



Research Article

Contextual Determinants of Reading Comprehension: Basis for An Enhanced Strategic Reading Program

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigated the contextual determinants of reading comprehension among Key Stage 2 pupils in a public elementary school in the Philippines, with the aim of developing evidence-based strategic interventions. Employing a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 49 purposively selected pupils using a validated questionnaire assessing three domains: Home Literacy Environment (HLE), School Learning Environment (SLE), and Digital Access and Media Environment (DAME). Descriptive and inferential statistics (t-tests, ANOVA) were used for analysis. Results indicated that contextual factors provided moderate support overall (grand mean = 3.22). The SLE was rated highest (mean = 3.31), followed by DAME (mean = 3.29), while the HLE scored lowest (mean = 3.07), revealing a gap between the value placed on reading and active literacy engagement at home. Inferential analysis identified parents' monthly income ($p = .029$) and educational attainment ($p = .041$) as significant socioeconomic predictors of contextual support, whereas age, gender, and parental occupation were non-significant. Grounded in these findings, a multi-component intervention framework, Project READ, was formulated, integrating a structured school-based literacy program, guided home engagement packs, differentiated feedback mechanisms, structured digital literacy modules, and a tiered support system to address socioeconomic disparities. This study underscores the critical role of contextual diagnosis in designing equitable literacy interventions and contributes to the global discourse on learning recovery in low-resource, multilingual educational settings.

Keywords: coping strategies, educational equity, last-mile schools, phenomenological study, teachers' lived experiences

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Introduction

Literacy serves as a good indicator to measure the quality of education and the success levels of the people. This remains a serious problem in most locations like in Philippines. Dixon & Oakhill (2024) state that reading does not only require a person to recognize words but also understand their meaning, create associations, and apply them in real-life situations. According to the Programme for International student Assessment (PISA) and the Southeast Asia primary learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), many students have difficulties in reading. In 2018, the reading scores of the Philippines were the lowest after the country first took part in PISA (Department of Education, 2019). Besides, as per the results of the 2019 SEA-PLM exam, the percentage of students who could read on the highest level was approximately 10 percent in the fifth grade (UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020). Also, as World Bank research revealed in 2022, 90.9% of Filipino children of 10 years old are learning poor (that is, they cannot grasp a full paragraph and read it). Based on these statistics, there is a wide range of children with reading issues, and that might cause a poorer performance in their academic activities, and it might be harder to build a better future in the new world.

The Department of Education (DepEd) came up with several initiatives to help in this. The National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP) was one of them. It began in 2023. This was meant to help students to be able to make up on school work, become more proficient readers and achieve educational objectives in the country at a faster rate. Nevertheless, there were problems still in the schools, especially in those regions that lacked resources, teachers, or languages. To ensure that these problems do not deteriorate, we are obliged to comprehend the key aspects of reading and the way they are being transformed over time (Pearson et al., 2022).

Poor reading comprehension was also one of the most significant issues in education in the Philippines. Most of the students had poor reading habits, limited previous knowledge and insufficient vocabulary, which complicated their understanding of the text that they read. Maglunob and Tabernilla (2023) observed that Filipino students tended to be weak in reading comprehension because of the low vocabulary and level of fluency. This problem was aggravated when reading resources were low and there was a lack of teacher support. Various reading initiatives were carried out in schools to solve this problem but had not completely solved the problem.

Recent studies tried new methods to help the students become better. Given the technology-based and interactive methods (such as TechPlay Fusion Strategy) helped to improve the comprehension and word memorization among Grade 5 students, as per Liggitan et al., (2025). Jumao-as et al., (2025) the remedial reading programs were revealed to help learners in fourth grade to shift their level of reading frustration to a more instructional level of reading. This proved the effectiveness of the focused and well-thought programs.

Moreover, the role of teachers was a big determinant of the ability of children to understand readings. Gamboa and Quicho (2025) found in the study that educators with an excellent professional skill and effective reading strategies enhanced reading comprehension of their pupils. As it can be seen, according to a study by De Ocampo et al., (2024), most teachers used methods, such as stating the objectives of reading in clear terms and connecting the lesson to the previous experiences of the students. There were still problems such as dealing with children whose reading levels were extremely different and lack of resources.

The problem was also observed in other schools like the Tipan Integrated School in Oroquieta City. Although students were able to read and spell separate words, they often had problems with the meaning. This study aimed at discovering what affected the reading comprehension of pupils. The demographic variables among the students (age, gender, the income of the parents, occupation, and their level of education) and the classroom factors such as peer interaction, teaching strategies, teacher support, and their assessment processes were analyzed. The goal was to understand the association between these factors and reading comprehension, and the findings were employed to create the effective interventions that increased the text comprehension of students.

This study aimed to provide a clear picture of the effect the classroom environment and the backgrounds of the students had on the understanding. The results would be useful in helping teachers develop more useful lesson plans, guiding administrators to develop more effective reading programs, and give policymakers relevant data that would help resolve literacy problems in local schools. The final aim of the research was to enhance reading power of students such that they could understand, interpret, and use whatever they read in their lives.

Methods

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to determine the factors influencing the reading comprehension of Key Stage 2 pupils at Tipan Integrated School and to develop appropriate reading interventions based on the findings. A total of 49 purposively selected pupils from Grades 4 to 6 served as the respondents. Data were collected using a Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI)-adapted Reading Comprehension Test and a structured, validated questionnaire that measured demographic characteristics and contextual determinants, including teacher support, instructional strategies, peer interaction, and assessment practices. Prior to data collection, the research instruments underwent expert validation and reliability testing, while ethical approval and informed consent were secured from the appropriate authorities and participants. The collected data were analyzed using frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation, independent t-test, and ANOVA to describe the respondents' profiles, examine contextual factors, and determine significant differences among groups, ensuring that the findings would provide a sound basis for developing effective reading interventions.

Results and Discussions

Table 1`

Summary Table: Level of Contextual Determinants of Reading Comprehension

Contextual Determinants	Overall Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Home Literacy Environment	3.07	0.75	Agree
School Learning Environment	3.31	0.64	Agree
Digital Access and Media Environment	3.29	0.64	Agree
Grand Mean	3.22	0.68	Agree

Table 1 presents a summary of the contextual determinants of reading comprehension. The mean of 3.22 ($SD = 0.68$) indicates that, overall, contextual factors moderately support pupils' reading comprehension. Among the three domains, the school learning environment obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.31$), followed closely by the digital access and media environment ($M = 3.29$), while the home literacy environment registered the lowest mean ($M = 3.07$).

This pattern suggests a trend where the school may function as a primary source of structured literacy support, particularly in contexts where quantitative measures indicate home-based literacy practices are less consistent. Similar findings were reported by Duke and Cartwright (2021), who found that explicit instruction, teacher support, and classroom discourse exert stronger effects on reading comprehension than home factors in low-resource settings. The relatively lower rating of the home literacy environment aligns with Niklas et al. (2020), who emphasized that limited parental time and resources often constrain active literacy engagement despite positive attitudes toward reading.

Moreover, the comparable ratings of the school and digital environments further indicate that digital tools are increasingly integrated into learners' reading experiences. However, as noted by van der Kleij et al. (2023), the effectiveness of digital resources depends largely on instructional guidance and learners' digital literacy skills. Taken together, the findings suggest that while multiple contextual determinants contribute to reading comprehension, school-based and guided digital supports play a central role in compensating for weaker home literacy conditions.

Table 2

Difference in the Level of Contextual Determinants of Reading Comprehension When Grouped According to Profile

Profile Variable	Test Used	Computed Value (F / t)	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	One-Way ANOVA	1.12	0.341	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant
Gender	Independent t-test	0.86	0.392	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant
Parents' Monthly Income	One-Way ANOVA	3.08	0.029	Reject H_0	Significant
Parents' Occupation	One-Way ANOVA	1.47	0.214	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant
Parents' Educational Attainment	One-Way ANOVA	2.76	0.041	Reject H_0	Significant

Table 2 presents the results of inferential analyses examining differences in the level of contextual determinants of reading comprehension when pupils were grouped according to selected profile variables, namely age, gender, parents' monthly income, parents' occupation, and parents' educational attainment.

The one-way ANOVA revealed no statistically significant difference in contextual determinants based on age, $F(5) = 1.12, p = .341$, indicating that pupils across different age groups experienced similar levels of home, school, and digital contextual support for reading comprehension. Similarly, the independent samples t-test for gender showed no significant difference, $t(1) = 0.86, p = .392$, suggesting that male and female pupils have comparable contextual experiences related to reading development. Additionally, parents' monthly income was found to have a significant effect on contextual determinants, $F(7) = 3.08, p = .029$, demonstrating that pupils from higher-income families are likely to benefit from greater access to reading resources and supportive learning environments compared with those from lower-income households. Meanwhile, parents' occupation did not produce a significant difference, $F(6) = 1.47, p = .214$, implying that the type of parental employment alone does not substantially alter the contextual conditions influencing pupils' reading comprehension.

Moreover, parents' educational attainment yielded a significant difference, $F(6) = 2.76, p = .041$, highlighting that children of more educated parents are exposed to more enriched literacy practices and supportive home environments that positively affect reading comprehension. These findings indicate that while age, gender, and parental occupation do not significantly affect the contextual determinants of reading comprehension, socioeconomic factors, particularly parents' income and education, play a critical role. This aligns with prior studies emphasizing the influence of family income and parental education on literacy development and academic achievement (Duncan & Magnuson, 2012). The results suggest that strategic reading interventions at Tipan Integrated School should consider these socioeconomic disparities, incorporating measures such as enhanced access to reading materials, parent engagement programs, and differentiated reading support to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all pupils.

PROJECT READ

Reading Enrichment and Assessment Drive for Strategic Contextual Support at Tipan Integrated School is a comprehensive school-based literacy intervention designed to improve the reading comprehension of Key Stage 2 pupils by addressing the contextual factors that influence reading achievement. Grounded on empirical findings and aligned with the Department of Education's National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP) and Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs) Initiative, the project integrates home, school, and digital literacy support through teacher capacity-building, parent engagement, contextualized reading resources, guided digital reading activities, continuous monitoring, and systematic assessment. Implemented through five phases—from baseline assessment to sustainability planning—PROJECT READ seeks to enhance pupils' reading comprehension, strengthen family participation in literacy development, improve instructional practices, and establish sustainable, evidence-based reading interventions that promote long-term academic success and lifelong literacy among learners.

Conclusions

The contextual determinants, such as the school environment and digital access, provide moderate support for reading comprehension; the home literacy environment shows notable limitations. Socioeconomic factors, specifically parental income and educational attainment, emerge as significant influences on the availability and quality of literacy resources, creating observable disparities among pupils. In contrast, age, gender, and parental occupation do not show significant effects, suggesting that reading challenges stem more from resource accessibility than from inherent demographic traits. These findings highlight the need for school-based, inclusive interventions that actively strengthen teaching practices, foster home-school collaboration, and promote guided digital literacy. By adopting strategic, targeted supports, schools can help offset socioeconomic barriers and improve reading comprehension outcomes for all learners.

Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the need for collaborative and context-responsive efforts to strengthen pupils' reading comprehension. Teachers should integrate evidence-based and contextualized instructional strategies into daily reading lessons, while learners requiring additional support should benefit from targeted school-based interventions complemented by structured home literacy activities. School administrators should

institutionalize comprehensive reading programs such as Project READ, provide adequate instructional resources, and strengthen teacher capacity through continuous professional development. Likewise, the Department of Education may utilize the findings to enhance existing literacy initiatives by promoting stronger school-home partnerships, digital literacy integration, and context-sensitive instructional approaches. Parents and guardians are encouraged to actively engage in their children's reading development through consistent literacy practices at home and close collaboration with teachers. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to expand this line of inquiry by conducting longitudinal and experimental studies across diverse educational settings to validate, refine, and assess the long-term effectiveness and scalability of integrated literacy intervention frameworks.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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