

Lived Experiences of Elementary Teachers in Handling Struggling Readers: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a fundamental skill that significantly influences learners' academic achievement and overall educational development. This study explored the lived experiences of elementary teachers handling struggling readers at an elementary school in Banga, Aklan, Philippines. Specifically, it examined the challenges encountered by teachers, the common reading difficulties experienced by learners, the support and remediation practices implemented, the instructional strategies used to improve reading skills, and the school-based interventions recommended to enhance literacy development. The study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. Six teachers from Grades 2 to 6 were purposively selected as participants due to their direct experience in handling struggling readers. Data were gathered through semi-structured

interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that teachers encountered challenges related to limited instructional time, diverse learner needs, low learner motivation, and insufficient parental support. Struggling readers commonly experience difficulties in reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, word recognition, pronunciation, and phonics-related skills, which adversely affect their academic performance and classroom participation. Teachers addressed these difficulties through remedial reading sessions, guided reading, individualized instruction, and continuous monitoring. Effective instructional strategies included differentiated instruction, repeated reading, phonics-based activities, scaffolding, interactive learning activities, and technology-enhanced instruction. Participants further emphasized the importance of instructional resources, teacher training, early intervention programs, and strong home-school partnerships. The study highlights the need for collaborative and sustained literacy interventions to improve the academic performance of struggling readers and promote long-term reading success.

Keywords: *academic performance, literacy intervention, reading difficulties, struggling readers, teachers lived experiences*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is widely recognized as one of the most fundamental skills that learners must develop to achieve academic success and lifelong learning. It serves as the foundation for acquiring knowledge, understanding concepts, and participating effectively in classroom activities across all subject areas. Through reading, learners gain access to information, develop critical thinking skills, and build the competencies necessary for academic and personal growth. Consequently, difficulties in reading can significantly affect a learner's overall academic performance, classroom participation, self-confidence, and educational development (Rivera & Aggabao, 2020; Dawkins, 2019).

Despite the recognized importance of literacy, reading difficulties remain a persistent challenge in many educational settings worldwide. Numerous learners continue to struggle with essential reading skills such as decoding, fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. These difficulties often hinder their ability to understand instructional materials, complete academic tasks, and achieve expected learning outcomes. Learners who experience reading problems frequently encounter challenges not only in language-related subjects but also in mathematics, science, and social studies, where reading comprehension is essential for understanding concepts and instructions (Septia et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2025).

Research has consistently demonstrated the relationship between reading proficiency and academic achievement. Learners with strong reading skills are more likely to perform well academically because they can effectively access, process, and apply information from various learning resources. Conversely, struggling readers often exhibit lower academic achievement, reduced classroom participation, and diminished confidence in their learning abilities. Rivera and Aggabao (2020) reported that learners experiencing reading difficulties commonly struggle with comprehension, vocabulary development, and reading fluency, which negatively affect their performance across academic subjects. Similarly, Septia et al. (2022) emphasized that inadequate reading comprehension significantly limits students' ability to understand lessons and complete learning tasks successfully.

Within the Philippine educational context, reading difficulties continue to be a major concern among elementary learners. The implementation of various reading intervention programs by the Department of Education highlights the ongoing efforts to address literacy challenges among students. Despite these initiatives, many learners continue to experience difficulties in mastering basic reading skills. Several local studies have identified factors contributing to reading difficulties, including inadequate reading exposure, limited instructional resources, insufficient parental support, and varying levels of teacher preparedness in implementing reading interventions. These factors collectively influence learners' reading development and academic performance (Cabalo & Cabalo, 2019; Adao et al., 2023).

Teachers play a critical role in identifying, understanding, and addressing the needs of struggling readers. As frontline implementers of literacy instruction, teachers are uniquely positioned to observe learners' reading behaviors, identify specific difficulties, and implement interventions that support reading development. Their experiences and perspectives provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by struggling readers and the instructional practices that may effectively improve literacy outcomes (Adao et al., 2023; Green, 2023).

Previous studies have highlighted the significance of teacher competence and instructional strategies in supporting learners with reading difficulties. Bratsch-Hines et al. (2017) found that teachers with specialized literacy training and strong instructional competencies were more effective in identifying reading difficulties and implementing appropriate interventions. Likewise, Liebfreund and Amendum (2017) emphasized that individualized instruction allows teachers to gain a deeper understanding of learners' specific reading needs and provide targeted support that addresses identified gaps in reading skills.

Various instructional approaches have also been found effective in supporting struggling readers. Guided reading, repeated reading, phonics-based instruction, differentiated learning activities, and technology-enhanced reading interventions have demonstrated positive effects on learners' reading performance. Louick et al. (2019) reported that learner-centered and autonomy-oriented approaches promote engagement and motivation among struggling readers. Similarly, Omar and Alluqmani (2021) found that technology-integrated reading interventions can enhance reading comprehension and learner participation through interactive and adaptive learning experiences.

While existing studies have extensively examined reading difficulties and intervention strategies, limited qualitative research has explored the academic performance of struggling readers from the perspectives of elementary school teachers within local contexts. Most studies have focused on quantitative measures of reading achievement, intervention effectiveness, or learner outcomes. Consequently, there remains a need to understand how teachers perceive the academic performance of struggling readers, the challenges they encounter in supporting these learners, and the instructional strategies they employ to address reading difficulties.

The elementary school examined in this study, like many public elementary schools, serves learners with diverse literacy needs and varying levels of reading proficiency. Teachers in this context possess firsthand experiences in working with struggling readers and implementing interventions aimed at improving reading

performance. Examining their perspectives provides valuable insights into the realities of reading instruction, the factors affecting learner achievement, and the support systems necessary to enhance literacy development.

Anchored on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, the Simple View of Reading, Scarborough's Reading Rope, and Constructivist Learning Theory, this study explored the academic performance of struggling readers from the perspectives of teachers at an elementary school in this study. These theoretical perspectives collectively suggest that reading development is influenced by the interaction of cognitive, linguistic, instructional, and environmental factors. Furthermore, they emphasize the importance of teacher guidance, scaffolding, and meaningful learning experiences in supporting learners who experience reading difficulties (Bratsch-Hines et al., 2017; Liebfreund & Amendum, 2017).

Specifically, this study sought to explore the challenges encountered by teachers in handling struggling readers, identify the common reading difficulties experienced by learners, examine the support and remediation practices implemented by teachers, determine effective instructional strategies for improving reading skills, and identify school-based interventions that may enhance the academic performance of struggling readers. Through an in-depth exploration of teachers' perspectives, the study aimed to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on literacy education and provide practical insights for improving reading instruction and intervention programs in elementary schools.

Conceptual Framework

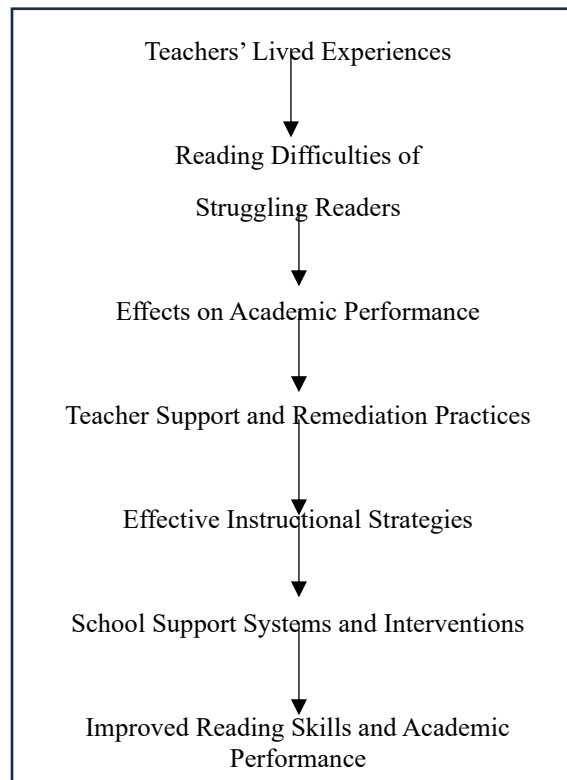


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore teachers' lived experiences regarding the academic performance of struggling readers at an elementary school. Qualitative descriptive research is appropriate when researchers seek to obtain rich, straightforward descriptions of participants' experiences, observations, and perceptions regarding a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Unlike other qualitative approaches that aim to develop theories or examine lived experiences in depth, qualitative descriptive studies focus on providing comprehensive accounts of events and situations as described by participants.

The qualitative descriptive approach was deemed appropriate because the study aimed to understand how teachers perceived the academic performance of struggling readers, the challenges they encountered in supporting these learners, and the instructional strategies they implemented to address reading difficulties. Through this design, the researchers were able to gather detailed information regarding teachers' observations and experiences within their natural educational setting.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research seeks to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasized that qualitative inquiry focuses on understanding participants' perspectives and interpretations of their experiences within specific contexts. Consistent with these principles, the present study examined teachers' perspectives regarding struggling readers and generated findings grounded in their actual experiences and observations.

The study adopted an interpretive orientation, recognizing that teachers construct meanings based on their interactions with learners, instructional experiences, and classroom realities. Through semi-structured interviews, participants were provided opportunities to describe the reading difficulties they observed among learners, explain the challenges they encountered in supporting struggling readers, and discuss the interventions they considered effective in improving reading performance.

Research Setting

The study was conducted at an elementary school, a public elementary school located in Mangan, Banga, Aklan, Philippines. The school serves learners from various grade levels and provides basic education in accordance with the standards established by the Department of Education.

This school was selected as the research setting because it provides a relevant context for examining reading difficulties among elementary learners. The school has teachers with extensive experience in handling learners who exhibit varying levels of reading proficiency, including those who experience significant reading challenges. As such, the setting offered an appropriate environment for investigating teachers' perspectives regarding the academic performance of struggling readers.

Furthermore, the school's implementation of classroom-based reading instruction and intervention activities provided opportunities for participants to share meaningful insights regarding the challenges, strategies, and support mechanisms associated with literacy development among elementary learners.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants of the study consisted of six teachers who had direct experience in teaching learners with reading difficulties. The participants represented different grade levels ranging from Grade 2 to Grade 6, and possessed varying years of teaching experience.

The study utilized purposive sampling in selecting the participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify information-rich participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The researchers intentionally selected teachers who had firsthand experience in handling struggling readers and who could provide detailed information regarding learners' reading difficulties, academic performance, and instructional interventions.

The participants included teachers whose teaching experience ranged from six to nineteen years. Their extensive classroom experience enabled them to provide valuable insights regarding the factors influencing reading performance, the challenges encountered in supporting struggling readers, and the strategies used to address literacy difficulties.

The inclusion criteria for participation were as follows: (1) currently employed as a teacher at an elementary school; (2) directly handling learners identified as struggling readers; and (3) willing to participate voluntarily in the study. Teachers who met these criteria were invited to participate and were provided with information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study before consent was obtained.

Because qualitative research prioritizes depth of information rather than statistical representation, the selection of six participants was considered appropriate for generating rich and meaningful descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Instrument

The primary data collection instrument used in the study was a semi-structured interview guide. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research because they provide flexibility while ensuring that key topics relevant to the research objectives are addressed consistently across participants.

The interview guide was adapted from the work of Alcayde and Basilan (2024) and was subsequently expanded and modified by the researchers to align with the objectives of the present study. The instrument consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses regarding teachers' experiences, observations, challenges, instructional practices, and recommendations related to struggling readers.

The interview guide focused on four major areas: challenges encountered by teachers in handling struggling readers, common reading difficulties demonstrated by learners, teacher support and remediation practices, and instructional strategies used to improve reading performance. Follow-up questions and probing techniques were employed when necessary to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses and provide additional details.

The use of open-ended questions enabled participants to freely express their views and experiences while allowing the researchers to gather rich and contextualized information relevant to the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to data collection, the researchers secured permission from the school administration to conduct the study at the target elementary school. Upon receiving approval, the researchers coordinated with prospective participants and explained the purpose, significance, and procedures of the research.

Participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. After obtaining informed consent, interview schedules were arranged based on the availability of the participants.

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted by the researchers. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to discuss their observations and experiences regarding struggling readers in their classrooms. The researchers used the interview guide to facilitate discussion while remaining flexible in exploring emerging topics relevant to the study.

Throughout the interview process, careful attention was given to establishing rapport and creating a comfortable environment that encouraged honest and detailed responses. Participants were given sufficient time to reflect upon and articulate their experiences. Notes were taken during the interviews to supplement the collected responses and ensure accurate documentation of participants' statements.

Following data collection, the researchers organized, reviewed, and prepared the interview responses for analysis. The collected data served as the primary basis for identifying recurring patterns, categories, and themes related to the academic performance of struggling readers.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the quality and rigor of the qualitative findings, the researchers employed strategies that addressed credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

A. Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truthfulness and accuracy of the findings. To enhance credibility, the researchers used semi-structured interviews that allowed participants to provide detailed explanations of their experiences and perspectives. Follow-up questions and probes were utilized to clarify responses and obtain deeper insights into the issues being discussed. Furthermore, participants were selected based on their direct experience in teaching struggling readers, ensuring that the information collected was relevant and grounded in actual classroom practice.

B. Dependability

Dependability concerns the consistency and stability of research findings over time. To ensure dependability, the researchers maintained a systematic and organized approach throughout the research process. The procedures for participant selection, data collection, and data analysis were clearly documented to provide transparency and allow future researchers to understand how the study was conducted.

C. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are derived from participants' responses rather than researcher bias or personal assumptions. To strengthen confirmability, the researchers relied on verbatim participant statements and direct quotations when interpreting the findings. Themes and conclusions were developed based on recurring patterns identified within the data rather than preconceived expectations.

D. Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings may be applicable to similar contexts. To facilitate transferability, detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and research procedures were provided. By presenting contextual information regarding the school and the participating teachers, readers may determine the relevance of the findings to other educational settings involving struggling readers.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles in educational research. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms and participant codes were used in reporting interview responses. No personally identifiable information was disclosed in any research document or publication resulting from the study.

The researchers ensured that participants experienced no physical, psychological, or professional harm as a result of their involvement. All information collected during the study was treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic and research purposes. The researchers also exercised honesty, integrity, and respect throughout the conduct of the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative analytic method that involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data.

The analysis began with familiarization, during which the researchers carefully reviewed and examined the interview responses multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. Significant statements and meaningful responses relevant to the research objectives were identified and highlighted.

Subsequently, the researchers generated initial codes by assigning labels to segments of data that reflected important ideas, experiences, and observations expressed by the participants. Similar codes were then grouped together and organized into broader categories.

Following categorization, the researchers examined relationships among categories and developed themes that represented recurring patterns across participants' responses. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately reflected the collected data and addressed the objectives of the study.

The final themes provided insights into the challenges encountered by teachers, the common reading difficulties experienced by learners, the support and remediation practices implemented by teachers, the instructional strategies used to improve reading skills, and the school support systems needed to strengthen reading interventions. These themes served as the basis for the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the study's findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the findings of the study on the academic performance of struggling readers from the perspectives of teachers. The findings were generated through semi-structured interviews with six teachers who had direct experience in handling learners experiencing reading difficulties. Through thematic analysis, five major themes emerged from the participants' responses: (1) challenges encountered by teachers in handling struggling readers, (2) common reading difficulties experienced by learners and their impact on academic performance, (3) teacher support and remediation practices, (4) effective instructional strategies in improving reading skills, and (5) school support systems and recommended interventions for struggling readers.

The discussion integrates participants' responses with relevant literature and theoretical perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Theme 1: Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Handling Struggling Readers

The findings revealed that teachers encountered multiple challenges in supporting struggling readers, including limited instructional time, large class sizes, mixed learner abilities, low learner motivation, and insufficient parental support. These challenges affected teachers' ability to provide individualized instruction and implement intensive reading interventions necessary for learners experiencing reading difficulties.

One of the most frequently cited concerns was the limitation of instructional time. Participants explained that reading intervention often required individualized support, additional preparation, and close monitoring of learner progress. However, classroom responsibilities and curriculum requirements frequently restricted opportunities for intensive remediation. Teachers found it difficult to balance the needs of struggling readers while simultaneously addressing the learning needs of the entire class.

The challenge of managing diverse learner abilities further complicated instructional delivery. Participants noted that classrooms typically consisted of learners with varying reading proficiency levels, requiring differentiated instruction and individualized support. While struggling readers required intensive guidance, teachers also needed to maintain instructional progress for learners performing at grade level.

Learner motivation was likewise identified as a significant challenge. Participants observed that struggling readers often demonstrated low confidence, reduced participation, and hesitation during reading activities. These behaviors were frequently attributed to repeated experiences of difficulty and failure in reading tasks. As learners became increasingly aware of their limitations, they often developed negative attitudes toward reading, which further affected their willingness to participate in literacy-related activities.

Insufficient parental support emerged as another challenge. Teachers reported that some learners received limited reinforcement of reading skills at home, reducing opportunities for practice outside the classroom. The absence of consistent home support often hindered learner progress and placed greater responsibility on teachers to address reading difficulties during limited instructional hours.

These findings are consistent with Adao et al. (2023), who reported that teachers encountered challenges related to limited instructional time, inadequate resources, and workload demands when implementing reading

interventions. Similarly, Reyes et al. (2023) found that varying learner needs and insufficient support systems complicated the delivery of effective reading instruction. The findings further support Cabalo and Cabalo (2019), who emphasized the influence of environmental and contextual factors on literacy development.

The findings may be interpreted through Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, which emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and guided support in learning. Struggling readers require sustained assistance from knowledgeable individuals, including teachers and parents, to progress beyond their current level of reading competence. When opportunities for scaffolding are constrained by limited instructional time and insufficient home support, literacy development may be adversely affected.

Overall, the findings suggest that reading difficulties cannot be addressed solely through classroom instruction. Rather, effective intervention requires supportive educational conditions that enable teachers to provide individualized assistance and continuous literacy support.

Theme 2: Common Reading Difficulties Experienced by Learners and Their Impact on Academic Performance

The findings revealed that struggling readers commonly experience difficulties related to reading fluency, comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary development, word recognition, and blending letter sounds. According to the participants, these reading difficulties significantly affected learners' academic achievement, classroom participation, and self-confidence.

Reading fluency emerged as one of the most frequently identified concerns. Participants observed that struggling readers often read slowly, inaccurately, and with limited expression. Because substantial cognitive effort was devoted to decoding words, learners frequently struggled to comprehend the meaning of texts. Consequently, they encountered difficulties understanding lessons, following instructions, and completing academic tasks.

Reading comprehension was likewise identified as a major challenge affecting learner performance. Participants reported that struggling readers frequently experienced difficulty understanding written materials, answering comprehension questions, and participating in classroom discussions. These difficulties extended beyond language subjects and affected performance across content areas where reading was necessary for understanding concepts and instructions.

Vocabulary limitations and word-recognition difficulties further contributed to reading challenges. Learners with restricted vocabulary often struggled to understand unfamiliar words and construct meaning from texts. Similarly, difficulties in recognizing words and blending letter sounds negatively affected reading fluency and comprehension.

The findings support the work of Rivera and Aggabao (2020), who found that reading difficulties significantly affect academic achievement because learners struggle to process instructional content effectively. Similarly, Septia et al. (2022) emphasized that reading comprehension is essential for successful learning across subject areas. Kanninen et al. (2019) further reported that literacy difficulties frequently extend beyond reading performance and influence broader academic outcomes.

The findings are also consistent with the Simple View of Reading, which posits that reading comprehension is dependent upon both decoding skills and language comprehension. Weaknesses in either component can impair overall reading performance. Likewise, Scarborough's Reading Rope emphasizes that skilled reading results from the integration of multiple literacy components, including vocabulary, language comprehension, phonological awareness, decoding, and word recognition. Deficiencies in any of these areas may contribute to reading difficulties and reduced academic performance.

Beyond academic achievement, participants noted that reading difficulties negatively affected learners' confidence and willingness to participate in classroom activities. Learners often became hesitant to read aloud and avoided situations that required public reading. These findings underscore the importance of early intervention in preventing reading difficulties from affecting learners' academic engagement and self-esteem.

Overall, the findings indicate that reading difficulties have far-reaching implications for academic performance, classroom participation, and learner confidence, highlighting the need for timely and targeted intervention.

Theme 3: Teacher Support and Remediation Practices for Struggling Readers

The findings revealed that teachers implemented various support mechanisms and remediation practices to assist struggling readers. These included remedial reading sessions, guided reading activities, individualized instruction, close monitoring, supplementary learning materials, and continuous encouragement.

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of remedial reading activities conducted beyond regular classroom instruction. Such interventions provided learners with additional opportunities to practice reading skills, improve comprehension, and strengthen literacy competencies. Teachers viewed remedial instruction as essential because many struggling readers required more intensive support than could be provided during regular classroom sessions.

Individualized instruction also emerged as a significant intervention strategy. Participants explained that one-on-one guidance enabled teachers to identify specific learner difficulties and tailor instructional approaches accordingly. Through individualized support, teachers were able to focus on particular literacy needs, including decoding, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension.

The findings align with Liebfreund and Amendum (2017), who found that individualized instruction facilitates the identification of learner-specific reading challenges and promotes targeted intervention. Similarly, Donegan and Wanzek (2021) reported that intensive and individualized reading interventions contribute significantly to improved literacy outcomes among struggling readers.

Participants likewise emphasized the importance of monitoring learner progress and providing encouragement. Teachers recognized that struggling readers often required emotional support in addition to academic intervention. Encouragement helped strengthen learner confidence and motivation, while continuous monitoring enabled teachers to evaluate progress and modify instructional strategies when necessary.

The findings may be explained through Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, wherein teachers function as more knowledgeable individuals who scaffold learners toward higher levels of literacy performance. Through guided support and targeted intervention, struggling readers are gradually assisted in developing independent reading skills.

Overall, the findings demonstrate the critical role of teachers in supporting literacy development through sustained intervention, individualized guidance, and continuous encouragement.

Theme 4: Effective Instructional Strategies in Improving Reading Skills

The findings revealed that teachers utilized a variety of instructional strategies to improve reading performance among struggling readers. These strategies included differentiated instruction, guided reading, repeated reading, phonics instruction, flashcards, visual aids, scaffolding, peer tutoring, interactive games, read-aloud activities, and technology-enhanced learning.

Differentiated instruction emerged as one of the most effective approaches identified by participants. Teachers adjusted instructional materials and activities according to learners' reading abilities, enabling struggling readers to participate meaningfully in classroom learning. This approach acknowledged learner diversity and promoted more inclusive literacy instruction.

Guided reading and repeated reading were also widely used to strengthen fluency and comprehension. Through repeated exposure to texts and teacher-guided practice, learners developed greater confidence and reading accuracy. Participants observed that these approaches promoted improved reading performance and increased learner engagement.

The findings support Chase Young and McCauley (2020), who found that repeated reading interventions significantly improve reading fluency among struggling readers. Vernon-Feagans et al. (2018) likewise reported that structured reading interventions positively influence literacy development among elementary learners.

Participants further emphasized the effectiveness of phonics instruction in addressing foundational reading skills. Because many struggling readers experienced difficulties with letter-sound correspondence and decoding, phonics-based activities were considered essential components of reading intervention.

The use of flashcards, visual aids, interactive games, and information and communication technology also enhanced learner engagement and motivation. These instructional tools provided interactive learning experiences that supported literacy development while making reading activities more enjoyable.

The findings reflect the principles of Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes active participation and meaningful engagement in learning. Through interactive and learner-centered approaches, learners actively construct knowledge and develop literacy competencies.

Overall, the findings suggest that successful reading instruction requires a combination of evidence-based strategies that address the diverse needs of struggling readers while promoting engagement, motivation, and skill development.

Theme 5: School Support Systems and Recommended Interventions for Struggling Readers

The findings revealed that teachers considered institutional support and collaborative intervention programs essential for improving the academic performance of struggling readers. Participants consistently emphasized the need for instructional resources, teacher training, remediation programs, early assessment systems, and strong home-school-community partnerships.

Teachers highlighted the importance of professional development opportunities and access to instructional materials. Participants indicated that adequate resources and literacy-focused training would strengthen their ability to implement effective reading interventions and address learner needs more efficiently.

The findings support Bratsch-Hines et al. (2017), who emphasized the importance of teacher preparation and professional development in effective literacy instruction. Green (2023) similarly reported that supportive educational environments contribute significantly to successful literacy practices.

Participants also advocated for remedial classes, individualized intervention programs, guided reading activities, phonics instruction, and vocabulary development exercises. These interventions were viewed as essential for addressing specific literacy deficits and supporting learner progress.

The importance of early identification and intervention was another recurring finding. Participants recommended implementing assessment systems that would identify struggling readers as early as possible, allowing teachers to provide timely support before difficulties become more severe.

The findings align with Heguerra and Cacho (2022), who emphasized the effectiveness of early intervention programs in preventing long-term reading difficulties and improving academic outcomes.

Finally, participants highlighted the significance of collaboration among teachers, parents, school administrators, and community stakeholders. Literacy development was viewed as a shared responsibility that extends beyond classroom instruction. Strong home-school partnerships were considered critical in reinforcing reading skills and sustaining learner progress.

Overall, the findings indicate that effective literacy intervention requires a comprehensive support system involving instructional resources, professional development, targeted remediation, early intervention, and collaborative partnerships. Such coordinated efforts contribute significantly to improving the academic performance of struggling readers and promoting long-term literacy success.

Synthesis of Findings

The findings collectively demonstrate that struggling readers experience multifaceted literacy challenges that negatively affect academic performance, classroom participation, and learner confidence. Teachers encounter various barriers in supporting these learners, including limited instructional time, diverse learner needs, and insufficient parental involvement. Despite these challenges, teachers implement a range of remediation practices and instructional strategies designed to improve literacy outcomes.

The study further highlights the importance of institutional support, early intervention, teacher professional development, and collaborative partnerships in addressing reading difficulties. Consistent with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, the Simple View of Reading, Scarborough's Reading Rope, and Constructivist Learning Theory, the findings underscore the significance of guided support, foundational literacy skills, active learner engagement, and collaborative educational environments in promoting reading development.

Ultimately, improving the academic performance of struggling readers requires a holistic and sustained approach involving teachers, families, school leaders, and community stakeholders working together to create supportive literacy-rich learning environments.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the lived experiences of elementary teachers in handling struggling readers. Through qualitative inquiry, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges encountered by teachers, teachers' experiences in addressing the reading difficulties of learners, the remediation practices employed in classrooms, the instructional strategies perceived as effective in improving reading skills, and the institutional support systems necessary to strengthen literacy development. The findings offered valuable insights into the realities of reading instruction within an elementary school setting and highlighted the critical role of teachers in addressing the literacy needs of struggling readers.

Teachers described struggling readers as having multiple and interconnected literacy challenges including difficulties in reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, pronunciation, word recognition, and phonics-related skills. Teachers observed that these literacy challenges affected learners' academic achievement, classroom participation, task completion, and self-confidence. Teachers consistently observed that learners with reading difficulties often struggled to understand lessons, follow written instructions, participate in classroom discussions, and demonstrate expected academic competencies. These findings reaffirm the fundamental role of literacy as a foundation for learning across all subject areas and underscore the far-reaching consequences of unresolved reading difficulties.

The study further revealed that teachers encounter substantial challenges in supporting struggling readers. Limited instructional time, diverse learner needs, low learner motivation, large class sizes, and insufficient parental support emerged as recurring concerns among participants. These challenges constrained teachers' ability to provide individualized attention and intensive intervention to learners requiring additional support. Despite these limitations, the participants demonstrated commitment and resilience in implementing various remediation practices designed to improve learner outcomes. The findings suggest that addressing reading difficulties requires not only effective instructional practices but also supportive educational environments that enable teachers to meet the complex literacy needs of learners.

Another important contribution of the study lies in documenting the lived experiences of teachers as they implemented various intervention practices for struggling readers. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of remedial reading activities, guided reading sessions, individualized instruction, continuous monitoring, and the provision of supplementary learning materials. These interventions reflected teachers' efforts to address literacy difficulties through sustained support and personalized instruction. The findings indicate that struggling readers benefit most when instructional approaches are responsive to their specific learning needs and when opportunities for practice and reinforcement are provided consistently.

The study also revealed how teachers experienced the use of various instructional strategies in supporting struggling readers. Differentiated instruction, repeated reading, guided reading, phonics-based activities, visual aids, flashcards, scaffolding techniques, interactive learning activities, peer-assisted learning, and technology-enhanced instruction were frequently mentioned by participants. These findings suggest that literacy instruction is most effective when it is flexible, engaging, and responsive to learner diversity. The use of varied instructional approaches allows teachers to accommodate differences in learner readiness, interests, and learning styles while creating meaningful opportunities for literacy development.

Furthermore, the findings highlighted the importance of institutional support and collaborative partnerships in addressing reading difficulties. Participants emphasized the need for adequate instructional resources, literacy-focused professional development, early identification systems, remediation programs, and strong collaboration among teachers, parents, school administrators, and community stakeholders. The participants recognized that reading development cannot be viewed solely as a classroom responsibility but rather as a shared educational

endeavor requiring coordinated efforts among multiple stakeholders. The findings therefore reinforce the importance of adopting a holistic and collaborative approach to literacy intervention.

From a theoretical perspective, the study supports the assumptions of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, the Simple View of Reading, Scarborough's Reading Rope, and Constructivist Learning Theory. The findings demonstrated how teachers utilized guided support, scaffolding, and collaborative learning experiences when assisting struggling readers. They likewise reinforced the notion that reading proficiency depends upon the successful integration of multiple literacy components, including decoding, language comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and phonological awareness. The instructional practices identified by participants reflected learner-centered approaches that encourage active engagement and meaningful learning experiences, further supporting constructivist principles of education.

The study contributed to the growing body of literature by providing context-specific insights into the lived experiences of elementary teachers working with struggling readers in a Philippine elementary school setting. While numerous studies have examined reading achievement quantitatively, the present study offered a qualitative perspective that captured the experiences, observations, and professional judgments of teachers who directly interact with struggling readers on a daily basis. As such, the findings provide valuable evidence that may inform literacy policies, intervention programs, and instructional practices in similar educational contexts.

The findings also carry important implications for educational practice. School administrators may consider strengthening school-based reading intervention programs through the provision of instructional resources, structured remediation initiatives, and ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers. Literacy-focused training programs may further enhance teachers' capacity to identify reading difficulties, implement evidence-based interventions, and monitor learner progress effectively. Likewise, classroom teachers may benefit from adopting differentiated instructional approaches that address the diverse literacy needs of learners while promoting active engagement and participation.

The study additionally underscores the importance of strengthening home-school partnerships. Parents and guardians play a critical role in reinforcing literacy skills outside the classroom through regular reading activities, monitoring of learner progress, and active participation in school literacy programs. Schools may therefore consider developing parent education initiatives that promote awareness of the importance of reading support within the home environment. Increased collaboration between schools and families may contribute significantly to improved literacy outcomes among struggling readers.

In terms of policy implications, educational leaders may consider investing in early screening and intervention programs designed to identify reading difficulties before they become severe barriers to academic achievement. Early identification enables educators to implement targeted support strategies and reduce the likelihood of persistent literacy challenges. Policies that prioritize literacy development, teacher support, and resource allocation may further strengthen efforts to improve reading outcomes among elementary learners.

Although the study generated meaningful insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within a single elementary school and involved a relatively small number of participants. Consequently, the findings should not be interpreted as representative of all schools or educational contexts. Rather, they provide an in-depth understanding of teachers' perspectives within a specific setting. Future research may consider including multiple schools, larger participant groups, and diverse educational contexts to generate broader perspectives regarding struggling readers and literacy intervention practices.

Future studies may also explore the perspectives of learners, parents, reading coordinators, and school administrators to provide a more comprehensive understanding of reading difficulties and intervention programs. Mixed-methods investigations may further enrich existing knowledge by integrating qualitative insights with quantitative measures of reading achievement and intervention effectiveness. Such research may contribute to the development of more comprehensive and evidence-based literacy programs.

In conclusion, the study demonstrated that elementary teachers encounter significant challenges in handling struggling readers, including diverse learner needs, limited instructional time, insufficient parental support, and resource constraints. Despite numerous obstacles, teachers remain at the forefront of literacy intervention through the implementation of remediation practices, differentiated instruction, and learner-centered teaching strategies. The

study highlights the importance of supporting teachers through collaborative and sustained literacy interventions that strengthen their capacity to address the needs of struggling readers effectively.

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