do these students navigate the challenges of their experience?
3. What explains the similarities and differences of each case?

## METHODS
### Research Design
This study is qualitative in nature employing a multiple case study. Through meticulous, in-depth data gathering incorporating several sources of information, a multiple case study technique investigates a real-life, modern bounded system (a case) or several bounded systems (cases) across time (Creswell, 2013). A multiple-case study design was used to find out about the experiences, difficulties, and viewpoints of non-readers in junior high schools who are involved in reading intervention programs.

Particularly, I utilized five distinct cases of junior high school non-readers to meet the requirements for a multiple case study. This approach is the most suitable since there were five cases of non-readers participating in reading intervention programs. Through in-person interviews, the experiences of each non-reader were ascertained.

### Participants
The selection of five reading program participants representing the five cases adhered to the principles of proper representation. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were therefore set and adhered to ensure that each case in point is distinct and to conjointly highlight the phenomenon of the viewpoints and experiences of non-readers participating in reading intervention programs within the framework of junior high public schools. To support the claims and findings even further, it was imperative to guarantee that research participants have verifiable access to important knowledge concerning the phenomenon under investigation. As such, the study's participants were chosen using Patton's (2002) purposive sampling technique. Accordingly, Creswell (2013) stated that a multiple-case study only needs three to five participants.

Participants were identified based on the following inclusion criteria for each of the five cases I used in this study. Regular junior high school students from Grades 7-10 who have been identified to be non-readers by the public schools' reading coordinators using the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Graded Passages, an individualized assessment tool used to record the student's performance in reading officially utilized by the Department of Education were deemed necessary to participate in my study. They were officially enrolled in the Learner Information System (LIS) of Davao Region public schools. This study excluded students from the elementary, senior high school, and college departments based on certain exclusion criteria. Students from private schools were not included in this research either.

A Grade 7 non-reader student is the first case unit for this study. Having recently done the transition from elementary to high school days, this participant still is struggling with reading while adjusting as a junior high school student. Also, a Grade 8 non-reader who is underweight (DepEd-Based Term) is the second case unit for this study. This student experienced difficult subjects and academic tasks and is identified to be a non-reader. Next, a Grade 9 non-reader from a broken family is the third case unit for this study. This student encountered different and more difficult experiences and challenges emotionally and mentally compared to other students and is still struggling with reading. A Grade 10 non-reader who is working part-time is the fourth case unit for this study. This student experienced difficulties balancing academic and work life and is identified as a non-reader by the reading coordinator. Lastly, for the fifth case, I invited a learner with special educational needs in junior high school. She is diagnosed as a person with a Learning disability (LD).

## Procedure

As mentioned in the preceding sections of this research, there are at least five human participants involved in this study. Proper protocol was adhered to in the data collection.

Before the study's implementation, a letter of approval was sought from the University of the Immaculate Conception's Graduate School Dean. Following the dean's approval is the Research Ethics Committee's (REC) approval. The endorsement from the dean and the approval from REC were attached to my letter asking permission from the superintendents of Davao Region schools. Similarly, a letter asking permission to conduct the study was given to school heads, reading coordinators, parents or guardians, and to the students.

When approved to proceed with the collection of data, the participants along with their parents and reading teachers were given an orientation on the study's relevance. In addition, a signed Informed Consent Form indicating their voluntary involvement in the study was requested of them. Since the participants are minors, permission from parents or guardians including the recording of the in-person interviews was secured. The participants were then informed by the researcher on how their confidentiality will be protected. They were also assured that the data collected would be solely used for this research.

The corresponding research participants were subjected to an in-person interview. This is to learn more about their reading intervention program experiences and coping mechanisms for all the difficulties they encountered. The audio-recorded interview was used for cross-validation of the interview notes.

Additionally, one-on-one in-depth interviews were held to capture the participants' lived experiences. I welcomed the participants and advised them of the responsibilities at hand, including the time and location chosen to accommodate everyone.

In the conduct of the in-depth interview, I used the prepared facilitating set of questions and gave follow-up questions to ensure saturation of answers, thus, gathering the needed data. During the conduct of the interview, I discussed thoroughly the ethical considerations with the participants. There were five participants for the in-depth interview.

Finally, I played the role of transcriber. I adhered to the standards of transcribing data, and I accurately transcribed the recordings. Finally, I took action as the sample selector and data analyst where I examined and analyzed the transcripts and conducted thematic analysis. Thus, this role underpinned the value of transparency and dedication to contribute significant findings to the body of knowledge on non-readers involved in reading intervention programs.

## Data Analysis

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, I analyzed my data in six phases: First by familiarizing myself with the data, second by generating initial codes, third by searching for themes, fourth by reviewing potential themes, fifth by defining and naming themes, and sixth by producing the report. Primarily, I immersed myself in the data during this phase by reading and rereading the transcripts of the in-person interviews. The audio recording was listened to the first time the transcript was read. Upon reading the transcript the second time, it was seen as data rather than a transcript. Notes were prepared for initial codes on the third attempt. Every instance of non-readers received this treatment. I used code to do a methodical study of my data. Codes were recognized and assigned a label for an aspect of my data that could be pertinent to the topics under investigation. Finding topics was the third step. The coded data were examined in this step to find instances where the codes overlap and are similar. The codes were created, particularly the ones that represented or explained a consistent and significant trend in the data. The coded data were then examined to look for emerging themes through a recursive approach. I started by comparing the themes to the compiled data extracts and investigated whether the themes made sense to the data. The themes that directly answered my research questions were designated in this phase. Every subject of the study questions was covered in detail and analyzed in the last step. The discussion and interpretation stage of my data analysis was the last one. In this section, I presented the cross-case analysis and my study findings' interpretation.
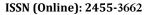
## Ethical Considerations

This research was carefully reviewed by the University of the Immaculate Conception's Research Ethics Committee, which evaluated it according to the ten established principles of research ethics: 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. This was thoroughly reviewed to ensure that the ethical principles were consistently followed throughout the research process, mainly on protecting the rights and well-being of human participants, particularly those who are vulnerable or at risk.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
### Participants' Profile

Table 1 presented a detailed profile of each participant involved in the study, offering valuable insights into their individual characteristics, backgrounds, and reading-related experiences. Each case represents a unique narrative, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing reading development and participation in reading programs. Case 1, a 14-year-old male in Grade 7, is identified as a non-reader. Despite being in Grade 7, he only started learning to read in Grade 6. He started joining the program for a year since he is still in the Grade 7 level. His delay in acquiring reading skills could be attributed to various factors, such as learning disabilities, lack of early literacy exposure, or other underlying challenges. Case 2, a 13-year-old male in Grade 8, faces the additional challenge of being underweight. Being in his second year as a junior high school student, he started participating in the program for two years.

While his underweight status may not directly impact his reading abilities, it could be indicative of underlying health issues or nutritional deficiencies that could affect his overall well-being and ability to focus on learning, including reading. Case 3, a 15-year-old female in Grade 9, comes from a broken family and started learning to read only in Grade 9. Despite being in Grade 9, she only started joining the school's reading program two years ago due to the pandemic. Her late start in learning to read could be due to various factors related to her family situation, such as limited access to educational resources or disruptions in her schooling. Case 4, a 17-year-old male in Grade 10, works part-time and started attending the reading intervention program of the school in Grade 9 since it was pandemic when he entered junior high school. His part-time work could significantly impact his time and energy available for studying and reading, potentially hindering his academic progress. For the last case, Case 5, a 17-year-old female classified as non-graded with a learning disability, lives with her aunt and began joining the school's reading intervention program for one year since this is her first school year as a secondary student. Her classification as non-graded and her learning disability indicate additional challenges in her educational journey.

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

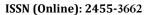| Case Unit | Age | Gender | Grade Level | Years as Reading Program Participant | Code |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Case 1 - Grade 7 | 14 | Male | 7 | 1 | **JHS-7** |
| Case 2 - Grade 8 | 13 | Male | 8 | 2 | **JHS-8** |
| Case 3 - Grade 9 | 15 | Female | 9 | 2 | **JHS-9** |
| Case 4 - Grade 10 | 17 | Male | 10 | 2 | **JHS-10** |
| Case 5 – LSEN | 17 | Female | Non-graded | 1 | **JHS-NG** |

**Presentation of Findings**
**Experiences.** The cross-analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) model revealed eight common themes, with four highlighting positive experiences and four highlighting negative experiences. As shown in Table 2, these themes are: *Recognizing the Importance of Reading, Having a Supportive Environment in the Reading, Being Determined to Enhance Reading, and Gaining Progress and Improvement in Reading for positive experiences; Holding Unpleasant Emotions, Facing Social Hostilities, Having Inadequate Familial Support, and Doing Unfavorable Learning Practices for negative experiences.*

**Table 2. Experiences of the Learners Involved in the Reading Program**

| Essential Theme | Core Ideas |
|---|---|
| **Positive Experiences** | |
| Recognizing the Importance of Reading | -Understanding the importance of reading<br>-Attending reading sessions<br>-Perceiving reading as a tool for empowerment<br>-Seeing reading as a pathway to personal growth |
| Having a Supportive Environment in the Reading | -Receiving assistance from teachers<br>-Getting support from parents and guardians<br>-Interacting positively with peers in collaborative reading activities<br>-Having access to reading materials<br>-Engaging in the reading practice session |
| Being Determined to Enhance Reading | -Persisting in their efforts to improve their reading skills<br>-Exhibiting a strong commitment<br>-Demonstrating a willingness to overcome challenges<br>-Remaining motivated to achieve their goals<br>-Seeking opportunities to enhance literacy skills |
| Gaining Progress and Improvement in Reading | -Exhibiting tangible progress and improvement<br>-Enhancing academic performance and self-esteem<br>-Receiving positive feedback on their progress<br>-Increasing engagement and participation<br>-Acquiring improved comprehension<br>-Understanding basic vocabulary |
| **Negative Experiences** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Holding Unpleasant Emotions | -Experiencing shyness and embarrassment in the reading sessions<br>-Being self-consciousness and having fear of judgment<br>-Enduring fatigue and familial responsibilities<br>-Having limited support from parents, and guardians<br>-Being discouraged by challenges |
| Facing Social Hostilities | -Being afraid of reading aloud<br>-Experiencing humiliation and ridicule from classmates<br>-Longing for a supportive and inclusive environment<br>-Suffering from bullying<br>-Facing negative physical discipline from parents |
| Having Inadequate Familial Support | -Lacking direct instruction at home about reading<br>-Being burdened by familial responsibilities<br>-Experiencing feelings of isolation at home when reading<br>-Not receiving additional practice and reinforcement<br>-Needing family involvement |
| Doing Unfavorable Learning Practices | -Facing distractions from electronic devices<br>-Experiencing fatigue from early morning sessions and long commutes to school<br>-Being absent due to sickness<br>-Declining participation and engagement<br>-Struggling to focus or maintain interest |

*Recognizing the Importance of Reading.* The learners' recognition of the importance of reading is a pivotal aspect of their experiences within the intervention program, reflecting not only an understanding of its intrinsic value but also a profound acknowledgment of its broader implications for personal and academic growth. Across the cases, it becomes evident that these learners perceive reading as more than just a requisite skill for educational advancement; rather, they view it as a gateway to knowledge, empowerment, and self-improvement. They experienced slowly learning about letters, sounds, and simple words. Their expressions of eagerness and willingness to enhance their reading proficiency underscore a deep-seated appreciation for literacy and its transformative potential in shaping their lives. Case 1 elaborated:

> *Maayo kayo ang programa sama sa ako kay tabang jud siya sa mga parehas nako na maglisod ug basa. Mapasalamaton ko kay sa hinay-hinay nakabalo nako ug* letters, sounds *ug mga sayon nga* words, Sir. *Sa sugod, gitudluan jud ko ni* Ma'am *sa* letters ug sounds. *(Case1_35)*

The program is truly helpful for children like me who are struggling with reading. I am thankful because I slowly learned about letters, sounds, and simple words. My teacher taught me about letters and sounds since the beginning of the program.

*Having a Supportive Environment in the Reading.* In terms of educational interventions, the significance of a supportive environment cannot be overstated, especially within reading programs aimed at enhancing literacy skills among learners. The experiences of some learners in the reading intervention program underscore the pivotal role played by teachers, parents, and guardians in nurturing a supportive atmosphere conducive to their progress and development. Case 4 shared:
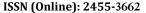
> *Nakabalo-kabalo na kog basa,* Sir. *Ok kaayo. Nakatuon jud kog basa. Pasalamat jud ko ka* Ma'am *kay gitabangan jud ko niya. Wala jud gipabati nya sa ako nga lahi ko sa uban. Iya jud kong gitabangan hantod sa nakabasa nako gamay. (Case4_149)*

I slowly learned to read, Sir. Very okay. I learned how to read. I thank Ma'am because she helped me. She never made me feel like I was different. She helped me until I slowly learned to read.

*Being Determined to Enhance Reading.* The learners' experiences in the reading intervention program illuminate a profound testament to the determination inherent within them. Despite encountering obstacles ranging from personal insecurities to familial responsibilities, everyone displays a determined spirit that propels them forward in their quest for improved literacy. Despite facing challenges balancing schoolwork with household duties, Case 3 exhibits remarkable perseverance in her pursuit of knowledge. Her unwavering determination to succeed serves as a beacon of hope amidst adversity, inspiring others to persevere in the face of hardship. She emphasized:

> *Ug* time *na pud sa pagbasa, ako jud mag una didto samong* reading center. *Masganahan na jud ko mutambong sa among pagbasa kay nakita nako nga gaimprove na jud gamay. Tungod sad sa pagbasa, nabawasan gamay akong kaulaw. (Case3_70)*

And if it's time for reading, I am always the first one to arrive in the center. I am more motivated to attend the reading program because I saw that I somehow

improved. Because of the reading, my shyness was minimized.

*Gaining Progress and Improvement in Reading.* The progress and improvement demonstrated by the learners in their reading abilities underscore the impact of the intervention program and supportive interventions on their educational journey. Despite initial struggles and obstacles, each learner exhibits tangible advancements in their literacy skills, reflecting their dedication and perseverance in the pursuit of academic excellence. For instance, Case 2's experience highlights the remarkable progress achieved through consistent effort and support. The intervention program equips him with the tools and strategies necessary to overcome obstacles and unlock his full potential as a reader particularly when the texts are in Filipino language. When asked about his development in understanding simple sentences Case 2 mentioned:

> *Masabtan nako direcho pag Tagalog among ginabasa, Sir. Masdali pud sa ako makasabot ug magbuhat sa mga buhatonon pag Tagalog ang ihatag ni* Ma'am. *Pag ang* assignment *ni* Ma'am *kay sa* English *na, magpatabang nako ni Mama. (Case2_139)*

I can understand it directly when we read Tagalog materials, Sir. It was also easier for me to understand and accomplish the activities when my teacher gave me Tagalog reading materials. If the assignment is for English, I would seek my mother's help.

*Holding Unpleasant Emotions.* Unpleasant emotions encountered by the learners in their reading intervention program represent significant obstacles that can impede their educational journey and hinder their progress. Each learner's experience reflects a unique set of challenges that range from experiencing shyness to enduring familial responsibilities, all of which pose significant barriers to their learning experience. Case 5's experience of caring for her cousin and mute-deaf sibling underscores the challenges of managing competing priorities and responsibilities, which can hinder her ability to fully engage in the program and dedicate time to improving her reading skills. She mentioned:

> *Kulang pud ko sa* time *kay bantay pud ko sa anak sa akong Tita. Gustohon man jud nako* Sir *oy, wala jud koy oras magbuhat sa mga ginapadala ni* Ma'am *na* activities *kay daghan kog trabaho. Dili pud ko matabangan sa akong manghod kay amang siya. (Case5_102)*

I don't have enough time because I am looking after the child of my Tita. No matter how I wanted to do it, I didn't have time to do the activities assigned by my teacher to me because I had tasks to do. My brother could not help me because he is mute-deaf.

*Facing Social Hostilities.* The social hostilities encountered by some learners in their reading intervention program can have profound effects on their emotional well-being, self-esteem, and

motivation to engage in learning activities. Across the experiences of the learners, instances of humiliation and ridicule from classmates due to difficulties with reading emerge as significant challenges that exacerbate feelings of embarrassment and anxiety. For example, Case 5's encounters with humiliation from peers due to her struggles with reading underscore the damaging effects of ridicule on learners' emotional well-being and motivation to participate in reading activities. Case 5 experienced this:

> *Naulawan ko. Gipakaulawan ko sa mga classmates nako sa una. Tawagon ko nila ug bugo kay edaran nako pero dili gihapon ko kabalo mobasa. Maong usahay dili na lang nako ipahalata nga maglisod ko ug basa,* Sir. *(Case5_21)*
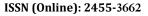
I was humiliated. I was humiliated by my classmates before. They would call me stupid because I'm too old not to be able to read. That's why sometimes, I just don't make it obvious that I was struggling with reading.

*Having Inadequate Familial Support.* The experiences of the learners highlight the profound impact that inadequate support at home can have on their reading intervention program. For many learners, the absence of direct instruction and encouragement from family members or guardians significantly complicates their efforts to improve their reading skills and engage meaningfully in the program. Case 3's experience highlights the challenges faced by learners from broken families with limited parental support. The lack of direct instruction or assistance at home causes her struggles, leaving her with limited resources to navigate her educational journey effectively. Case 3's grandfather admitted:

> *Sa tinuod* Sir, *malooy jud ko sa akong apo. Mohilak na usahay* Sir *nga dili makatambong kay walay masaligan pag magsakit ko. Mouli pa gane na usahay* Sir *kay wa ko nasayod sakong tambal. (Case3_PG_50)*

Sir, I feel sorry for my grandchild. She cried sometimes Sir every time she couldn't attend because there was no one to rely on when I got sick. She still has to go home sometimes, Sir, because I don't know my medicines.

*Doing Unfavorable Learning Practices.* The experiences of the learners shed light on the significant impact of unfavorable learning practices on their participation and engagement in the reading intervention program. These practices, ranging from facing distractions from electronic devices to struggling to focus or maintain interest, present additional challenges that learners must navigate in their educational journey. Case 2's experience highlights the disruptive influence of distractions from electronic devices on learning. The prevalence of electronic devices and their potential to divert attention away from learning activities can hinder focus and concentration, impeding learners' ability to fully engage with reading materials and participate effectively in the program. His teacher confirmed:

He was unable to sustain his drive because there were cases where he was absent due to sickness and excessive use of cellphones. (*Case2_T_TR-2_18*)

**Coping Strategies.** The cross-analysis of the five study cases revealed four common themes for navigating the challenges encountered in their involvement in the reading intervention program. As shown in Table 3, four emerging themes were presented: *Engaging in Relaxation Activities, Seeking Help from Teachers and Parents, Involving Parents or Guardians in Doing the Tasks, and Following a Structured Reading Schedule.*

**Table 3. Navigating the Challenges of the Experiences of the Learners Involved in the Reading Program**

| Essential Theme | Core Ideas in Navigating the Challenges | Challenges |
|---|---|---|
| Engaging in Relaxation Activities | -Being more sociable to address shyness and insecurities during reading activities<br>-Motivating oneself after an embarrassing encounter in classroom reading<br>-Having a good rest or break to overcome fatigue in reading exercises and homework | Holding Unpleasant Emotions During and After Reading Classes |
| Seeking Help from Teachers and Parents | -Asking for advice to overcome humiliation and ridicule from classmates<br>- Reporting cases of bullying to teachers<br>-Facing negative physical discipline from parents or guardians | Facing Social Hostilities while Participating in the Reading Intervention Program |
| Involving Parents or Guardians in Doing the Tasks | -Asking for help from parents or guardians in accomplishing the activities<br>-Communicating openly with family<br>-Practicing at home with parents or guardians | Having Inadequate Familial Support to Reinforce Reading |
| Following a Structured Reading Schedule | -Incorporating fun elements into the reading activities' schedule<br>-Utilizing interactive materials<br>-Setting a specific time for reading<br>-Reducing time in going out with friends and using of cellphones | Doing Unfavorable Learning Practices that Affect Reading Development |

*Engaging in Relaxation Activities.* Despite holding unpleasant emotions during and after reading classes such as shyness, embarrassment, anxiety, familial responsibilities, and limited support at home, the learners engage in relaxation activities in their pursuit of improved reading skills. When faced with embarrassment or anxiety about reading aloud in class, they push through their discomfort and continue to participate actively in the program. For instance, Case 1, despite initial shyness and difficulty seeking help, actively engages in the reading program, gradually overcoming barriers while finding time to rest. He highlighted:
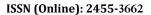
*Ginadasig sad nako akong kaugalingon nga maningkamot. Dili ko pwede nga magdako nga dili kabalo mobasa,* Sir. *Pirmi nako pahinumduman akong sarili nga para sa akong kaugmaon, dapat makabalo jud kog basa. Kapoyan ko usahay pero magpahulay jud ko. (Case1_77)*

I also encouraged myself to strive. I cannot grow up being a non-reader, Sir. I always remind myself that for my future, I should learn to read. I got tired sometimes, so I secured time to rest.

*Seeking Help from Teachers and Parents.* When facing social hostilities while participating in the reading intervention program, the learners benefit from a supportive environment provided by their teachers, parents, and guardians. In the face of challenges such as bullying, embarrassment, and ridicule, the help and guidance offered by these individuals serve as crucial sources of support. In Case 4, the learner appreciates the teacher's support despite work commitments. Every time he experienced bullying, he would immediately report it to his teacher, as he shared:

*Kulba oy. Bullihon man gud ko sa akong mga classmates gud. Kanang makita ko nila gatuon ug basa naa juy mga adlaw nga nay mobully sa ako maong naa pud koy pagduha-duha nga motambong usahay. Gina-ingnan nako si* Ma'am *aron dili na mausab. (Case4_43)*

Nervous. I will be bullied by my classmates. When they saw me learning to read, there were days that they would bully me that's why I was apprehensive to participate sometimes. I told my teacher about it so that it won't happen again.

*Involving Parents or Guardians in Doing the Tasks.* Despite initial struggles, some learners consistently demonstrate progress and improvement in their reading skills over time with the involvement of their parents and guardians. When confronted with challenges such as comprehension difficulties or reluctance to engage with longer texts at home, they sought their parents or guardians' help. Case 2 faces challenges with comprehension and anxiety in English materials but demonstrates consistent progress with the help of his mother. He shared:

> *Masabtan nako direcho pag Tagalog among ginabasa,* Sir. *Masdali pud sa ako makasabot ug magbuhat sa mga buhatonon pag Tagalog ang ihatag ni* Ma'am. *Pag ang* assignment *ni* Ma'am *kay sa* English *na, magpatabang nako ni Mama. (Case2_139)*

I can understand it directly when we read Tagalog materials, Sir. It was also easier for me to understand and accomplish the activities when my teacher gave me Tagalog reading materials. If the assignment is for English, I would seek my mother's help.

*Following a Structured Reading Schedule.* Despite the unfavorable learning practices that they do, the learners maintain a positive outlook for the opportunity to participate in the reading program. They acknowledged the benefits of the structured reading program schedule amidst their struggles with distractions from electronic devices, fatigue from early morning sessions and long commutes to school, and being absent due to sickness. The incorporation of fun elements in the activities, the utilization of interactive materials, the setting of a specific time for reading, and the reduction of time in going out with friends and using cellphones, strengthen their motivation to continue participating in the program. In Case 2, despite experiencing fatigue, sickness, and anxiety when reading aloud in class, the learner finds positive aspects in the reading program by setting a specific time for reading and reducing time in going out with friends and using cellphones. He stated:
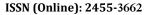
> *Katong mga adlaw nakaabsent ko kay kapoyan ko, magmata ug sayo ug masakit ko, ginalikayan nako. Magsayo kog katulog. Unya kanang sa dula likayan sa nako kung ting basa. (Case2_119)*

Those days when I was absent because I felt tired, I woke up early and I was sick, I prevented them from happening again. I sleep early. As for playing, I avoid it when we have a reading session.

**Similarities and Differences**. As part of the cross-case analysis, similarities and differences among cases are analyzed in the context of the junior high school non-readers involved in the implementation of reading intervention programs. Generally, the five cases were similar except for the supportive familial environment and gaining progress in reading for Cases 3 and 5. Anent to navigating the challenges of their experiences, all cases show significant advancements in their reading skills over time except for Case 5 who exhibited minimal improvement due to a lack of parental support and a learning disability. Underscored in Table 4 are the similarities and differences between the five cases in the context of experiences and navigating the challenges, where the check mark (✓) indicates the presence of the theme in a case and an X-mark (X) indicates the absence of the same.

**Table 4.** *Similarities and Differences of Experiences and Navigating the Challenges of the Learners Involved in the Reading Program*

| Themes on Experiences | GRADE 7 NON-READER (Case 1) | GRADE 8 NON-READER (Case 2) | GRADE 9 NON-READER (Case 3) | GRADE 10 NON-READER (Case 4) | LSENs NON-READER (Case 5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Recognizing the Importance of Reading | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Having a Supportive Environment in the Reading | ✓ | ✓ | X | ✓ | X |
| Being Determined to Enhance Reading | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Gaining Progress and Improvement in Reading | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | X |
| Holding Unpleasant Emotions | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Facing Social Hostilities | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Having Inadequate Familial Support | X | X | ✓ | X | ✓ |
| Doing Unfavorable Learning Practices | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Themes on Navigating Challenges** | **GRADE 7 NON-READER (Case 1)** | **GRADE 8 NON-READER (Case 2)** | **GRADE 9 NON-READER (Case 3)** | **GRADE 10 NON-READER (Case 4)** | **LSENs NON-** |

| | | | | | READER (Case 5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Engaging in Relaxation Activities | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Seeking Help from Teachers and Parents | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Involving Parents or Guardians in Doing the Tasks | ✓ | ✓ | X | ✓ | X |
| Following a Structured Reading Schedule | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

**Implications**

The experiences of learners engaged in the reading intervention program yield significant implications for educational practices aimed at bolstering literacy development and aiding learners in surmounting obstacles. Firstly, educators should underscore the multifaceted importance of literacy, positioning it not solely as an academic requisite but also as a tool for personal advancement, critical thought, and empowerment. By fostering a comprehensive understanding of reading's broader implications, educators can imbue learners with a deeper appreciation for literacy, motivating active participation in literacy-focused endeavors.

Secondly, the creation of supportive and friendly environments by educators and caregivers is paramount. Through tailored support, acknowledgment of individual needs, and the cultivation of a compassionate and encouraging culture, educators can empower learners to navigate challenges and thrive academically.

Additionally, educators should prioritize the promotion of determination and relaxation activities among learners. Emphasizing the significance of persistence in the face of adversity, educators can provide opportunities for learners to confront and conquer obstacles, fostering resilience and nurturing a growth-oriented mindset conducive to continual learning and advancement. Moreover, fostering parental involvement in educational opportunities can enhance learner motivation and engagement. Educators should accentuate the positive facets of learning experiences, celebrate progress and accomplishments, and instill a culture of gratitude and enthusiasm for learning.
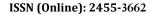
Tailoring interventions and support to address individual needs is essential for optimizing outcomes in intervention programs. Educators must recognize and address variances in support requirements, whether relating to social dynamics, home environments, or external factors. By delivering personalized support, educators ensure that all learners have equitable opportunities to succeed in their educational journey.

Lastly, the incorporation of enjoyable learning experiences in a structured reading intervention program is crucial. Integrating interactive elements into the curriculum, such as games and collaborative activities, can enhance learner engagement and motivation. Educators should explore innovative teaching methodologies through training to become more inclusive of the different needs of the learners.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The experiences of learners involved in the reading program reveal a nuanced understanding of both positive and negative aspects of their educational journey. Across the five study cases, several common themes emerge, highlighting both the challenges and successes encountered by learners in their pursuit of improved literacy skills. The learners recognizing the importance of reading reflect a profound understanding of its multifaceted significance in their lives. Also, having supportive environments provided by teachers and guardians is instrumental in nurturing the learners' progress and development within the intervention program. Despite facing challenges such as shyness, embarrassment, social hostilities, and limited support at home, everyone displays an indomitable spirit that propels them forward in their quest for improved literacy. Additionally, unfavorable learning practices such as distractions, sickness, fatigue, and familial responsibilities add another layer of complexity to the learning experience, further hindering learners' ability to fully engage in reading activities.

The cross-analysis of the five study cases unveiled four common themes that underscore the rich and diverse experiences of learners involved in the reading program. Firstly, the theme of engaging in relaxation activities permeates each case, showcasing how learners navigate through challenges of holding unpleasant emotions such as shyness, embarrassment, insecurities, anxiety, familial responsibilities, and limited support at home with unwavering perseverance. Secondly, the learners consistently seek help from teachers and parents towards the reading program despite facing social hostilities. In the face of trials such as bullying, embarrassment, and ridicule, the help and guidance offered by these individuals serve as fundamental sources of support. Moreover, the learners benefit immensely from the involvement of parents or guardians in doing the reading tasks. Lastly, learners acknowledged the benefits of the structured reading program schedule to minimize unfavorable learning practices such as their struggles with distractions from electronic devices, fatigue from early morning sessions and long commutes to school and being absent due to sickness. By incorporating fun activities, using interactive materials, setting a dedicated time for reading, and limiting time spent with friends and screen use, the

program can boost students' motivation to continue engaging with the reading activities.

As a researcher delving into the experiences of learners in reading intervention programs, this study resonates deeply with my own journey as a teacher and a reading coordinator. It reaffirms the profound impact of supportive environments and tailored interventions on learners' progress and resilience. Moreover, it underscores the importance of inclusivity and personalized support in educational practices, aligning closely with my own beliefs as a researcher. This study has not only enriched my understanding of literacy development but has also inspired me to advocate for more inclusive and effective educational practices in my future research endeavors.
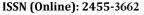
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