

Revisiting Filipino Pupils' Reading Ability Post-Pandemic: Basis for a Remediation Program

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Abstract— Reading is one of a person's most important skills. It is the world's window. Reading abilities are among the most severely impacted by the pandemic. As a result, this research was carried out. This quantitative study employed a descriptive method in analyzing the data gathered. This study involved 79 pupils enrolled in Grades 1 to 3 in a public elementary school. It was found that pupils in lower elementary grades have low reading levels – Non-reader and Frustration levels. Meanwhile, the parent's highest educational attainment has some implications for their children's reading abilities. In contrast, parents' employment status could not be associated with pupils' reading levels.

Keywords— Literacy, Pupils, Reading ability and levels, Remediation program.

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is essential for achievement in the many diverse socioeconomic industries. Reading is a crucial literacy skill that everyone should have. Meanwhile, reading comprehension and fluency are highly valued skills essential for social and economic progress. Even though many kids pick up reading very fast, many youngsters still struggle with reading.

As Cimmiyotti (2013) have discussed, reading is the foundation of all academic learning. He provided evidence for his assertion by saying that children who cannot read fluently and thoroughly cannot benefit from the resources offered by the school and can barely obtain the material on their own. Access to knowledge in all disciplines covered by the school curriculum is made possible by reading, a cognitive activity.

Recognizing and accurately interpreting words in context, understanding sentences of any complexity, and understanding the major points and importance of what is read are all required skills when reading. This proficiency entails silently reading for key concepts and details at all cognitive levels and translating, interpreting, and extrapolating (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2007).

Meanwhile, several factors have been primarily connected to learners' academic progress. Most students handle their academic workload daily, although this is often due to poor reading comprehension and inadequate study habits. There are many meanings associated with reading, but it's important to keep in mind that reading extends beyond spoken communication. Reading must convey the core or fundamental meaning to the decoder (Iheakanwa, Obro, and Akpochafo, 2021). Additionally, the research by Sanford (2015) uncovered a number of significant traits that impair students' reading

comprehension. When reading, a variety of cognitive processes are used to help with comprehension. A child with strong vocabulary skills can read well, just like one with strong grammar skills. Unfortunately, because they struggle with reading, kids avoid reading a lot. Refusing to read has a number of consequences since reading affects vocabulary development. As a result, vocabulary expansion is also reduced when reading is not a habit or a strong activity. Kids need a wide vocabulary to understand what they read because they continually interpret words to give them meaning while reading.

The results of the Adult Skills Survey demonstrated the importance of literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving abilities for workers in the twenty-first century. Making sophisticated inferences and analyzing textual assertions and arguments are skills that pay better than others. Workers with less literacy, meanwhile, are more likely to be out of a job (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013). This shows that reading literacy has become crucial for successfully engaging in life and the workplace. Reading literacy is crucial for workers and enhancing a nation's competitiveness and cultural soft power. It also barometer a nation's social civilization and total national power (Luo et al., 2016).

The implementation of the K–12 Basic Education Program is tied to the significance of raising students' competitive reading skills. The Department of Education's (DepEd) actions and initiatives to improve the reading skills of Filipino learners by using planned reading and writing activities to teach them and create independent readers and writers were clearly outlined in the Department's Memorandum No. 4, series of 2004, and Administrative Order No. 324. Correspondingly, the nation's public schools must then create graduates who are well-prepared for a variety of difficulties, according to then President Aquino's ten-point education plan, which also incorporates ECARP. In order to support the efficacy of instruction and reading skills, the appropriate evaluation methodologies have been reinforced to evaluate the actual status of students' reading proficiency. One such assessment tool is the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). Assessing learners' reading proficiency through word recognition and reading comprehension in English and Filipino by gathering students' scores on word recognition accuracy and comprehension questions based on a set of reading level criteria (Department of Education, 2018; Aquino & De Vera, 2018).

Despite such efforts, the Philippines still scored 340 in Reading on the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is below the average of participating OECD nations (DepEd, 2019). In the Philippines, UNICEF found that among the 122 nations, schools have been closed to in-person instruction for the longest period of time. As a result, less than 15% of students, or roughly three in every 20, can read simple texts (De Vera, 2022).

This led the researchers to look into the reading skills of pupils in Upper Lapu-Lapu Elementary School in Narra del Norte District, Palawan, Philippines post-pandemic, in order to create a remediation plan that could be put into place to address the newly emergent issue connected to learners' reading skills.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study assessed Grades 1 to 3 pupils' reading abilities in Upper Lapu-Lapu Elementary School in Narra del Norte District, Palawan, Philippines, and what affects their reading abilities. Answers to the questions below were sought.

1. What describes the pupils in terms of:
 - 1.1. Sex;
 - 1.2. Grade level;
 - 1.3. Parents' highest educational attainment; and
 - 1.4. Parents' employment status?
2. What are the pupils' reading levels when grouped according to their sex, grade level, and parents' highest educational attainment and employment status?
3. What factors affect pupils' reading abilities, as perceived by the parents?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Everyone is concerned about the apparent loss in students' literacy abilities, particularly their reading abilities. The situation in question causes teachers the most concern, and they are constantly looking for viable solutions. According to Gurley (2011), reading is a difficult ability that requires the coordination of language processing and eye movement systems. Although other processes influence it, recognizing words is what propels the gaze through text.

Every person's life depends on reading. Reading is used everywhere, and it is believed that a person's life can be improved by their literacy level because it is closely tied to their working life. Reading is regarded as being important. Reading is supposedly the real foundation of most learning. No of the issue, everything begins with the written word. More reading is typically necessary as students move up the educational ladder since the courses get harder and more complex (Philippine Star, 2010).

Because it is often held in society that a person who cannot read is illiterate, reading combats ignorance and discrimination. As a result, reading is a learning method that communicates social rank, hierarchy, and level of schooling (Barredo, Viray & Galimba, 2022). Reading is considered crucial to a person's total growth, and the ability to read and write is frequently seen as a sign of education (Marual-

Gillaco, 2014). Reading is, therefore, necessary for someone to fully comprehend what is happening in his or her world.

Reading literacy is viewed as a foundation for full participation in contemporary society by PISA 2018, which calls for students to incorporate and apply textual information with prior knowledge. In the same way, reading literacy is defined by PISA 2018 as "understanding, evaluating, reflecting on, and engaging with texts in order to achieve one's goals, develop one's knowledge and potential, and participate in society." According to the description provided above, reading literacy is no longer a skill that is only learned during the formative years of education, but rather an evolving skill and technique that places more emphasis on the use and acquisition of knowledge than on its collection and retention (OECD, 2019).

A program designed to make every Filipino learner a reader and writer has been put into place in the Philippines by the education bureau. The K-12 Basic Education Program, or the Enhanced Basic Education Curriculum, directly supports the aforementioned goal by emphasizing the development of competitive reading skills among Filipino students. The introduction of the Department of Education's "Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP)," which offers students in public schools structured reading and writing instruction that helps students become independent readers and writers, demonstrated the Department's commitment to raising literacy levels (Aquino & De Vera, 2018; DepEd, 2018; Marual-Gillaco, 2014).

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), which directly addresses the Department's objective of making every Filipino kid a reader, was implemented with help from the Department of Education. The informal reading inventory known as the Phil-IRI uses graded passages "to measure an individual student's performance in oral reading, silent reading, and listening comprehension" to ascertain the student's degrees of independence, instruction, and frustration. The Phil-IRI measures students' abilities and overall reading performance, and the information obtained through it "may be utilized to develop or adapt classroom, small group, or individualized instruction to fit the needs and abilities of the students." As a result, it must be used in conjunction with other trustworthy and validated reading assessment methods (DepEd, 2018).

A strong reading comprehension would imply understanding the author's points of view and his intended message. However, a person's capacity for reading and decoding the meaning of the words he reads is influenced by various circumstances. Various circumstances can influence the capacity of a learner to read.

A study found that the readers' background, classroom tasks, and strategies are among the major factors influencing reading. Other factors such as "motivation, learning style, age, sex, cognitive style, intelligence, aptitude, personality, sex, attitude, nationality, learning beliefs, classroom setting, teaching methods, and tasks" also affect one's reading abilities (Yang, 2016). Similarly, gender, age, word recognition skills, and reading habits indicates one's reading levels (Duncan et al., 2016).

Furthermore, reading strategy has greatly impacted pupils' ability to comprehend what they read. Students might comprehend the primary idea of a piece, clarify strange words or sentences, and cut down on their reading time by using reading methods. When reading texts, readers can overcome obstacles using strategies (Ahmadi & Pourhossein Gilakjani, 2012). Reading techniques must be practiced to improve pupils' reading comprehension and overcome reading-related issues and challenges.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study's design was Quantitative Design, using a Descriptive method to determine the pupils' profiles, reading levels, and the factors affecting their reading abilities. The samples include all the grades 1 to 3 pupils enrolled in the School Year 2022-2023. As for the instrument used to identify the pupils' reading level, passages from DepEd's Phil-IRI were adopted and utilized. Frequency count, percentages, and rank were employed in treating and analyzing this study's data.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Pupils' Description

Table I presents the pupils' profiles or descriptions in terms of grade level, sex, and their parents' highest educational attainment and occupational status. As presented, the 79 sample pupils were composed of learners who are enrolled at grades 1 ($f = 31$), 2 ($f = 29$), and 3 ($f = 19$) levels. In terms of sex, the number of male pupils is greater than females, with a frequency count of 48 or 61% of the total samples.

TABLE I. Pupils' Grade Level and Sex, and their Parents' Educational Attainment and Occupational Status

Grade Level	Frequency count	Percentage
Grade 1	31	39.2%
Grade 2	29	36.7%
Grade 3	19	24.1%
Total	79	100%
Sex	Frequency count	Percentage
Male	48	61%
Female	31	39%
Total	79	100%
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency count	Percentage
Elementary level	8	10%
Elementary graduate	6	8%
High School level	17	22%
High School graduate	25	32%
College level	18	23%
College graduate	5	6%
Total	79	100%
Parents' Employment Status	Frequency count	Percentage
Contractual	4	5%
Regular	3	4%
Self-employed	72	91%
Total	79	100%

The parents' educational attainment and employment status were also taken and presented in Table I, where the majority of the pupils' parents have graduated High School ($f = 25$), reached but were unable to finish college ($f = 18$), and

High School level ($f = 17$). The small number of parents who could not finish ($f = 8$) and graduated only in elementary education ($f = 6$) indicates that they value education. Still, finishing college education is not so popular with the pupils' parents as only 5 or 6% graduated from tertiary education.

As for the parents' employment status, a very large number of parents are self-employed, with a frequency count of 72 or 91%, while contractual ($f = 4$) and regular ($f = 3$) combined only comprise 9%. Parents, in general, are not employed by any private or public institutions as they consider themselves self-employed.

B. Pupils' Reading Levels

The pupils' reading levels, as classified using the DepEd's Phil-IRI to be "non-reader, frustration, instructional, and independent," is presented in the following Tables.

Looking at the presented data in Table II, Grade 1 pupils have a relatively high number of "non-readers" with a frequency of 24 or 77%. As for the reading levels of Grade 2 pupils, there was only 1 pupil who is a non-reader, but there are 18, or 63%, and 10, or 34%, who are still under the frustration and instructional levels, respectively. It is noted that there was no independent reader from Grade 2. While there were zero non-readers from Grade 3, there were still 6, or 32%, who were at the frustration level and 8, or 43%, who were at the instructional level.

TABLE II. Pupils' Reading Level When Grouped According to Grade Level

Reading levels	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Non-Reader	24	77%	1	3%	0	0%
Frustration	4	13%	18	62%	6	32%
Instructional	2	6%	10	34%	8	42%
Independent	1	3%	0	0%	5	26%
Total	31	100%	29	100%	19	100%

Table III presents the pupils' reading levels when grouped according to their sex. While there are more male non-readers ($f = 17$; % = 35.4%) than females ($f = 8$; % = 25.8%), male independent readers ($f = 4$; % = 8.3%), is also greater than the females ($f = 2$; % = 6.5%). The results in the Table below imply that both male and female pupils got low reading levels.

TABLE III. Pupils' Reading Level When Grouped According to Sex

Reading Level	Male		Female	
	f	%	f	%
Non-Reader	17	35.4%	8	25.8%
Frustration	16	33.3%	12	38.7%
Instructional	11	22.9%	9	29.0%
Independent	4	8.3%	2	6.5%
Total	48	100%	31	100%

The pupils' reading level when grouped according to their parents' highest educational attainment is shown in Table IV. It can be noted that non-reader pupils are children of parents who are only elementary level ($f = 5$; % = 62.5) and elementary graduates ($f = 4$; % = 66.7). On the other hand, there were independent readers from pupils whose parents' highest educational attainment is High School Level ($f = 2$; % = 11.8), college-level ($f = 3$; % = 16.7), and college graduate ($f = 1$; % = 20.0).

TABLE IV. Pupils' Reading Level When Grouped According to Parents' Highest Educational Attainment

Reading Level	Elementary Level		Elementary Graduate		High School Level		High School Graduate		College Level		College Graduate	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Non-Reader	5	62.5	4	66.7	5	29.4	8	32.0	3	16.7		
Frustration	1	12.5	2	33.3	7	41.2	11	44.0	6	33.3	1	20.0
Instructional	2	25.0			3	17.6	6	24.0	6	33.3	3	60.0
Independent					2	11.8			3	16.7	1	20.0
Total	8	100	6	100	17	100	25	100	18	100	5	100

The reading level of pupils, when grouped according to their parent's employment status, was revealed in Table V. The three pupils whose parents are in regular employment status were reported to be under the instructional level of reading, while those whose parents are in contractual status were classified as a non-reader ($f = 1$; $\% = 25.0$), Frustration ($f = 2$; $\% = 50.0$), and Instructional ($f = 1$; $\% = 25.0$). As for those whose parents are self-employed, 24, or 33.3%, were non-readers, 26, or 36.1%, were under the Frustration level, 16, or 22.2%, were under the Instructional level, and only 6, or 8.3%, were independent readers. The results imply that the parents' employment status cannot be implicated in their children's reading levels.

TABLE V. Pupils' Reading Level When Grouped According to Parents' Employment Status

Reading Level	Contractual		Regular		Self-Employed	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Non-Reader	1	25.0			24	33.3
Frustration	2	50.0			26	36.1
Instructional	1	25.0	3	100.0	16	22.2
Independent					6	8.3
Total	4	100.0	3	100.0	72	100.0

In general, the pupils' reading levels are low, as reflected in the findings. This means that there was a problem with pupils' reading skills post-pandemic.

C. Factors Affecting Pupils' Reading Abilities

The parents were asked about the factors affecting their children's reading abilities, and seven factors emerged: absenteeism, house chores, lack of guidance and follow-up at home, lack of motivation, not being ready, playfulness, and sickness, and poor nutrition. Among the identified factors, not being ready ranked 1st with a frequency count of 24. It was followed by lack of motivation ($f = 18$) and playfulness ($f = 13$) as 2nd and 3rd. Noticeably, absenteeism ($f = 3$), house chores ($f = 4$), and sickness, and poor nutrition ($f = 6$) were the factors to be least considered that have something to do with the pupils' reading abilities.

TABLE VI. Factors Affecting Pupils' Reading Abilities

Factors	Frequency	Rank
1. absenteeism	3	7th
2. house chores	4	6th
3. Lack of guidance and follow up at home	9	4th
4. Lack of motivation	18	2nd
5. not ready	24	1st
6. playfulness	13	3rd
7. sickness and poor nutrition	6	5th

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful evaluation of this study's findings, it thereby concluded that:

1. Pupils in lower grades, specifically Grades 1 and 2, have a problem with reading ability as most fall under non-reader and frustration levels. With this, the school must devise a reading program intended for early primary-grade pupils to ensure the early development of reading abilities.
2. The parents' educational attainment has implications for their child's reading abilities, as pupils who are non-readers were children of parents who are elementary or high school graduates only. Thus, parents' and teachers' collaborations must be enhanced to improve pupils' reading levels.
3. As indicated in the findings, parents' employment status cannot be implicated with the pupils' reading abilities.

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