



JOURNAL

OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH,
INNOVATION, AND
MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

An Academic Journal Publication



Website: | <https://jerimspublication.com>

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBERS



PRINT ISSN

3116-5559



ONLINE ISSN

3116-5567

Volume 1, Issue 6, pp 46-53, August 2026

Research Article

Implementation Challenges of a Community-Based Reading Program

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ABSTRACT

Article History:

Submission: June, 2026

Revised: July, 2026

Accepted: August, 2026

Published: August, 2026

Originality: 97%

Similarity Index: 4%

Grammarly Score: 94%

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Recommended Citation:

Clarion, J. & Ligaya, N., (2026). Implementation Challenges of a Community-Based Reading Program. *Journal of Educational Research, Innovation, and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(6), 46-53.

<https://doi.org/10.67001/jeri.2026.06.Z3Q2TL>

This study examined the implementation challenges of the Community-Based Reading Program in selected elementary schools in District IV, Schools Division of Oroquieta City, during School Year 2025–2026. Using a descriptive–narrative research design, the study involved twelve participants, including school heads and teachers, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that the program is generally implemented through structured reading activities, stakeholder collaboration, and monitoring mechanisms; however, several challenges persist, including time constraints, limited resources, inconsistent stakeholder participation, and diverse learner needs. Despite these, teachers and school heads reported positive experiences, professional growth, and meaningful learner progress. The study concludes that while the program is beneficial, strengthening planning, resource provision, and stakeholder engagement is essential. An enhanced remedial framework is proposed to improve program effectiveness and sustainability.

Keywords: *community-based reading program, implementation challenges, literacy development, remedial framework, stakeholder participation*

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Introduction

School-based programs that promote community participation and learner support have become essential strategies in addressing persistent educational challenges worldwide. Globally, education systems recognize that strong school–community partnerships contribute significantly to learner engagement, retention, and academic achievement. The UNESCO (2022) emphasized that community-supported school initiatives are critical to learning recovery and learner well-being, particularly in response to large-scale disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the World Bank (2021, 2022) underscored that structured, school-based interventions are necessary to address learning loss and reduce learning poverty, especially in foundational literacy. These international perspectives highlight the importance of examining how community-based programs operate at the school level and how they may be strengthened through systematic evaluation and evidence-based improvements. In the Philippine context, these global directions are reflected in the institutionalization of Brigada Eskwela by the Department of Education. The program is legally anchored in DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2008, which institutionalized Brigada Eskwela as a national school maintenance and stakeholder engagement program. Its expanded learner-focused orientation is reinforced by DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2015 (Guidelines on the Enhanced School Improvement Planning Process), which emphasizes participatory planning and stakeholder involvement, and DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019 (Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program), which highlights inclusive and learner-centered education. More recently, DepEd Memoranda on Brigada Eskwela implementation (2022–2023) and the National Learning Recovery Program aligned Brigada initiatives with literacy improvement and remedial interventions. In District IV, Schools Division of Oroquieta City, schools have adopted Brigada Eskwela Plus initiatives to support reading remediation and learner participation. However, differences in planning, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement are observed across schools, raising questions about program consistency and effectiveness.

Nieva (2021) reported that active stakeholder participation strengthens school operations and increases learner motivation, particularly in literacy programs. However, the study also noted that inconsistent implementation and limited monitoring mechanisms reduce program impact. Cruz and Alviar (2023) similarly emphasized that school-based initiatives achieve better outcomes when supported by clear objectives, structured evaluation tools, and sustained community collaboration. Other recent studies (2020–2023) highlight that while volunteer-driven reading programs show promise, their sustainability depends on systematic planning, resource allocation, and accountability mechanisms. These findings suggest the importance of conducting localized investigations to determine how Brigada Eskwela Plus initiatives are implemented and what challenges affect their success.

Despite policy support and ongoing implementation, data-driven evidence indicates persistent concerns in learner performance. The World Bank (2022) reported that a significant proportion of Filipino learners experience learning poverty, particularly in reading comprehension. National education reports, including analyses by the Senate Economic Planning Office (2023), have identified learning loss and foundational skill gaps among elementary learners. At the division and district levels, school records in District IV, Schools Division of Oroquieta City, reveal varying reading proficiency levels, irregular attendance in remedial sessions, and limited instructional resources. Monitoring reports also show inconsistent stakeholder participation in some schools. These data-driven conditions reveal a gap between the intended objectives of Brigada Eskwela Plus and the actual outcomes observed in learner reading performance and program sustainability.

To address this gap, the present study aims to determine the status, impact, and implementation challenges of the School-Based Brigada Plus Program in District IV, Schools Division of Oroquieta City, during School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) describe how the program is planned and implemented across selected schools; (2) assess its perceived and documented impact on learner participation and reading performance; and (3) identify operational and stakeholder-related challenges encountered during implementation. Through systematic data collection and analysis, the study intends to generate empirical evidence that will inform the enhancement of school-based remedial initiatives consistent with existing DepEd policies and guidelines.

The study is expected to produce an evidence-based enhanced remedial program tailored to the needs of District IV schools. The findings will likely identify strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of Brigada Eskwela Plus, particularly in stakeholder mobilization, monitoring systems, and instructional support. Results may guide school heads and teachers in refining remedial strategies, improving collaboration with community partners, and aligning practices with DepEd Orders and national learning recovery goals. Furthermore, the study may contribute

to informed decision-making at the district and division levels, ultimately promoting more effective, sustainable, and policy-aligned school-based interventions that improve learner outcomes.

Methods

This study examines the implementation challenges of the Community-Based Reading Program in Buntawan Elementary School and Bunga Elementary School, District IV, Schools Division of Oroquieta City, during the School Year 2025–2026. Using a descriptive–narrative research design, the study involves twelve purposively selected participants composed of two school heads and ten teachers who are directly involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the program. Data are gathered through a researcher-developed and expert-validated questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide, with quantitative data analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, while qualitative responses are examined through thematic analysis. The study focuses on the status of program implementation, experiences and challenges encountered by implementers, and areas requiring improvement, particularly in stakeholder participation, reading interventions, resources, scheduling, and monitoring practices. The findings serve as the basis for proposing an enhanced remedial framework that may strengthen the implementation and sustainability of community-based reading interventions in the selected schools.

Results and Discussions

Theme 1: Structured and Collaborative Implementation of Reading Interventions

The findings reveal that the Community-Based Reading Program is implemented through a structured yet flexible approach that combines regular reading sessions, varied instructional strategies, home-based activities, stakeholder participation, and continuous monitoring of learners' progress. Teachers conduct scheduled reading sessions particularly for struggling readers, with some interventions taking place after regular class hours. Participants also report using guided reading, phonics activities, storytelling, one-on-one reading practice, and comprehension exercises to respond to learners with different reading levels and needs. One participant explained that the program involves “scheduled reading sessions where teachers work with struggling readers” (T3), while another indicated that learners are grouped according to their reading levels for targeted instruction (T7). These practices suggest that implementation is not merely based on the conduct of general reading activities but on deliberate efforts to provide appropriate support according to the difficulties experienced by individual learners. Reading activities are likewise extended beyond the classroom through home-based reading, demonstrating that literacy development is viewed as a continuing process involving both the school and the home. The soft copy further shows that parents and community volunteers assist during reading activities, listen to learners read, encourage practice at home, and sometimes serve as reading tutors. This shared responsibility strengthens the community-based character of the program because teachers are not expected to address reading difficulties alone.

The collaborative nature of implementation is particularly important because the findings indicate that reading development requires sustained support from different people surrounding the learner. Parents provide home-based assistance and monitor reading progress, while volunteers extend the instructional support available to struggling readers. Formal coordination with the PTA, school heads, and community partners further provides an organizational structure for participation. The participants' experiences therefore demonstrate that collaboration is not simply an additional feature of the program but one of the mechanisms through which reading interventions are sustained. The finding is consistent with Mapp (2022), as cited in the soft copy, who emphasizes the important contribution of family and community engagement to learner success. Likewise, Fisher and Frey (2020) support the use of varied and contextually appropriate instructional materials and strategies in improving reading comprehension and engagement, while Lesaux (2020) emphasizes the importance of adapting literacy instruction to learners' particular backgrounds and needs. The findings are also aligned with Epstein (2021), who stresses that strong school-family-community partnerships contribute to a more supportive educational environment. Thus, the effectiveness of the Community-Based Reading Program appears to depend on the interaction of structured intervention, responsive teaching, family involvement, community participation, and school leadership rather than on any single strategy.

Overall, this theme demonstrates that community-based reading intervention becomes more meaningful when responsibility for literacy development is shared. Teachers provide professional and instructional direction, but

parents, volunteers, school leaders, and other stakeholders extend the opportunities for learners to practice and receive support. Such collaboration also creates continuity between what learners experience at school and what they practice at home. This is particularly significant for struggling readers who require repeated practice, encouragement, monitoring, and individualized assistance. At the same time, the findings suggest that successful collaboration requires clear coordination because participation from different stakeholders must be organized around the needs and schedules of learners. Therefore, strengthening the Community-Based Reading Program requires not only maintaining regular reading sessions but also developing sustainable systems for coordinating teachers, parents, volunteers, and school leaders. When these components function together, the program becomes a shared literacy intervention rather than an additional activity handled primarily by teachers.

Theme 2: Interconnected Challenges in Time, Resources, Participation, and Learner Needs

The second theme reveals that the implementation challenges experienced by teachers and school heads are interconnected rather than isolated. Participants identify limited time, heavy teaching and administrative workloads, insufficient instructional materials, inconsistent stakeholder participation, varied learner abilities, motivational difficulties, and irregular attendance as major barriers to effective program implementation. Teachers must perform their regular classroom responsibilities while conducting additional reading sessions and completing administrative requirements. One participant specifically mentioned “the time constraints due to other reports and submissions to be done” (T5), while another explained that limited time makes it difficult to provide sufficient one-on-one support and consistent reading practice for all learners. These accounts demonstrate that time constraints have direct instructional consequences. When teachers have limited available time, scheduled interventions may not be conducted consistently, and struggling readers may receive less individualized attention than they require. The soft copy therefore establishes that workload is not simply an inconvenience for implementers; it influences the regularity, intensity, and quality of reading intervention provided to learners.

Resource limitations further intensify these difficulties. Participants report insufficient reading materials, inadequate funding, and dependence on old or inappropriate resources. Such conditions limit teachers’ ability to provide engaging and differentiated activities suited to learners at different reading levels. At the same time, the program encounters challenges in stakeholder participation. Although parents and community volunteers are important sources of support, their participation is not always consistent because of personal responsibilities and scheduling conflicts. One participant stated that coordinating the schedules of “volunteers, parents, and the school is a constant difficulty” (T7), while another explained that some parents are non-readers and therefore cannot effectively assist their children with reading activities at home. Consequently, gaps in stakeholder participation may transfer additional responsibilities to teachers. The soft copy connects these concerns with Goodall (2021), who emphasizes the effect of inconsistent parental involvement on learning outcomes, and García and Weiss (2020), who recognize that family capacity and socioeconomic circumstances can influence parental educational support. Emerson et al. (2021) similarly emphasize the importance of effective school-family coordination in sustaining educational programs.

Learner-related concerns add another dimension to these implementation difficulties. Participants encounter learners with different reading levels, low participation, limited confidence, motivational difficulties, and irregular attendance. The diversity of reading ability requires teachers to differentiate their strategies instead of applying the same intervention to every learner. As one participant stated, the challenge involves “learners with different reading levels and needs” (T6), while another identified difficulty in encouraging all learners to participate actively. Irregular attendance further interrupts the continuity necessary for reading development because learners who frequently miss sessions receive fewer opportunities for guided practice. These findings are supported in the soft copy by Guthrie et al. (2021), who emphasize the role of motivation in reading engagement and achievement; Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020), who associate learner motivation and self-efficacy with participation and learning outcomes; and Connor et al. (2020), who emphasize differentiated instruction in addressing differences in reading ability. Taken together, the findings show that the program operates within a network of constraints. Limited time affects individualized instruction; insufficient resources restrict instructional choices; inconsistent stakeholder support increases teacher responsibility; and diverse learner needs require additional time and instructional adjustment. Addressing only one difficulty may therefore be insufficient. A stronger remedial framework should respond simultaneously to workload, resources, stakeholder coordination, learner motivation, attendance, and differentiated reading support.

Theme 3: Meaningful Learner Progress as a Source of Teacher Growth, Commitment, and Program Sustainability

Despite the challenges encountered during implementation, the findings demonstrate that teachers and school heads consider their involvement in the Community-Based Reading Program meaningful and rewarding, particularly when they witness learners improve their reading skills and confidence. The participants' experiences reveal an important contrast: the program demands additional time, effort, patience, and instructional adjustment, yet observable learner progress gives meaning to these demands. One participant described the experience as both "challenging and rewarding" because seeing learners improve makes the effort worthwhile, while another emphasized the fulfillment experienced when a learner is finally able to read what has been taught. These experiences indicate that learner improvement serves not only as an outcome of the intervention but also as a source of professional motivation for implementers. The soft copy further identifies memorable moments in which struggling readers gradually gain confidence and eventually read independently. Such moments reinforce teachers' perception that their additional effort produces meaningful changes in learners' lives. This emotional and professional satisfaction may help explain why teachers remain committed to the program despite workload and implementation difficulties.

Participation in the program also contributes to teachers' professional growth. Teachers report becoming more patient, committed, creative, and sensitive to individual learning needs. One participant explained that involvement in the program made them "more patient and more aware of the different learning needs of students" (T3), while another indicated that the experience strengthened commitment to helping learners improve. Teachers also describe becoming more creative in finding appropriate strategies for struggling readers. Importantly, the program expands their professional roles beyond regular classroom teaching. Some participants function as facilitators, mentors, coordinators, and guides for community reading volunteers. One participant specifically described the experience as expanding the role "from just a classroom teacher to a community coordinator" (T7). This indicates that the Community-Based Reading Program provides an experiential form of professional development in which teachers learn through direct interaction with learners, families, and community stakeholders. The soft copy relates these findings to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who emphasize that experiential and practice-based learning contributes to professional competence, and Avalos (2021), who associates continued participation in instructional programs with teacher development and reflective practice. Flores and Day (2021) and Cordingley et al. (2020) are also cited as supporting the role of experience and collaboration in strengthening professional skills and identity.

The theme further suggests that teacher growth and learner progress are closely connected to the sustainability of the program. Teachers become more willing to continue an intervention when they can see concrete evidence that their work is helping struggling readers. At the same time, professional commitment alone cannot guarantee long-term sustainability. The soft copy shows that teachers experience increased workload when resources, volunteers, or other forms of support are unavailable. This means that the dedication of teachers should be reinforced by institutional and community structures rather than treated as a substitute for them. The findings therefore point toward a balanced approach to sustainability: teachers' motivation and professional growth provide the human foundation of the program, while adequate resources, organized stakeholder participation, appropriate workload distribution, and consistent monitoring provide the structural support necessary to maintain it. Meaningful learner progress can motivate educators to persist, but a sustainable Community-Based Reading Program should ensure that such persistence does not depend primarily on teachers extending their work beyond regular responsibilities. The proposed enhanced remedial framework should therefore preserve the meaningful and collaborative qualities of the existing program while creating stronger systems of support that allow teachers, parents, volunteers, and school leaders to sustain reading interventions over time.

Conclusions

The study concludes that while the Community-Based Reading Program in the selected elementary schools in District IV, Schools Division of Oroquieta City, is actively implemented and demonstrates meaningful contributions to learners' reading development, its effectiveness is constrained by several interrelated factors involving time limitations, insufficient resources, inconsistent stakeholder participation, and challenges in addressing diverse learner needs. Despite these constraints, teachers and school heads exhibit strong commitment, adaptability, and collaborative efforts, resulting in positive learner outcomes and professional

growth among implementers. However, the variability in implementation practices and support systems highlights the need for a more structured, well-supported, and sustainable approach. Overall, the findings underscore that strengthening program planning, resource provision, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring mechanisms is essential to enhance the consistency, impact, and long-term sustainability of the Community-Based Reading Program, thereby ensuring more effective literacy development interventions grounded in actual school contexts.

Recommendations

Based on the thematic analysis and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that students be provided with differentiated and learner-centered reading interventions suited to their individual reading levels and needs, supported by regular assessment and feedback to monitor progress, strengthen confidence, and encourage active participation in reading activities both at school and at home. Teachers are encouraged to continuously improve their instructional practices through professional development, collaboration, and the use of varied, innovative, localized, and contextualized reading materials while establishing appropriate support mechanisms to manage workload and sustain effective implementation. School heads should strengthen program planning, supervision, monitoring, and evaluation by providing clear guidelines, structured schedules, adequate support, and stronger coordination among teachers and stakeholders to ensure consistent and sustainable implementation. Parents and community stakeholders are encouraged to participate actively and consistently in reading sessions and home-based reading activities, while schools may provide capacity-building activities and maintain regular communication to strengthen their ability to assist learners. Policymakers and education authorities should provide adequate resources, funding, training, and policy support to address identified gaps and strengthen school-community partnerships for sustainable literacy development. Finally, future researchers may evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed enhanced remedial framework, explore innovative approaches to community-based reading interventions, and conduct comparative studies across different schools and contexts to generate further evidence for improving literacy programs.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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