

## EXPLORING THE STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING THE READING SKILLS OF LEARNERS DURING THE IN-PERSON CLASSES

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### ABSTRACT

This phenomenological inquiry explored the experiences of elementary teachers on strategies in improving the reading skills of learners during the in-person classes in North District, Panabo City Division. In exploring the experiences of the ten (10) participants, I employed the qualitative – phenomenological study of which primary instrument of data gathering was through in- depth interview. Major findings indicated that after analyzing the responses of the participants about their experiences in improving the reading skills of learners, the following three themes emerged: enhancing the reading performance of students, using technology, and highlighting the role of parents. Additionally, regarding the answers of the participants about their coping mechanisms adopted in improving the reading skills of learners, the following three themes emerged namely motivating the students, utilizing different reading strategies, and providing intervention program. Lastly, when the parstudents and questioned about their educational management insights drawn from the findings of the study, after analyzing the responses of the participants, there were three themes that emerged namely developing a contextualized reading program, improving the reading literacy of students, and signifying the role of teachers and school environment. Results imply that students have the opportunity to improve their reading, writing, test-taking, and study skills at their instructional level through intervention. Each session is designed to satisfy the unique requirements of each pupil in a small group setting. Different learning rates are accommodated by varying the instructional pace. Contextualizing reading comprehension instruction positions students in an authentic situation that is evocative and meaningful. Contextualization can be achieved by creating reading lessons and activities that are centered on the interests and environment of the learners.

**Keywords:** Reading skills, in-person classes, phenomenology

### 1. INTRODUCTION

“Reading is an exercise in empathy, an exercise in walking in someone else’s shoes for a while.” – Malorie Blackman  
Reading aloud to young children on a regular basis, beginning when they are infants, may aid in the development of literacy abilities, as well as language acquisition, communication skills, and social skills. Children are able to have a better understanding not just of the environment that surrounds them but also of the people in it, which helps them develop their social-emotional abilities and, of course, their creativity. Reading introduces us to a wide variety of literary formats, voices, styles, and genres that we may not otherwise encounter. However, teachers have difficulties in determining what strategies to employ in teaching reading due to the varied problems of learners in their reading skills.

Students’ motivation to read has not shown a considerable improvement. Moreover, the reading comprehension results indicate that extensive general reading transfers to academic reading skills. It can be concluded that an extensive reading program is indeed feasible and desirable among Mozambican university students, but there are still problems concerning requirements for the implementation of such programs (Nhapulo, Simon & Van Herreweghe, 2017).

In Nueva Ecija, Philippines, data indicates that the majority of students were at the frustration level in reading. The perceived causes, sources, and determinants of the students’ reading levels were lack of mastery of reading components, the existence of at-risk learners, and the absence of a reading culture. Recommended reading programs and activities may be included in the development of a contextualized reading curriculum and implemented in schools as reading literacy initiatives (Tomas, Villaros & Galman, 2021).

Similarly, elementary teachers in North District, Division of Panabo City, experienced comparable problems. Teachers struggled to enhance the reading skills of their learners and admitted having difficulty selecting appropriate intervention strategies to address these reading difficulties in the classroom. A gap identified in this study is the lack of research on exploring the reading strategies employed by teachers in addressing learners’ reading difficulties, particularly in remote school communities compared to urban schools. For instance, the use of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) for additional reading sessions in elementary schools in Korea showed dramatic improvements in students’ reading attitudes and abilities (e.g., cooperative skills and friendships) (PALS research).

This research aimed to explore and understand teachers’ strategies and experiences in addressing learners’ reading difficulties during in-person classes. There is a scarcity of studies that focus on the experiences and strategies of

elementary teachers in improving learners' reading skills, particularly during in-person classes in North District, Division of Panabo City.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of elementary teachers on strategies in improving the reading skills of learners during in-person classes in North District, Panabo City Division. This also investigated their learning and challenging experiences as drawn from the findings of this study.

#### Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of teachers in improving the reading skills of learners?
2. How do teachers cope with the challenges in improving the reading skills of learners?
3. What educational management insights are drawn from the findings of the study?

#### Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are beneficial for the following stakeholders:

**Department of Education:** The Department of Education Officials may benefit by adopting effective strategies that teachers used in teaching reading, integral to learning letter recognition, phonological awareness, and writing.

**School Principals:** Principals can apply strategies that enhance learners' reading competence, thus improving academic performance.

**Teachers:** Teachers can develop effective strategies to enhance learners' reading skills, influencing academic success. This study will guide teachers in evaluating and improving their teaching pedagogies related to reading.

**Future Researchers:** This study will aid future researchers in exploring teachers' reading strategies, providing guidance on which areas need further research and investigation.

#### Operational Definitions

**Strategies in Improving the Reading Skills of Learners:** Refers to various approaches employed by teachers to improve learners' reading skills, particularly in North District, Division of Panabo City.

**In-Person Classes:** Refers to face-to-face classes as a transition phase from modular, online, and other distance learning modalities at public elementary schools in North District, Division of Panabo City.

#### Review of Significant Literature

##### Strategies in Improving the Reading Skills of Students

Blended learning, an educational setting where computers and the Internet are widely accessible, combines independent study with face-to-face instruction. Banditvilai (2016) focused on learning outcomes in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) class in Thailand, showing that e-learning strategies combined with conventional classroom strategies enhanced students' language skills and learner autonomy.

Schechter et al. (2015) found that a blended learning strategy effectively improved reading abilities of pupils from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. Similarly, digital reading abilities are crucial as children spend significant time reading electronic media, yet reading on a screen often results in shallow comprehension. Chen & Chen (2014) developed a collaborative reading annotation system that significantly enhanced reading comprehension and attitudes.

In Malaysia, technology has the potential to revolutionize ESL teaching. Razali, Hashim & Yunus examined the benefits and limitations of MOOCs for ESL learners, suggesting they could improve reading skills despite certain challenges. Cheung and Slavin (2013) found that computer-assisted instruction (CAI) had a minor positive impact on reading skills.

Foorman and Torgesen (2011) emphasized the need for intense interventions for at-risk children, suggesting targeted personalized skill demands. Poonpon (2017) advocated for project-based learning to enhance students' English skills, including reading.

##### Reading Literacy for Students

Improving mother tongue and reading literacy involves proper reading, expanding vocabulary, and fostering awareness. Abdulhamidovna (2022) highlighted the importance of these skills for future success. Emotional constructions and self-concepts also significantly impact reading literacy (Chen, Zhang & Hu, 2021).

Machine learning techniques like support vector machine (SVM) have been used to examine contextual characteristics influencing reading literacy, with SVM-based recursive feature elimination identifying key factors (Chen, Zhang, Wei, & Hu, 2019). Studies have also shown that non-native speakers generally score lower on reading tests, often due to socioeconomic factors (Di Liberto, 2015; Lenkeit, Caro & Strand, 2015).

### Family and School Influences

Family socioeconomic status, parents' education and work, and the availability of educational resources significantly affect students' reading literacy (Ho, 2010; Topcu, Arkan & Erbilgin, 2014). School environment factors, including type, size, economic status, leadership, teacher engagement, qualifications, and ICT resources, also play crucial roles (Farver et al., 2006; Rutter & Maughan, 2002; Shin, Slater & Ortiz, 2017).

Public schools often lack innovation and responsiveness (Jehangir, Glas & Van den Berg, 2015), while teacher support and feedback are critical for student success (Chen et al., 2019; Hu & Wei, 2019). Susanti (2017) found that both positive and negative influences affect students' motivation and ability to acquire reading skills.

### Reading Strategies and Interventions

Whole Language and Code Emphasis approaches highlight the importance of both speaking and reading in language acquisition (Liberman & Liberman, 2017). Comprehensive interventions for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency/comprehension, and reading comprehension have been shown to be effective (Snyder, Witmer & Schmitt, 2017; Macaruso, Wilkes & Prescott, 2020).

Reading is crucial for academic success and provides children with access to a wider range of subject matter, enhancing their communication and language skills. It also offers enjoyable and creative experiences, allowing children to explore new worlds.

### Theoretical Lens

This research utilized the Metacognition Theory and Social Learning Theory to understand and improve reading skills among learners. Metacognition involves awareness, control, and regulation of cognitive processes, enhancing comprehension and retention through active reading strategies and peer discussions (Rubin, 1988; Wenden, 1998; Salataci, 2002).

Social Learning Theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions in learning. Vygotsky (1962) argued that children learn through interactions with peers, teachers, and professionals, and that culture influences knowledge acquisition. Teachers can provide individualized guidance based on observations of each student's progress, reinforcing social learning and building positive relationships (Vygotsky, 1962; Cherry, 2018).

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development also informs this study, suggesting that children actively engage in learning, continually acquiring and adjusting knowledge through interactions with their environment (Cherry, 2018).

### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework, synthesizing literature and observations to explain the phenomenon of teachers' experiences in improving reading skills in public elementary schools in North District, Division of Panabo City.

### Method

In this chapter, some important sections are presented. These are research design, research participants, ethical considerations, the role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness of the study.

### Philosophical Assumptions of the Study

Qualitative research is a multifaceted approach to inquiry that delves into the intricate aspects of human experiences, beliefs, and behaviors. Unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research is deeply rooted in philosophical assumptions that underpin its methodologies and interpretations. These philosophical assumptions serve as the foundational framework upon which qualitative researchers build their studies. In this introduction, I explore the key philosophical assumptions that form the bedrock of qualitative research, setting the stage for a deeper understanding of how researchers approach the study of human phenomena.

### Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality. Qualitative researchers often embrace constructivist or interpretive ontologies, suggesting that reality is not an objective, fixed entity, but rather a socially constructed and subjective phenomenon. This assumption acknowledges that different individuals or groups may perceive reality in unique ways, emphasizing the importance of exploring multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2015). In the context of a research study on strategies for improving the reading skills of learners in the classroom, ontology focuses on understanding how reading skills are co-constructed within the classroom context. I investigate how social interactions, classroom culture, and instructional strategies contribute to the development of reading abilities. This approach emphasizes the socio-cultural context when designing and implementing reading interventions.

### Epistemology

Epistemology deals with the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired. Qualitative research tends to adopt an interpretive or constructivist epistemology, recognizing that knowledge is context-dependent and subject to interpretation. Researchers acknowledge that their own subjectivity and biases can influence the research process, and they seek to understand the meaning that participants ascribe to their experiences (Creswell, 2015). In the context of this study, epistemology pertains to understanding how learners actively engage with texts, make meaning from them, and adapt reading strategies to their unique needs and contexts. This involves qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and reflective journals to capture the rich and context-specific nature of reading skill development.

#### Axiology

Axiology refers to the role of values and ethics in research. Qualitative researchers are often explicit about their values and recognize that their personal values can influence the research process. They may embrace a value-driven approach, acknowledging that their values shape research questions, methods, and interpretations (Creswell, 2015). In the context of this study, axiology involves considering the ethical implications of different reading strategies, evaluating them not only for effectiveness but also for inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and educational equity.

#### Rhetoric

In qualitative research, rhetoric refers to the deliberate use of language, discourse, and persuasive techniques within the research process to construct meaning, convey findings, and engage with the audience. This involves the strategic selection of words, phrases, and communication methods to convey research outcomes, often with the aim of persuading or influencing the reader or audience's interpretation of the research (Creswell, 2015). In the context of this study, rhetoric involves using narratives, metaphors, and practical recommendations to humanize the research, connect with the experiences of stakeholders, and bridge the gap between research and practice.

#### Qualitative Assumptions of the Study

This qualitative investigation utilizes a phenomenological approach, as outlined by Husserl (1970) and conveyed by Gupeteo (2014). Phenomenology focuses on describing rather than explaining and begins without pre-existing theories or preconceived notions. It examines the effects and perceptions of experiences by gathering narratives from participants who share a common occurrence or state. As noted by Willis (2007), phenomenology consistently underscores the importance of comprehending how individuals perceive themselves and their surrounding environment.

Qualitative research, as a methodology, is deeply rooted in specific philosophical assumptions that guide the design, conduct, and interpretation of research studies. When applied to the study of improving reading skills in the classroom, these qualitative assumptions play a pivotal role in shaping the research approach and outcomes. The quest to enhance reading skills among learners in the classroom is a complex and multifaceted endeavor, demanding a research approach that goes beyond mere quantitative measurements and delves into the intricate and context-rich aspects of reading instruction and its impact.

#### Research Design

I employed a qualitative approach for this endeavor, specifically utilizing the phenomenological method. My approach was guided by Creswell's (2015) methodology, which illustrates how a phenomenological inquiry can delve into the real-life experiences of a group of individuals who share a particular concept or phenomenon. Framing my research around characterizing this phenomenon was the most suitable approach. Moreover, I contributed my perspective by including tables that delineated the extent of my data collection efforts and the challenges educators encountered when enhancing the reading abilities of their students in face-to-face classroom settings.

Utilizing a qualitative research design to investigate the improvement of reading skills among learners in the classroom offered nuanced insights into the complex dynamics of this educational endeavor. Qualitative research allowed me to explore the topic in-depth, prioritizing the voices and perspectives of participants, including teachers, students, and other stakeholders. This participant-centric approach ensured that strategies for improving reading skills were informed by the lived experiences of those directly involved.

Aligned with the qualitative phenomenological methodology, this research encompassed the entirety of the methodological procedure.

The selection of research participants involved the purposeful sampling method, and pertinent data were acquired through comprehensive virtual interviews and group discussions.

The gathered data underwent a thorough examination via thematic analysis to derive significant themes from the participants' experiences. Finally, steps were taken to ensure the credibility of the study and incorporate ethical considerations.



#### Research Participants

In this phenomenological investigation, a total of 10 elementary-level teachers from North District, Division of Panabo City participated. Each of these 10 participants took part in comprehensive in-depth interviews (IDI). Consistent with Creswell's (2015) guideline, which suggests that having between 8 to 14 participants is adequate to fully explore the information in qualitative inquiries, this research adhered to this participant count. Additionally, Lichtman (2010) endorsed the notion that a limited number of individuals were deliberately chosen to attain in-depth insights in qualitative research.

Moreover, as per Crouch and McKenzie's (2006) findings, having fewer than 20 participants in a qualitative study facilitated the establishment and maintenance of a strong researcher-participant relationship, ultimately fostering a more open and candid exchange of information. This approach can be instrumental in mitigating certain biases and threats to validity inherent in qualitative research. I was confident that this selected group of participants would be able to share their experiences related to enhancing learners' reading skills in the classroom during in-person classes in North District, Division of Panabo City.

Purposive sampling involved the deliberate and strategic selection of participants based on specific criteria or characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Researchers carefully identified individuals who possessed the desired qualities or experiences to provide valuable insights into the research topic. This method aimed to ensure that the chosen participants could contribute meaningfully to the study's goals and provide in-depth perspectives and information that aligned with the research focus (Creswell, 2017).

I followed criteria in selecting the participants such as: (a) the participants must hold a permanent position of at least Teacher I in public elementary schools at North District, Division of Panabo City; (b) they were assigned to Grades 1 to 3; (c) these teachers had experienced various challenges in using reading strategies towards improving the reading skills of the learners in the classroom; (d) they were composed of either male or female teachers and were willing to participate in this study. Additionally, these ten participants were for in-depth interviews and this number was already enough to provide information with regard to the opportunity to identify and generate the themes.

#### Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles and practices have played a fundamental role in safeguarding the rights, well-being, and dignity of both participants and researchers. This introduction provides an overview of the ethical dimensions that were central to the research endeavors undertaken in the pursuit of improving reading skills among students. The process of conducting research on reading skills improvement necessitated a deep commitment to ethical guidelines, encompassing various aspects such as participant consent, privacy, confidentiality, and equitable treatment.

To establish ethical consideration, I adhered to the fundamental principles of ethical consideration of the Belmont Report (1979) as cited in Beauchamp (2008) where respect for persons, beneficence, and justice were identified.

#### Respect for Persons

Respect for persons entails recognizing and upholding the inherent dignity, autonomy, and rights of individuals who participate as research subjects or participants. It involves treating individuals as autonomous agents capable of valuing one's opinions and choices (Nambisan, 2017). This included obtaining voluntary and informed consent from individuals before they participated in the research, safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of research participants, and ensuring that participants were never coerced, manipulated, or exploited.

#### Beneficence

Beneficence refers to the ethical principle of promoting the well-being and welfare of research participants and, by extension, the broader community. It involves identifying and minimizing any potential harm or discomfort that participants may experience as a result of their involvement in the research. This includes obtaining informed and voluntary consent, respecting the autonomy and choices of research participants, and ensuring that research practices maximize benefits and minimize potential harm or risks.

#### Justice

Justice pertains to the notion of fairness regarding research participants. It encompasses the ethical requirement for unbiased procedures in the selection of research participants. This principle advocates for the fair allocation of benefits and risks, with a strict prohibition against the exploitation of vulnerable individuals. The principle of justice also involves ensuring that the participant pool represents a diverse range of learners from various backgrounds, demographics, and abilities.

In addition to following the guidelines outlined in the Belmont Report, I ensured strict compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173). This act served two primary purposes: (1) safeguarding individuals from

unauthorized disclosures of their private information, ensuring that confidential data remained inaccessible to unauthorized parties, and (2) preventing the identification of individuals through direct attribution or the merging of their data with other accessible information. I took multiple measures to enhance the security of data processing in my research, including anonymization, secure data storage, and comprehensive data protection plans.

#### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, researchers serve as the primary data gatherers. The research itself is considered a means of collecting data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012). Various qualitative data collection methods are utilized, including observing individuals in their natural settings, posing open-ended questions, conducting in-depth interviews, and maintaining field notes. In my role as a researcher conducting this study, I assumed multiple responsibilities, including interviewer, observer, transcriber, moderator, translator, and main data analyst.

#### **Interviewer**

As an interviewer, I prioritized building trust with the participants before conducting interviews, assuring them that their identities would remain confidential, and their information would be safeguarded. I posed probing questions and ensured that the discussions flowed smoothly.

#### **Moderator**

As a moderator, I identified participants who had undergone in-depth interviews and adhered to the predefined inclusion criteria for participant selection. I guided the conversation during interviews, using non-verbal cues such as gestures and body language to maintain the participants' focus.

#### **Recorder and Transcriber**

As a recorder, I utilized an audio recorder to capture the entirety of the interviews. As a transcriber, I meticulously transformed the recorded data into written form, taking note of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, vocal tone, and reactions.

#### **Translator and Data Analyst**

As a translator, I converted participant responses from the local dialect into Standard English. As the primary data analyst, I ensured that the transcripts accurately reflected the information divulged and articulated by the participants during the interviews.

#### **Data Collection**

The researcher as a data collector plays a central role in the research process, particularly in qualitative research. In this role, the researcher is responsible for gathering information, observations, or responses from research participants to address the research questions or objectives (Creswell, 2015). The data gathering process adhered to IATF protocols, particularly in situations where in-person interactions were restricted or not feasible. Virtual interviews were employed as the most suitable method for collecting data.

#### **Procedures**

**Authorization and Permissions:** Secured authorization to conduct the study from the Dean of Rizal Memorial College, followed by permission from the office of the Schools Division Superintendent and the Administrators.

**Participant Selection:** Employed purposive sampling technique to identify participants, ensuring they met specific criteria.

**Informed Consent:** Participants were informed about the research objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant.

**Interview Protocol:** Developed a detailed interview protocol, including a list of open-ended questions and prompts designed to elicit rich and relevant information about the learners' reading skills and experiences.

**Conducting Interviews:** Conducted individual in-depth interviews in a suitable and private setting, guided by the prepared interview protocol.

**Data Transcription:** Transcribed the data obtained from the in-depth interviews, ensuring precision by meticulously reviewing the transcripts multiple times while simultaneously listening to the corresponding audio recordings.

#### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis involved systematic activities such as reading, non-verbal representation, depiction, grouping, comprehension, portrayal, and visualization. I systematically generated and structured data files originating from interviews, focus group discussions, observations, recorded notes, and source materials. I thoroughly reviewed the transcribed texts, annotated in the margins, and initiated the creation of initial codes.

### Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis played a pivotal role in unraveling the intricate dynamics of improving the reading skills of learners within the classroom context. The process involved:

Data Familiarization: Immersing in the data, including interview transcripts and field notes.

Initial Coding: Generating initial codes by identifying and labeling meaningful segments of the data.

Searching for Themes: Grouping related codes together to identify overarching themes.

Reviewing Themes: Reviewing and refining the identified themes to ensure they accurately represent the data.

Defining and Naming Themes: Giving each theme a clear and descriptive name and providing a concise definition.

Writing the Narrative: Crafting a coherent and meaningful narrative that presents the themes and their supporting evidence.

Data Verification: Employing member checking to validate the accuracy of the themes and interpretations with participants.

### Environmental Triangulation

I implemented environmental triangulation by incorporating information about the specific settings in which interviews with elementary school teachers aimed at improving their students' reading skills were conducted. Recognizing the significance of understanding the experiences of these educators within the North District of the Division of Panabo City, I believed that the unique contexts in which they operated could potentially influence the data analysis.

### Analytical Framework

The analytical framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), often referred to as thematic analysis, was utilized to uncover, analyze, and interpret themes and patterns within textual data. This approach involved a systematic and iterative process of data analysis that has been instrumental in gaining valuable insights from qualitative research findings.

### Trustworthiness of the Study

Creswell (2015) showcased the effectiveness of this method to establish the research's trustworthiness. It was my responsibility to ensure that this study adhered to the foundational theoretical framework, preserving its authenticity. I provided a comprehensive breakdown of every phase of data collection and analysis, ensuring that readers gain a transparent understanding of the path leading to our findings. The standards of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability served as guiding principles throughout this inquiry.

### Credibility

Credibility ensures that the study effectively assesses or examines the researchers' intended objectives, focusing on determining whether the results align with real-world experiences and actualities (Polit & Beck, 2014). To establish credibility, I conducted research using well-established methods and procedures, including in-depth interviews with validated questions to delve deeper into teachers' experiences concerning the enhancement of their students' reading skills in the classroom.

### Transferability

Transferability pertains to the extent to which findings can be applied across various circumstances (Stahl & King, 2020). I provided contextual background information that defined the scope of my research, ensuring the applicability of my findings. This included the research's objectives, methodology, and criteria used for participant selection and exclusion.

### Dependability

Dependability ensures the reliability of the research findings by documenting the research processes and decision-making steps. This included maintaining a comprehensive record of each step taken, the decisions made, and any changes or adjustments during the research journey. Dependability was reinforced through member checking and peer debriefing.

### Confirmability

Confirmability ensures the validity and impartiality of the study's findings. This involved maintaining a neutral and unbiased stance throughout the research process, minimizing personal biases and preconceptions that could influence interpretations. Confirmability was upheld through rigorous documentation, member checking, and an unwavering commitment to objectivity.

In summary, these measures collectively ensured that the study's findings could be trusted as a reliable reflection of the participants' experiences and the data collected, contributing to the overall rigor and quality of the research.

## 2. RESULTS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of elementary teachers on strategies in improving the reading skills of learners during the in-person classes in North District, Panabo City Division. This also investigated their learning and challenging experiences as drawn from the findings of this study. At this stage of research, strategies of teachers were generally defined as their methodologies or approaches employed towards the improvement of the learners' reading skills in the classroom. These were vital elements for the promotion of various reading intervention programs in the school. The approach I used to my study was qualitative. Methods common to phenomenological research served to facilitate data collection and processing. The results provide a synopsis of the primary teachers' knowledge and expertise obtained by working to improve their children's reading abilities.

### Experiences of Teachers in Improving the Reading Skills of Learners

After analyzing the responses of the participants about their experiences in improving the reading skills of learners, the following three themes emerged: enhancing the reading performance of students, using technology, and highlighting the role of parents.

#### Enhancing the Reading Performance of Students

Students who read on their own are more likely to have higher levels of reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general knowledge than students who do not read on their own. They improve as readers, score higher on performance exams across the board, and have stronger subject matter understanding than their classmates who do not read.

IDI-03 uncovered during the interview that:

"It is my role as a classroom teacher as well as a reading teacher to improve my students' reading performance. It is a very significant element in order for the students to become successful across curriculum learning areas because they are very good in reading comprehension."

Additionally, IDI-04 indicated:

"Reading skills are very important for the students to be improved. As a teacher, it is my responsibility to enhance their reading skills. The students can be independent enough if they know how to read and apply their skills with other subject areas."

IDI-05 admitted:

"We can be determined as teachers as we try our best to enhance the reading skills of our students. Yes, it is very true that reading skills of students can be as important as learning some competencies within and across curriculum learning areas."

Numerous studies have shown that the school setting is a significant element in enhancing children's reading proficiency (Farver et al., 2006). In general, the following elements may be used to examine the school setting that influences students' reading literacy: school type, school size, school economic status, principal leadership, teacher engagement, teachers' qualifications, and ICT resources at school (Rutter & Maughan, 2002; Shin, Slater, & Ortiz, 2017). According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children actively engage in the learning process, performing experiments, making observations, and acquiring knowledge of the world, thus broadening their present comprehension and adjusting previously held ideas to accommodate new material (Cherry, 2018).

#### Using Technology

Technology is useful because it facilitates the editing of written work, the exploration of ideas and material across numerous modalities, and the stress-free recording, listening to, and rerecording of oral fluency practice. Computers and associated technologies may help kids increase their vocabulary and read more fluently, which in turn improves their comprehension. The use of technology in the classroom helps pupils improve their reading comprehension by forcing them to dig deeper for answers.

IDI-01 expressed:

"The use of technology in teaching reading can also enhance the reading performance of students. It can assist them towards developing the love for reading using appropriate technologies."

IDI-04 responded:

"Teachers use technology in order to facilitate the teaching of reading to the learners, and it really helps a lot for them. It must be emphasized that the responsible use of technology can support the development of reading skills among the learners."



IDI-07 recognized:

“Technology can be a helpful tool for teachers especially in using it in teaching the students to improve their reading skills. Teachers must be diligent enough to use the technology for the benefit of our school children for them to develop a very good reading habit in the classroom.”

Technology is transforming the landscape of language acquisition and is considered as having enormous potential to improve the teaching and learning of English. Due to the great accessibility of the internet and the availability of ICT tools in Malaysian schools, it is expected that new pedagogical strategies might be used in the classrooms. This has the potential to significantly alter the English as a second language (ESL) teaching and learning process in Malaysia (Razali, Hashim & Yunus).

Highlighting the Role of Parents

It has been shown that when parents are involved in their children's education on a regular basis, it has a beneficial impact on both their children's academic success and their emotional well-being. When parents are interested in their children's education, overall student success, student confidence, and classroom behavior all improve. Both the student and the parent would benefit from maintaining an open line of communication between the two.

IDI-06 revealed:

“In teaching the students how to read, the parents can play a significant role. They are considered the first teachers at home. So as a teacher, I can be able to capacitate the parents so that they would also assist me in teaching their children how to read at home.”

IDI-09 enunciated:

“The role of parents in their child's education is very crucial. As a teacher, I am reminding my parents to help also their children at home with how to read. They can play this role during their vacant time or after work or even during weekends.”

IDI-10 said:

“The parents can also serve as reading teachers at home. They can help the teachers in teaching the children how to read. The teachers can teach the children in school, while the parents can teach them at home. It can be a good partnership between home and school.”

Factors at the family level include the economic, social, and cultural standing of families (SES), parents' levels of education and work, and the availability of communications technology (ICT) and educational resources at home. A high economic status and an abundance of resources have a positive effect on the academic performance of children (Ho, 2010; Topcu, Arkan, & Erbilgin, 2014).

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers in Improving the Reading Skills of Learners

After analyzing the answers of the participants about their coping mechanisms adopted in improving the reading skills of learners, the following three themes emerged: motivating the students, utilizing different reading strategies, and providing an intervention program.

Motivating the Students

Students in the middle grades who are driven to read and interested in what they are reading demonstrate improvements in their reading comprehension and reading abilities. This is a direct route to better levels of general accomplishment and success both inside and outside of the classroom.

IDI-05 mentioned:

“One important factor also that can contribute to the better learning of students on how to read is motivating them. Motivation is very important, be it extrinsic or intrinsic motivation.”

IDI-06 articulated:

“Of course, for me, motivating the students can help them achieve better learning outcomes, especially in teaching them how to read. It can denote that when a child is motivated to learn, he or she is also motivated to read.”

IDI-08 added:

“One thing we need as teachers is how we motivate our students to learn. Let us not get tired of teaching our children how to read because this is one of the legacies that can impart to them. Let us continue to motivate our children about the importance of learning how to read.” Teachers who successfully instill both the skill and the enjoyment of reading lay the groundwork for a lifetime of reading. Establishing reading motivation is crucial in reading instruction and classrooms (Brandt et al., 2021).

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### Utilizing Different Reading Strategies

Reading techniques are mental processes that assist the reader in grasping information more quickly and effectively. They are essential for the development of reading skills and can be taught directly to students.

IDI-05 cited:

“In teaching children how to read, teachers must devise different strategies based on their needs. It can help the children learn reading and teachers can specifically address the types of reading remediation using various strategies.”

IDI-04 expressed:

“Various reading strategies can support the children in learning how to read. Depending on the capability of the children, we can also modify our teaching reading strategies to address the problem in reading.”

IDI-10 emphasized:

“When teaching the students how to read, teachers need to employ various reading strategies because it can facilitate better learning outcomes in reading. The children who are at risk in reading must be given preferential attention.”

It is essential to explore further study on reading strategies for learners in remote school communities to find out whether it really differs in urban schools. For example, the use of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) for additional reading sessions in elementary schools in Korea demonstrated significant improvements in reading attitudes and abilities (PALS research).

### Providing Intervention Program

Reading intervention helps students who are having difficulty improving their reading abilities in the areas of decoding, comprehension, and reading fluency by providing supplemental reading techniques and exercises.

IDI-06 quipped:

“We need to enhance the reading skills of our students or address those under frustration readers by crafting some intervention programs. This can help reduce the number of readers at risk or frustration readers.”

IDI-07 revealed:

“As a teacher and as a reading teacher, it is critical for the children to undergo an intervention or remediation program at least thirty to one hour every day or even three times a day for us to help our readers at risk enhance their reading skills.”

IDI-09 thought:

“Intervention activities for the children who are at risk in reading can help improve their reading skills, especially if teachers apply or utilize appropriate teaching resources for the children.”

The findings suggested that interventions for at-risk children must be intense, targeting personalized skill demands and enabling substantial progress (Foorman & Torgesen, 2011). Comprehensive interventions for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency/comprehension, and reading comprehension have been shown to be beneficial (Snyder, Witmer, & Schmitt, 2017).

### Educational Management Insights Drawn from the Findings of the Study

When the participants were questioned about their educational management insights drawn from the findings of the study, after analyzing the responses of the participants, three themes emerged: developing a contextualized reading program, improving the reading literacy of students, and signifying the role of teachers and the school environment.

### Developing a Contextualized Reading Program

Learners are encouraged to reflect on and investigate their own abilities and interests via the use of context-based learning. They will be able to communicate themselves clearly and confidently, allowing them to excel academically. Teaching and learning in a more relevant setting have been shown to increase students' learning and retention of material.

IDI-01 declared:

“The school principal together with the school reading focal persons and other teachers must develop a contextualized reading program which is intended for the readers at risk or frustration readers.”

IDI-02 quipped:

“In fact, the school has a contextualized reading program that we are using for our readers at risk or those under frustration level.”

IDI-03 conveyed:

“It really helps especially when the school has a reading program intended for the enhancement of the reading skills of students. Teachers need to utilize it so that the number of frustration readers must be decreased.”

The majority of students were under frustration level due to lack of mastery of reading components, the existence of at-risk learners, and the absence of a reading culture. Recommended reading programs and activities may be included in the development of a contextualized reading curriculum and implemented in schools as reading literacy initiatives (Tomas, Villaros & Galman, 2021).

Improving the Reading Literacy of Students

Reading is an essential ability for a kid to develop in order for them to be successful in school since it gives them access to a wider range of subject matter and helps them enhance their communication and language abilities.

IDI-04 conveyed:

“Especially those who are in the key stage 1 students, teachers have to consider that reading literacy among the students must be focused. Through this, the students can be able to develop their reading skills like fluency and phonological awareness.”

IDI-05 stated:

“It can be understood that our role as a teacher is to improve the reading literacy of our learners. We have to make the most of our time in order to help our struggling readers.”

IDI-07 accentuated:

“Reading literacy of learners is developed through teachers’ creativity by employing different strategies. Likewise, teachers need to bear in mind that struggling readers need to have a remediation program in order for them to be literate in reading.”

Improving mother tongue and reading literacy involves proper reading, expanding vocabulary, teaching wide thinking, enhancing communication, and fostering awareness (Abdulhamidovna, 2022).

Signifying the Role of Teachers and School Environment

Creating a learning environment in which children are motivated to study within the confines and expectations of a secure classroom is another crucial responsibility of the teacher.

IDI-07 stated:

“We need to consider our role as a teacher and as a reading teacher to instill among our students the love for reading. We need to inject some reading activities every day in our lesson, be it in English, Filipino, or mother tongue. It really helps our children enhance their reading skills.”

IDI-08 indicated:

“The school environment can also contribute to the enhancement of reading outcomes of learners. The environment must be positive and supportive to the need of every learner in school.”

IDI-09 mentioned:

“As a teacher, I need to consider my role as a reading teacher because you’re a teacher especially if you are an adviser, you also consider yourself as a reading teacher. So, my role as a teacher is not only as an adviser but also as a reading teacher.”

A variety of school characteristics have been identified as influencing school capacity, including enhanced education, professional development, shared governance, teacher support, and teacher attitude (Hu, 2014; Shin, Slater, & Ortiz, 2017). Teachers' emotional and behavioral support can significantly influence pupils' attitudes and academic results (Chen et al., 2019).

### 3. DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, the summary of the study is presented. From the summary of findings, I drew the implications for future directions. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of elementary teachers on strategies in improving the reading skills of learners during the in-person classes in North District, Panabo City Division. This also investigated their learning and challenging experiences as drawn from the findings of this study. At this stage of research, strategies of teachers were generally defined as their methodologies or approaches employed towards the improvement of the learners’ reading skills in the classroom. These were vital elements for the promotion of various reading intervention programs in the school. In order to finish my study, I used a qualitative-phenomenological technique in addition to a strategy that focused on theme analysis. In accordance with the criteria

outlined by Creswell (2006), I used "open-ended" interview questions to get a comprehensive understanding of the history of the individuals I interviewed. This approach urged my participants to contribute their own descriptions or interpretations of the phenomena we were studying.

Major findings indicated that after analyzing the responses of the participants about their experiences in improving the reading skills of learners, three themes emerged: enhancing the reading performance of students, using technology, and highlighting the role of parents. Additionally, regarding the answers of the participants about their coping mechanisms adopted in improving the reading skills of learners, three themes emerged: motivating the students, utilizing different reading strategies, and providing an intervention program. Lastly, when the participants were questioned about their educational management insights drawn from the findings of the study, three themes emerged: developing a contextualized reading program, improving the reading literacy of students, and signifying the role of teachers and the school environment.

#### Implications

In light of the analysis and discussion of the results of the study, the following implications are drawn:

##### Individualized Instruction:

Results imply that students have the opportunity to improve their reading, writing, test-taking, and study skills at their instructional level through intervention. Each session is designed to satisfy the unique requirements of each pupil in a small group setting. Different learning rates are accommodated by varying the instructional pace.

##### Role of Technology:

Technology increases student engagement, which can contribute to improved retention of information, especially regarding literacy development. Additionally, technology can boost students' self-esteem and enthusiasm for learning, bring them together via discussion and collaboration tools, and have a positive effect on society as a whole.

##### Parental Involvement:

Parents can improve their child's reading by engaging them in phonemic awareness activities, rhymes, pointing to each word as they read, and rereading. These activities aid in the development of early literacy skills in their child. Through their relationship with their parents, infants begin to develop literacy abilities immediately after birth. By conversing, reading, singing, and playing with their neonate or toddler, parents set the groundwork necessary for the development of language and literacy abilities.

##### Contextualized Learning:

Contextualizing the curriculum can help students see the relevance of their studies to their lives, thereby increasing their engagement and motivation to learn. It also assists them in making connections between various subject areas, which can deepen their comprehension of the material. Contextualizing reading comprehension instruction positions students in an authentic situation that is evocative and meaningful. Creating reading lessons and activities centered on the interests and environment of the learners achieves contextualization.

##### Reading Strategies:

Reading must be a dynamic and coherent activity that involves both the reader and the text in meaning construction. Reading strategies describe how a reader perceives a reading task, what written clues they use, how they interpret the text, and what to do when comprehension is lacking.

##### Future Directions of the Study

Reading skills are crucial to a child's academic success because they enable them to access a broad curriculum and enhance their communication and language skills. Additionally, reading can be an enjoyable and imaginative activity for children, which opens them up to a variety of new environments.

##### Exploring Long-Term Impacts:

As a researcher, I may propose further investigations with school administrators and other relevant parties to see whether the impacts have evolved over time. This approach can help future researchers investigate the long-term effects of school stakeholders' involvement in reading initiatives.

##### Policy and Program Development:

It is possible that the Panabo City Division would institute new rules and initiatives to get students more involved in developing their reading abilities at school. The study suggests that school administrators and stakeholders be permitted to communicate with one another for the benefit of students. The Panabo City Department of Education-Division has received requests for assistance in reading instruction from school administrators, teachers, and other interested parties who believe there is room for improvement in the educational system.



#### Utilizing Focus Group Discussions:

A focus group discussion (FGD) as a method of data collection can be employed to arrive at findings that are more accurate and trustworthy about the experiences of elementary school teachers in enhancing the reading abilities of pupils during in-person classes. FGDs allow participants to shed light on the many different perspectives they have, offering richer insights into the phenomenon under study.

#### Broader Contextual Studies:

Future studies could explore how reading strategies differ between urban and rural schools, as well as how these strategies can be adapted to different cultural and socioeconomic contexts. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective reading interventions across diverse educational settings.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the importance of individualized instruction, the effective use of technology, the significant role of parental involvement, and the benefits of contextualized learning in improving the reading skills of learners. These insights offer valuable directions for future research and educational practices aimed at enhancing literacy development among students.

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