

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SIX EIGHT GRADER STRUGGLING READERS IN SAN FRANCISCO INTEGRATED NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT OF VICTORIA

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to determine the needs of the students who struggle in reading based on their lived experiences. Researcher-made interview guide for conducting interviews were used in data gathering which was held from December 2022 to January 2023.

The researcher derived the following significant themes: *socio-emotional impact of reading difficulties, importance of support systems at home and in school, effects of reading deficiencies on academic performance, and effects of reading deficiencies on social interactions.*

The experiences of the participants indicated that the socio-emotional impact of reading difficulties were sadness, fear, and humiliation. They were once humiliated and laughed at when they failed to read in class. Their experiences also highlighted the importance of support systems in school and at home. Results imply that students did not have reliable support system when they were younger. Only P1 and P2 shared experiences about teachers and parents helping them. However, the fact that they were still struggling proves that such support system was not enough.

Participants cannot avoid the anxiety of being called during class discussions since they are aware of their reading shortcomings. Reading difficulties inhibit the participants from reading aloud and working on assignments, particularly those requiring English. Participants emphasized assignments and activities in “English” particularly.

There were two kinds of struggling readers found in this study. First, those who acknowledge their need for assistance from others. Second, those who are afraid of seeking help considering they might get humiliated. The difference in the participants’ perception on their social circles came from their previous experiences.

Results established that the participants were aware of their reading deficiencies and of the past experiences that prevented them from successfully overcoming such. The past experiences of the participants brought fear and trauma, and these have not been resolved. The fear was caused by the teacher and classmates who reacted negatively to their inability to read. The feeling of fear remains in the participants, and they still fear to commit errors in reading and being laughed at.

They need an inclusive learning environment where they will be helped instead of being humiliated. They need an intervention that would bring an increase in their level of self-esteem that has been neglected for quite some time.

The study recommends that school may design a reading intervention program that does not only addresses the reading skills of the students but also their socio-emotional health.

Keywords:

Lived experiences, phenomenology, struggling readers, themes, inclusive learning environment.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an important skill that every individual need to master to become an effective communicator and user of the English language. When a person is able to read, they can easily recognize written symbols and understand them. As a tool subject, reading helps learners to gain competencies in other learning areas. Learners who can read and understand English with ease may find it easier to master lessons in subjects that use it as the medium of instruction.

It is absolute that having the capacity to read with comprehension is one of the most fundamental and vital talents that an individual should possess to be successful in life (Ranjan, 2021). However, for some people, it is a difficult task because of the complexity of the skill involved, which includes active thinking and assimilation of a writer's message along with interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of the content — all of which occur simultaneously and generate new ideas (Shea and Ceprano, 2017; Elleman and Oslund, 2019).

The school system in the Philippines is facing a significant obstacle in the form of a struggle in sharpening the reading and comprehension abilities of Filipino students. This has come about as a result of a number of international testing organizations discovering that students in the Philippines, notably those in grade 5 and those aged 15, are in the risk zone. To give just one illustration, the pattern of the country's proficiency over the past five years has been steadily declining on a global scale. The country moved from 13th place in 2016, where it ranked, to 20th place in 2019, and 26th place in 2020, out of a total of 100 countries (Education First, 2020).

Only a few studies or publications have investigated the lived experiences of students, who are the ones experiencing the problem. The researcher holds that investigating how struggling readers think their difficulties shape their lives is of equal relevance to discovering a more adequate explanation for the issue. It is more vital than ever before to investigate the experiences that struggling readers might have really lived through, especially in light of the additional obstacles that have been brought about by the deployment of various modes of remote learning. The limited engagement and contact that occurs between teachers and their pupils pose a challenge to the transmission of instructions, in particular for educational systems that utilize a modular learning method.

The main concern of this study is to determine the needs of the students who struggle with reading based on their lived experiences. It specifically seeks answers to the following:

1. What are the experiences of struggling readers in school and at home?
2. What are the problems which caused struggling readers their reading difficulties?
3. How do their reading skill deficiencies affect them?
4. What are the needs of struggling readers in order to address their difficulties?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter includes a compendium of previous research and literature that has been conducted in both an international and a domestic context. All these resources have either been published on the internet or are easily accessible in the library collections of various universities.

Reading Difficulties

Reading difficulties are referred to by a number of different names. Different terminology may be used by various groups in various contexts. From a normative perspective, Hamilton (2022) defined

reading difficulty (i.e., how a child performs in reading compared with peers or educational expectations). One of the causes of reading difficulties is reading impairment.

Reading Intervention

Reading intervention was defined by Endo (2022) as intensive or targeted reading teaching designed to accelerate the reading abilities of students who are reading below grade level. She suggested the underlying issues that kids have with their core literacy abilities can sometimes be the cause of the difficulties that students have with text comprehension.

Lived Experiences

Talking HealthTec (2022) explained that a person's lived experience is a representation of their experiences and decisions, as well as the knowledge gained from these events and decisions. It is also used to describe a sort of qualitative study that incorporates cultural and social studies, as well as linguistics and communication.

Study Smarter (2022) further explained that lived experience is the direct observation of a phenomenon in a specific location. A person's lived experience will consist of their thoughts, emotions, views, and attitudes about the phenomenon they experience.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter offers a full overview of the design that the researcher followed to perform this investigation as well as the techniques that were followed. It provides a thorough explanation of each of the component parts in order to justify how each one contributed to the accomplishment of the overarching goal.

Research Design

The qualitative approach to research was utilized for the completion of this study. The overarching goal of conducting this qualitative research, which is based on the researcher's own first-hand experience, was to acquire a deep and comprehensive picture of the daily experiences of those who struggle with reading. Because gathering the data took quite a bit of time and because this study was more concerned with the quality of the findings than the quantity, it was necessary to have a sample base that was relatively small yet well-defined to accomplish the goal. It sought to establish answers to the whys and hows of the lived experiences of students who struggle with reading. It wanted to do so by focusing on the lived experiences of those students (DJS Research, 2020).

This study is particularly, phenomenological in nature. It was qualitative research that aimed to understand and characterize the universal core of the reading difficulties or struggles of the students. Employing this technique, the researcher suspended whatever preconceived notions or ideas she might have had about the topic in question before beginning the investigation of daily human experiences. In a nutshell, this phenomenology research investigated students' lived experiences to get a more nuanced understanding of how they made sense of their situations (Delve, 2020).

Respondents of the Study

The research respondents, or participants, were six (6) purposively sampled students who have been identified as struggling readers using the materials and procedures given by the Department of Education. They were 8 graders who shared the same reading difficulty. These students were selected from the bottom, meaning, they were those who scored the lowest on the pre-test of Phil-IRI. Aside from being at the bottom, which made them the most struggling among all struggling readers, their willingness to participate was also considered. Table 1 shows the profiles of the participants.

In this study, only students who expressed willingness to participate through a written undertaking were considered. Also, the consent of their parents was sought. Besides these, participants were the ones who completed the interview of three sessions without any absence. Finally, the students were also the ones attending the school’s remedial reading program.

Table 1. Participants’ Profile

The Participants	Age	Grade Level	Reading Level	Sex
P1	14	Grade 8	Frustration	Male
P2	14	Grade 8	Frustration	Male
P3	13	Grade 8	Frustration	Male
P4	14	Grade 8	Frustration	Male
P5	14	Grade 8	Frustration	Male
P6	13	Grade 8	Frustration	Female

Research Procedure

Following Creswell's (2007) prescribed techniques, this study consisted of five major steps. First, the researcher identified and limited the research problem by brainstorming relevant phenomena for answering the overarching topic. This study aimed to respond to the overarching question, "Why do the participants struggle with reading?" Thus, the identified phenomena were the struggling readers’ lived experiences in the context of full face-to-face learning delivery. Figure 2 below shows the next steps undertaken by the researcher. It depicts the investigation's progress. This describes the research process, from problem identification to publication of the findings.

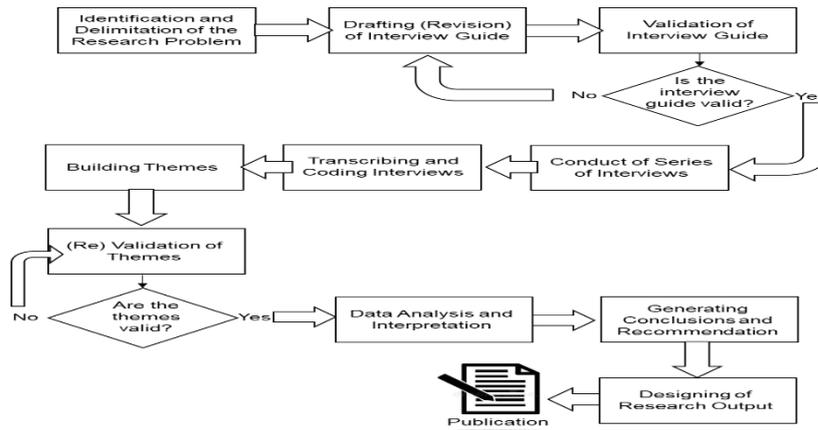


Figure 2. The Research Procedure

After identifying and limiting the research problem, the researcher drafted the interview guide. The guide underwent validation and revalidation. Upon validation, the researcher collected data from co-participants. In particular, a series of in-depth interviews were performed with six (6) students. During the interview process, the researcher addressed their own origins, biases, and understandings; provided a supportive environment for participants; was open to understanding the students’ experiences; and shared and reciprocated experiences with co-researchers (Corbin and Morse, 2003; van Manem, 2014).

During each interview, the researcher asked broad questions, such as "What are your experiences of having difficulty reading?" and "What circumstances have influenced or affected your reading struggles?" Each co-researcher completed a minimum of three in-depth interview sessions (i.e., one each week for three consecutive weeks) until the saturation threshold was reached. A saturation point indicates

that, based on previously gathered or processed data, further data gathering and/or analysis is superfluous (Saunders et al., 2017). Each interview was conducted in person, via face-to-face meetings. Each session was recorded with the cooperation of co-researchers so that the researcher could examine facial expressions and other non-verbal clues.

After finishing data collection, the researcher moved on to transcription of interview sessions. Information identifying the participants, their section, or their location has been removed from the transcriptions. After finishing the corpus, the researcher began identifying noteworthy sentences and then formed meaning clusters from these words into themes through manual coding following Saldana principles (2015). The themes were submitted to the subject specialist for validation. At the conclusion of a phenomenological study, the themes supplied the researchers with the framework for a description that captures the core of the phenomenon (Moore and Llompert, 2017).

The next step involved vividly describing the identified themes. In the final report, direct quotes from participants were included as crucial elements, while shorter quotes were provided to clarify specific points of interpretation and highlight the prevalence of the themes (King, 2004). To ensure the quality of their findings, the researchers practiced iteration. They frequently thought about the themes, examined data, and established connections between them and the emerging concepts. This method helped them achieve more concentration and comprehension (Srivastva and Hopwood, 2009).

After analyzing and interpreting the themes, the researcher generated conclusions and recommendations. The research output was then crafted. Upon approval of the panel of examiners, the paper was submitted for publication.

Research Instrument

This study adopted in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are a type of qualitative data collection approach that enables the interviewers' behavior, attitudes, and perceptions of the world to be observed, as well as a substantial quantity of information to be gathered about the same. When conducting in-depth interviews, both the researcher and the people being interviewed have the option to investigate additional points and alter the path that the process is taking whenever it is deemed necessary. It is a self-contained research method that may be adapted to make use of a variety of approaches in accordance with the requirements of the research (Question Pro, 2021).

It was possible for the researcher and the participants to establish a comfortable and welcoming interaction because of using in-depth interviews in this investigation. This allowed for more in-depth responses addressing sensitive narratives to be generated. In addition to this, the researcher was able to ask follow-up questions, get additional information, and return to important topics in order to acquire a deeper comprehension of the attitudes held by the participants. In addition to this, the technique was more accurate than other methods of data collection.

It is also anticipated that the researcher would be able to track changes in the participants' word choice and tone to acquire a deeper understanding of their perspectives. Additionally, the number of participants needed to collect valuable information was reduced because of the instrument.

Treatment of Data

A deductive approach to treating qualitative data was employed in this study. The deductive method entails conducting an analysis of qualitative data based on a framework that has been established beforehand by the researcher. When conducting the analysis of the data, the researcher referred back to the questions for direction. Since the researcher already had a good sense of the expected replies that she was going to receive from the sample population, she made use of this strategy, which is both speedy and straightforward.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the research findings of the data collected from the qualitative samples. The main source of data was the interview, and analysis was also supplemented by library research. The findings are presented in relation to the research objectives stated in the study. The method used to analyze the data has been discussed in the previous chapter.

Description of the Respondents

One of the major considerations in this study was the homogeneity of the research participants. The researcher only invited students who have been found to be at struggling and “frustration” levels of reading in English. This part presents the characteristics of the students who participated in the study.

Table 2. Description of the Research Participants

Participant Code	Reading Level based on Phil IRI Results (Oral Reading)	Number of Interviews Conducted
P1	Frustration	3
P2	Frustration	3
P3	Frustration	3
P4	Frustration	3
P5	Frustration	3
P6	Frustration	3

Table 3. Interview questions based on SOP.

Problem / Objective	Interview Question (s)
1. What are the experiences of struggling readers in school and at home? <i>(Ano ang mga karanasan ng mga nahihirapang mambabasa sa paaralan at sa tahanan?)</i>	<p>a. Naalala mo pa ba noong tayo ay magkaroon ng pagtataya sa pagbasa? Naalala mo ba nung pinabasa kita ng malakas at may ilang katanungan akong pinasagutan sa iyo? <i>(Do you recall when we had a reading test? Do you recall when I read something to you and asked you to answer some questions?)</i></p> <p>b. Noong panahon na iyon ay napansin ko na nahihirapan ka sa pagbabasa sa English, tama ba? <i>(At that time, I noticed that you were struggling with reading in English, right?)</i></p> <p>c. Ano ang pakiramdam mo nung mga oras na iyon? <i>(How did you feel at that time?)</i></p> <p>d. Nauunawaan ko ang iyong naramdaman. Marami talaga ang nakakaramdam ng ganoon tuwing nagbabasa. Sa iyong palagay, bakit mo kaya iyon naramdaman? <i>(I understand how you feel. Many people actually feel that way every time they read. Why do you think you felt that way?)</i></p> <p>e. Mayroon pa bang ibang pagkakataon na pinabasa ka at ganoon din ang iyong naramdaman? <i>(Has there been another time when you were read and felt the same way?)</i></p>

<p>2. What are the problems which caused struggling readers their reading difficulties? <i>(Ano ang mga problemang nagdulot ng mga nahihirapang mambabasa sa kanilang kahirapan sa pagbabasa?)</i></p>	<p>a. Talagang marami ang mayroong suliranin sa pagbabasa, hindi lamang ikaw. Lubos kong nauunawaan ito at hindi ka dapat matakot dahil naririto kami upang tulungan ka. Ngunit maaari ko bang malaman kung mayroong mga pangyayari na naging dahilan kung bakit ka nahihirapan magbasa? <i>(There are definitely many people who have reading problems, not just you. I completely understand this and you should not be afraid because we are here to help you. But may I know if there were circumstances that made it difficult for you to read?)</i></p> <p>b. Paano sa palagay mo iyon naka apekto sa paglalaan mo ng oras sa pagbabasa? <i>(How do you think that affects your time spent in reading?)</i></p>
<p>3. How do their reading skill deficiencies affect them? <i>(Paano sila naapektuhan ng kanilang mga kakulangan sa kasanayan sa pagbasa?)</i></p>	<p>a. Alam natin na ang kakayahang bumasa ay mahalaga sa araw-araw na pamumuhay. Maaari ko bang malaman kung paano nakaka apekto sa iyong araw-araw na pamumuhay ang kahirapan sa pagbabasa? <i>(We know that the ability to read is important in everyday life. May I know how reading difficulties affect your daily life?)</i></p>
<p>4. What are the needs of the struggling readers in order to address their difficulties? <i>(Ano ang mga pangangailangan ng mga nahihirapang mambabasa upang matugunan ang kanilang mga paghihirap?)</i></p>	<p>a. Ano sa iyong palagay ang kailangan upang mapaghusay ang kakayahan mo sa pagbabasa? <i>(What do you think is needed to improve your reading skills?)</i></p> <p>b. Mayroon ka bang nais na tulong mula sa akin bilang iyong guro? <i>(Do you want help from me as your teacher?)</i></p>

INTERVIEW RESULTS

Significant Themes

This part of the chapter presents the findings and analyses of the data obtained from the individual interviewees on their lived experiences. The data were extracted and analyzed according to the objective of the study using open coding and a thematic approach.

Theme 1: Socio-Emotional Impact of Reading Difficulties

During the conduct of the series of interviews, participants constantly included in their responses their feelings of sadness, fear, and humiliation. They expressed fear of being called during class discussions and they also hesitate to ask questions and seek help for they might get humiliated.

P1 said, *“I’m nervous and shy Because I don’t read very fast or well, just slowly. (straightforward). Yes, in Filipino. I’m nervous to read in Filipino. I can read a little in English and I’m nervous too.”*

P2 also expressed the same when he said, *“I’m afraid. I don’t know how to read. In elementary school, yes. Because I was shy, I was afraid to read. My classmates make fun of me because I can’t read. They can read quickly, whereas I cannot.”*

P3 also shared the same dilemma when he narrated,

“It’s hard because I don’t know how. I’m not sure yet. It’s humiliating for classmates. Yes, in elementary school, in MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health subject). Reading is difficult and humiliating for me. I am embarrassed by my inability to read.”

The inability to read tortures the students. The feeling haunts them whenever they attend classes.

It was also observed that the students’ fear came from their spurred experiences of embarrassment.

P4 shared, “*Maybe I’m ashamed of the teacher that I can’t read (slurred speech). Yes, a year ago. When I was in elementary school, I was laughed at when I was asked to read. (teary-eyed).*”

There were also instances when they already have that feeling even without having the experience. For instance, P5 felt embarrassed internally i.e., no one embarrasses her, but the feeling is automatic whenever she is asked to read.

P5: “I’m also embarrassed in front of my classmates and my teacher because they’ve heard I can’t read. I am embarrassed because a lot of people are listening. They are aware of my inability to read. In elementary school, yes. When the teacher asked me to read, I was embarrassed because I couldn’t read what he was asking.”

The fear of being a laughingstock because of their inability to read is evident among the participants. P6 also expressed, “*I’m nervous and shy. Maybe it’s my reading error at times. I mumbled sometimes, and there are letters that I can’t read.*” Nevertheless, the responses of the participants also indicated that they were aware of themselves – their difficulties, their experiences, and their emotions. Looking from this perspective, there is a great chance of addressing the issue from this point. However, it is also important to note that while such feeling is present in the school setting mean that students with reading difficulties do not feel included.

These findings complement Nachshon and Horowitz-Kraus’ (2019) findings that children with reading difficulties have a wide range of social and emotional difficulties, including low self-esteem, anxiety, and sadness. The current study’s findings suggest that executive function impairments can lead to emotional stress, which, according to Nachshon and Horowitz-Kraus (2019), reduces the ability to monitor, inhibit, and pay attention to written content, impairing reading to a greater extent.

The lack of inclusivity may be inferred from the responses of the students. Considering this, the present study takes into account the findings of O’Brien (2021) that external forces such as the environment, relationships and teacher understanding may contribute to (or alleviate) such negative self-perceptions. O’Brien (2020), in his paper emphasizes that while children may learn and process information differently, negative feelings are often compounded by a teacher’s lack of knowledge regarding this different way of learning in the inclusive classroom. If not addressed this might result to disengagement coping strategies (Sukovieff and Kruk, 2021) i.e., focusing on how to avoid being called and being embarrassed rather than focusing on how to improve reading skills.

McArthur and Castles (2017) found evidence that poor readers, as a group, have higher levels of anxiety than typical readers. The same is true for low self-concept, which can be defined as a negative perception of oneself in a particular domain.

Theme 2: Importance of Support Systems at Home and in School

The second theme derived from the responses of the participants shows that they were expecting support from individuals in their houses and in the school. P1 felt that he did not receive enough help from the teachers in his previous level. However, he received support at home. P2 also received help from his teacher and was aware of his difficulties.

P1: *Many times, since elementary school. The teachers neglected me when I was still in elementary school, they just passed me. There was just one teacher who took care of me, it was Ma'am ****. Yes, I'm not fond of reading. Trouble arises when I have a lot to read. I can't read anymore. I can only read one word at a time.*

P2: *My teacher taught me in elementary school. He was calling me to teach me, I was in grade 5 at the time. I have been taught many times. I know the alphabet. I have a hard time putting them together. I don't know how to read especially when there are so many of them.*

On the contrary, P3 had a different experience. He indicated the absence of support. He was afraid of asking others because of his fear of humiliation. This results to his unaddressed reading difficulty. He admitted he was actually only reading the assignment but was not able to answer them.

P3: *Yes. I'm just reading the assignment little by little. I can't answer everything because I don't understand it. I can't read everything, and I don't know if I read it right. I often can't do assignments because no one teaches me. I don't copy and I never ask classmates to help me, I'm ashamed.*

The experience of P4 was somewhat like P3. P4 indicated his fear of the teacher that prevented him from trying to read. He also reiterated in his response his fear of humiliation.

P4: *Yes. I was embarrassed because I couldn't read. I'm afraid of the teacher so I don't even want to read anymore. I only read at home, but only those which are easy to read. I'm not good at reading English.*

P4 even added that he did not receive any instructions nor was engaged in reading exercises when he was young. He highlighted his knowledge on the importance of teaching a child how to read but indicated that he was not fortunate enough to receive such experience.

P4: *Because that's how it was in elementary school when I was a kid. A child must be taught, which I did not have any experience with. When I get older, I'll realize that was only the time I was taught.*

P5 and P6 share the same experience as P4. They expressed fear of their teachers and P5 even described her teacher "insensitive." This kind of impression prevented P5 from seeking any help from her teacher and P6 from attending school.

P5: *When I was in elementary school, no one taught me. My parents did not teach me. Yes, my elementary school teacher was also insensitive. I was afraid of her. I'm also shy to approach because she might get angry.*

P6: *I don't really understand when it isn't taught to me. In kindergarten, I gave up studying. I don't know, I just felt sorry for my classmates. Yes, I was afraid, which is why I stopped attending my classes.*

Results of the present study imply that students did not have reliable support system when they were younger. Only P1 and P2 shared experiences about teachers and parents helping them. However, the fact that they were still struggling proves that such support system was not enough.

The findings of the present study were different from what Capotosto et al. (2017) found through their qualitative study on the family support of third grade reading skills, motivation, and habits. In their study, Capotosto et al. (2017) that parents actively and deliberately scaffolded their children's progress toward developing independent reading skills.

The absence of similar experiences in the narratives of the participants after three interview sessions indicate absence of the same from their schema. The present study helps in reiterating the importance of building student's trust in their own learning. Bledsoe and Baskin (2014) explained that understanding fear, its causes, and its impact on students can be important for educators who seek ways to help students manage their fears. They even suggested strategies to help alleviate learners' fears. Thus, teachers are expected to resolve that fear in the learners instead of inducing it. According to Chew (2019), teachers should promote student trust, rapport and a sense of belongingness to reduce fear and mistrust. By doing so, teachers are also improving student motivation, effort, and perseverance. However, Ampofo (2019) found the same problem showing the lack of guidance by parents on pupils reading, no proper method of reading by teachers in teaching, and lack of guidance by teachers on pupils reading.

Theme 3: Effects of Reading Deficiencies

Sub-Theme 3.1: Effects on Academic Performance

Knowing their reading deficiencies, the participants cannot avoid the fear of being called during class discussions. Reading difficulty prevents students from reading aloud when called and working on his assignments particularly those requiring English. Participants particularly highlighted assignments and activities in "English." In the response of P1 below, he indicated that he was trying to understand questions in the test (*means struggling to understand*) and he got 32 in the previous test but he was actually telling how he guessed all his answers. When he said, "*However, this does not happen very often,*" means his guesses were not that accurate most of the time.

P1: Yes, a little at school. I get nervous when I'm reading or being called. When the teacher calls my name, I get up and press myself to read. During test, I read carefully. That makes sense to me. There were mistakes, and I got 32. However, this does not happen very often.

P1: When there are no choices, I am the one who has to give the answer. That's difficult.

P1 even indicated that he there were times when he needed the help of seatmates during examinations. He said, "I ask *my seatmate when I don't understand.*" In the course of the interview, his statement, "I'm *going to skip first. Then, go back to it. Sometimes I just guess,*" implies his struggles reading and understanding test items.

P2, on the other hand, focuses on assignment and class activities. He said that he could barely complete all his assignments because of his difficulty in reading. He also expressed his difficulty in participating in class activities and his need of support from others when working or reading. His responses imply his desire to learn that is hampered by his inability to read with ease. It is aggravated by his fear of humiliation which prevents him from seeking help.

P2: Yes, I'm just reading the assignment little by little. I can't answer everything because I don't understand it. I can't read everything, and I don't know if I read it right. I often can't do assignments because no one teaches me.

P2: I am unable to participate in the activities. I requested assistance from my classmates. I'm unable to complete the assignments. But I can do it if someone teaches me how.

P3 shared similar experiences as P1 – the difficulty in taking exams. However, P3 added his frequent absence from class because of his fear that he might get scolded and humiliated when he fails to read properly. He also highlighted that exams for him are easy for as long as there are options to choose the answer from.

P3: When I have a test, I sometimes ask my classmates to read it to me. I asked what it means. I'm just guessing. I find it difficult to do what the teachers ask me to do. Because I don't understand. I can't read continuously. Keep stopping.

P3: Yes, because I can't read. But circling the answer is something I can do. I can't do it when the required response is a sentence.

P3: Yes, I was always absent then. I feel sorry for myself.

P4 expresses his difficulty memorizing the content of their lessons and this makes him feel burdened. He finds reading extremely difficult because he is not sure if he is reading texts the right way.

P4: Graded recitation, apart from stuttering, I can't memorize what to say. I'm having a hard time. I am ashamed. It's like stuttering. Letters are misplaced. Reading is extremely difficult for me. I'm not sure of what I read.

Kweldju (2020) explained that all learning should include remembering, and remembering is part of cognitive behavior and becomes fundamental to education. A good study cannot be separated from concentration and memory retention. The difficulty of P4 could be due to the limited exposure and repeated practice. It could also be due to a phenomenon which Godman (2019) called Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) may also be behind a decline in reading skills. MCI can make it harder to understand or retain what is read. MCI is a noticeable change in thinking and memory skills, but not enough that it becomes a huge barrier to the ability to take care of oneself and accomplish daily tasks.

P5 shares the same dilemma as P1 and P3 who just guesses the answers to exams and who requires assistance in accomplishing assignments. She also expressed her desire to read and her frustration for not being able to read it especially when she is called in the class to read from the board.

P5: I'm just guessing the answer to the test if it's a,b,c, or d. As for the assignment, I can't answer on my own. Yes, sometimes I want to read but I can't. When I am asked to read. I couldn't do it.

P6 also expresses his difficulty in accomplishing activities given especially those without choices provided. It becomes more difficult when he is asked to answer question with extended answers. He even told that he is having difficulty composing electronic messages because of his limited knowledge on spelling.

P6: Yes, I find it difficult to complete activities with no answer options. I only struggle with English, especially essays, but when given choices, I can respond. When I use a cellphone, I sometimes have difficulty encoding what I want to say because I don't know the spelling.

The results of the present study support the findings of Karanja (2015) student' reading deficiencies or difficulties often lead to absenteeism, drop-outs, and repeaters.

Sub-Theme 3.2: Effects on Social Interactions

There were two kinds of struggling readers found in this study. First, those who acknowledge their need for assistance from others. Second, those who are afraid of seeking help considering they might get humiliated. The difference in the participants' perception on their social circles came from their previous experiences.

P1: When I'm out with friends and need to read. Someone else approaches me for Bible study, and it is we who read. I'm trying to read but stutter.

P5: I asked my classmates to help me.

P3: I asked for assistance. I feel sorry for myself.

For instance, P1, P5, and P3 shared experiences on how they sought for others' help. P1 have friends who try helping him improve his reading skills by guiding him read the Bible. P5 also shared account of how he sought help from his classes. Similarly, P3 asked classmates for help but has that feeling of self-pity.

On the other hand, P2, P4, and P6 shared negative and traumatic experiences which led them to humiliation. P2 is apprehensive of asking help from classmates due to fear of humiliation. P4 experienced being the laughingstock when he mispronounced words. P6 also accounted for an experienced when classmates laughed at him and made him cry.

P2: I don't copy, and I never ask help from classmates, I'm ashamed.

P4: When I was reading English in the room, for example, and didn't understand what I pronounced incorrectly, they would laugh at me. Someone reads for me at school. I'm alone at home, no one is teaching. My mother doesn't teach me anymore. I am ashamed. It's like stuttering. Someone is teasing me. I also feel ashamed. When I'm out with friends and need to read. Someone else approaches me for Bible study, and it is we who read. I'm trying to read but stutter.

P6: When they laugh at me, I cry.

Lived experiences of the struggling readers show two faces of perception on their social interactions related to their reading deficiencies. There were those who just get by through the help of other but there were those who feel discouraged because of negative experiences with their social circles. The results confirm the findings of Hosek et al. (2018) that students respond to negative experiences using behavioral change, support seeking, and doing nothing. According to Dash (2021), students who experience humiliation become reclusive and avoid any further participation in class. The negative self-talk, social anxiety arising out of shame, can all blow up to aggression, defiance, blaming others, and even going to an extent that the child becomes disruptive in the class, causing havoc for other students.

Needs of Learners to Address Reading Difficulties

Considering their descriptions of their experiences as struggling readers and how such affect their lives, the researcher elicited the following needs.

The lived experiences of the participants imply the necessity for an inclusive learning environment. The humiliation and embarrassment they experienced have greatly affected their self-esteem. They also imply that past experiences have created a deeply rooted fear of committing mistakes and becoming a laughingstock inside the classroom. Nevertheless, the same experiences imply that the participants still have that desire to cure their difficulties in reading. They have not given up and that requires the system to also not give up but address the needs they have raised.

According to Yale University (2017), an inclusive climate is one in which all students, regardless of identity, learning preferences, or education, feel intellectually and academically supported and have a sense of belonging in the classroom. Such environments are preserved when teachers and students collaborate for thinking, respect, and academic performance, and they are critical to supporting all students' academic success. The University recommended that professors appreciate all students' genuine expressions and thoughts. Students should be held accountable for their actions if they make overtly offensive or discriminatory remarks.

In an inclusive learning environment, humiliation should not exist. According to Mann et al. (2017), humiliation is a highly negative, intense emotion that sticks with a person far more strongly than many other negative emotions. When the class laughs after a humiliating insult, the feelings of shame are stronger than when there is no response. Humiliation following a public insult is more intense when the offense involves autonomous self-related values rather than social-relational self-related values. Furthermore, this study found that audience laughter only increased humiliation when the autonomous self was threatened, not when the social-relational self was threatened.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION MODEL

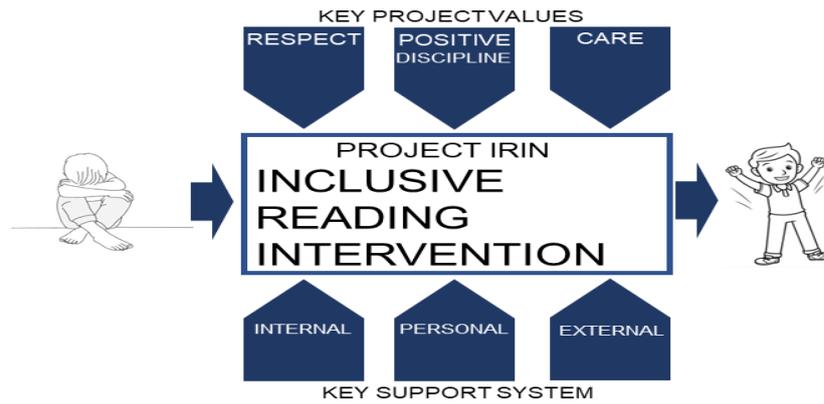


Figure 3. Reading Intervention Model

The model is an inclusive reading intervention that features three key elements i.e., the child, the project values, and the support system. In the recently concluded study, it was discovered that children with reading difficulties are also socio-emotionally challenged. They have the tendency to have low self-esteem due to the traumatic experiences associated with humiliation.

Thus, the model suggests that a reading intervention should socio-emotionally inclusive. It should respect the child's unique situation that might have caused the reading deficiencies. Another value that must be observed is positive discipline. There were narratives showing the humiliations experienced by struggling readers from their teachers. The embarrassment not only hampered their growth in reading but cause their withdrawal from school. It is important for teachers to always practice positive discipline considering the fragile emotions of students with difficulties. Another important value is care. Some narratives showed students' appreciations of teachers who were able to show that they care about the students' reading problems. Making students feel that their teachers care serves as encouragement and boosts their morale.

Aside from key values, the students also need a strong support system. The support system may be internal i.e., everyone inside the school should make students feel their support. Students also need personal support, i.e., those people within their family circles should also be able to extend their support. Also, external partners such as the community and government leaders should extend their support to the journey of students who seek remediation for their reading difficulties. When these three aspects of the support system successfully create a supportive learning environment, students would become more inspired to help themselves.

The final outcome of an inclusive reading intervention is a child who was once struggling and discouraged has become a happy and inspired child.

CONCLUSION

1. The participants are aware of their reading deficiencies and of the past experiences that prevented them from successfully overcoming such. The past experiences of the participants brought fear and trauma, and these have not been resolved. The fear was caused by the teacher and classmates who reacted negatively to their inability to read. The feeling of fear remains in the participants, and they still fear to commit errors in reading and being laughed at.
2. The struggling readers need an inclusive learning environment where they will be helped instead of being humiliated. They need an intervention that would bring increase in their level of self-esteem that has been neglected for a quite some time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The school may design a reading intervention program that does not only addresses the reading skills of the students but also their socio-emotional health. Such reading intervention must be inclusive i.e., respectful of the student's reading difficulties and considerate of their emotions and esteem. It is important in rekindling the courage of the students to try and resiliency to face errors in reading.
2. Teachers need to promote an inclusive learning environment where learners are valued, cared for, and respected regardless of their abilities and disabilities. They need to model how people of different intellectual levels and skills must be treated in accordance with the norms and standards.
3. A case study on students who would undergo an inclusive reading intervention may be conducted to further clarify the phenomenon in the lives of struggling readers.

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