

Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program: A Phenomenological Study of the Narratives of ARAL Tutees

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of ARAL tutees participating in the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program at Mapiña Elementary School, Division of Masbate City. Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with eighteen (18) purposively selected ARAL tutees from Grades 1 to 6 and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that ARAL tutees experience the program as a structured, routine-based literacy intervention involving repeated reading, writing, and guided exercises. Learners reported positive emotional experiences such as enjoyment and satisfaction, though some experienced anxiety and difficulty during performance tasks.

The program was perceived to have a positive impact on academic performance, particularly in reading fluency, comprehension, spelling, and English proficiency, as well as on learners' confidence, participation, study habits, and motivation. However, challenges persisted, including difficulties in literacy and language skills, a strong dependence on teacher guidance, and a desire for more varied and engaging learning activities. Learners also expressed the need for emotional and social support, emphasizing the importance of patience, encouragement, and a positive classroom climate. The study concluded that while ARAL effectively supports literacy development and learner confidence, its effectiveness varies among learners and is contingent upon instructional quality, emotional support, and activity design. Recommendations include strengthening differentiated instruction, providing continuous professional development for teachers, incorporating varied and interactive activities, and sustaining emotional and social support to address learner diversity and ensure equitable learning outcomes.

Keywords: *ARAL Program, learning recovery, literacy intervention, phenomenological study, remedial education*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in equipping learners with the competencies necessary for academic success, personal development, and lifelong learning. Central to this role is the development of foundational literacy and numeracy skills, which enable learners to access, understand, and engage with increasingly complex content across grade levels. Research consistently demonstrates that early academic competencies form the foundation for later school achievement. In a large longitudinal study of over 35,000 children, Duncan et al. (2007) found that mathematics and reading skills at school entry were among the strongest predictors of subsequent academic performance. Similarly, foundational language and literacy skills acquired in the early years significantly predict later reading and writing outcomes in primary school

(Bigozzi et al., 2021). Long-term evidence also shows that first-grade reading proficiency can influence academic trajectories into adulthood (Ferrer et al., 2023). Learners who fail to develop these skills early are likely to experience academic struggles, lower engagement, reduced confidence, and fewer future opportunities.

Recognizing the importance of foundational skills, the educational community worldwide—including the Philippines—has implemented strategies to support learners who lag behind academically. This aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all (United Nations, 2015). Despite these efforts, persistent learning gaps in reading and numeracy remain a critical challenge in the Philippine educational system.

National and international assessments underscore the magnitude of these gaps. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 indicate that Filipino learners continue to perform significantly below the international average in reading, mathematics, and science. The Philippines obtained average scores of 355 in mathematics, 347 in reading, and 356 in science, substantially lower than OECD averages of 472, 476, and 485, respectively (OECD, 2023). Only 24% of Filipino students reached at least Level 2 proficiency in reading, compared with the OECD average of 74%, suggesting widespread difficulty in identifying main ideas and interpreting moderately complex texts (OECD, 2023). Similarly, the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) reported that only 15% of Grades 1 to 3 learners are considered grade-level readers, leaving 85% struggling with basic reading competencies (EDCOM II, 2025). These statistics highlight the urgent need to improve foundational learning outcomes across the basic education system.

In response, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented a range of targeted remedial and instructional interventions designed to strengthen foundational skills and support struggling learners. These initiatives, introduced incrementally over the past decade, have shown promising yet instructive impacts on learner outcomes.

One early strategy was the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Program, which increased learners' reading exposure through sustained silent reading integrated into the school schedule, reinforced by DepEd Memorandum No. 244, s. 2011. Schools implementing DEAR with fidelity reported improvements in reading fluency and learner engagement. Learners participating in structured DEAR sessions demonstrated gains in reading stamina and comprehension, while teachers observed increased independence and motivation to read (Mendoza & de la Cruz, 2019).

Complementing DEAR, the National Reading Program (NRP) institutionalized a systematic approach to developing literacy, strengthened through DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2018. The program incorporates phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Evaluations indicate that learners in classrooms applying these practices consistently achieved higher reading proficiency than those in schools with partial implementation (Abella, 2020).

To further assist learners struggling despite classroom instruction, DepEd introduced the Literacy Remediation Program (LRP) via DepEd Memorandum No. 34, s. 2025, providing additional, targeted instruction to low-emerging readers. Studies show that structured remediation significantly improves decoding accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Soriano, 2019). Teachers reported that structured practice, focused activities, and regular feedback increased learners' confidence and competence in basic literacy skills (Parr & Timperley, 2010; Yu et al., 2021; Al-Obaydi et al., 2023).

Similarly, the 8-Week Intervention Package offered short-term intensive remediation for learners performing below grade-level expectations, aligning with DepEd Order No. 021, s. 2019. Learners completing the program demonstrated significant gains in reading and numeracy (Caballero & Santos, 2021). Teachers noted that structured practice and timely feedback fostered learner confidence, aligning with research that highlights the role of supportive guidance in enhancing self-efficacy and motivation (Jones et al., 2021; Morris et al., 2021; Parr & Timperley, 2010; Yu et al., 2021; Al-Obaydi et al., 2023).

Recognizing the need for sustained support, DepEd formalized Catch-Up Fridays through DepEd Memorandum No. 001, s. 2024, dedicating Fridays to structured remediation across all grade levels. Field reports suggest that learners participating regularly in these sessions showed incremental improvements in foundational skills and increased engagement during classroom instruction (De la Cruz & Quiambao, 2024).

Despite these positive outcomes, program effectiveness depends on design, teacher capacity, resource availability, and implementation consistency (Consunji, 2023). Moreover, while gains in test scores and proficiency are evident, quantitative measures alone may not capture learners' subjective experiences, motivations, or perceptions, which shape their engagement with instruction.

In this context, the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program was introduced through DepEd Order No. 18, s. 2025. Building on prior interventions, ARAL provides structured remediation and accessible learning support for academically at-risk learners, aiming to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy, ensure equitable access to quality instruction, and enhance learner engagement. Anchored in Republic Act No. 12028, the program emphasizes the government's commitment to bridging learning gaps and ensuring every learner's opportunity to achieve academic proficiency. By combining policy, legal backing, and evidence-based practices, ARAL ensures remediation is systematic, inclusive, and sustainable.

At Mapiña Elementary School, 77 out of 216 learners in Grades 1–6, or roughly 36%, were identified as ARAL tutees based on baseline diagnostic assessments conducted at the beginning of the school year (BoSY). In Key Stage 1 (Grades 1–3), 30 learners were selected using the CRLA assessment. The initial distribution of reading proficiency revealed that 56% of learners were classified as Low Emerging Readers, 27% as High Emerging Readers, 12% as Developing Readers, and 15% as Transitioning Readers. This indicates that a majority of early-grade learners were struggling with foundational literacy skills at the start of the program, including basic decoding and word recognition.

In Key Stage 2 (Grades 4–6), 47 learners were identified using the Philippine Early Reading Inventory pre-test, with 65% at the Frustration Level and 35% at the Instructional Level.

A comparative analysis of assessment results across BoSY, Middle-of-School-Year (MoSY), and End-of-School-Year (EoSY) shows differing patterns of improvement between the two key stages. In Key Stage 1, the data indicate minimal gains during MoSY. The proportion of learners demonstrating progress remained essentially unchanged, reflecting that the initial intervention strategies had limited immediate impact for early learners who were still consolidating basic literacy skills. By the EoSY assessment, only a small improvement was observed: four learners previously classified as Developing Readers advanced to the Transitioning category.

In contrast, Key Stage 2 learners demonstrated more significant improvements. From BoSY to MoSY, the proportion of learners performing at grade-appropriate levels rose from 48% to 61%, and by EoSY, it reached 69%. Many learners moved out of the Frustration Level into the Instructional Level, indicating that older learners were more responsive to structured, targeted interventions and capable of consolidating reading skills more quickly.

Motivated by firsthand experience as an ARAL tutor for 15 Key Stage 2 tutees, the researcher observed learners' struggles and incremental progress. The BoSY and Phil-IRI classifications, together with MoSY results, revealed persistent literacy and numeracy gaps. This inspired the study to explore ARAL tutees' lived experiences, aiming to understand how learners perceive and respond to the program, and to inform strategies for improving learner-centered support in the school.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine and gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of ARAL tutees in relation to the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program of the Department of Education of Mapiña Elementary School in the Division of Masbate City.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of ARAL tutees in participating in the ARAL Intervention Program?
2. How do ARAL tutees describe the program's impact on their academic performance and confidence in their learning?
3. What challenges and support needs do ARAL tutees encounter during their participation in the ARAL Intervention Program?

Assumptions of the Study

This study was grounded on the following assumptions:

1. It is assumed that ARAL tutees are able to recall and articulate their personal experiences accurately and honestly during the program.
2. It is assumed that the ARAL program has had some perceptible effect on learners' academic performance and self-confidence, which they can recognize and describe.
3. It is assumed that ARAL tutees face specific challenges and have identifiable support needs that influence their engagement and progress in the program.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at Mapiña Elementary School, a public elementary school under the Division of Masbate City.

Established in 1969, the school has a long-standing history of providing basic education to learners in the community. For the School Year 2025–2026, Mapiña Elementary School has a total enrollment of 252 learners from Kindergarten to Grade 6, and a teaching staff of 13 teachers.

The school implemented various remedial and intervention programs to support academically at-risk learners. One such program is the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program. Among the total enrollment, 77 students were identified as ARAL tutees based on diagnostic assessments. These included the CRLA Beginning-of-School-Year (BoSY) test for Grades 1 to 3 and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) pretests for Grades 4 to 6. The selection of ARAL tutees was determined by classification. Learners in Grades 1-3 were categorized as Emerging, Developing, or Transitioning. Those in Grades 4 to 6 were classified as Frustration or Instructional.

The school environment provided a practical context for evaluating the ARAL Program's effectiveness. It is also a setting to investigate the experiences of learners engaged in structured remedial interventions, particularly in literacy and numeracy development.

Figure 1 shows the Site Development Plan of Mapiña Elementary School.

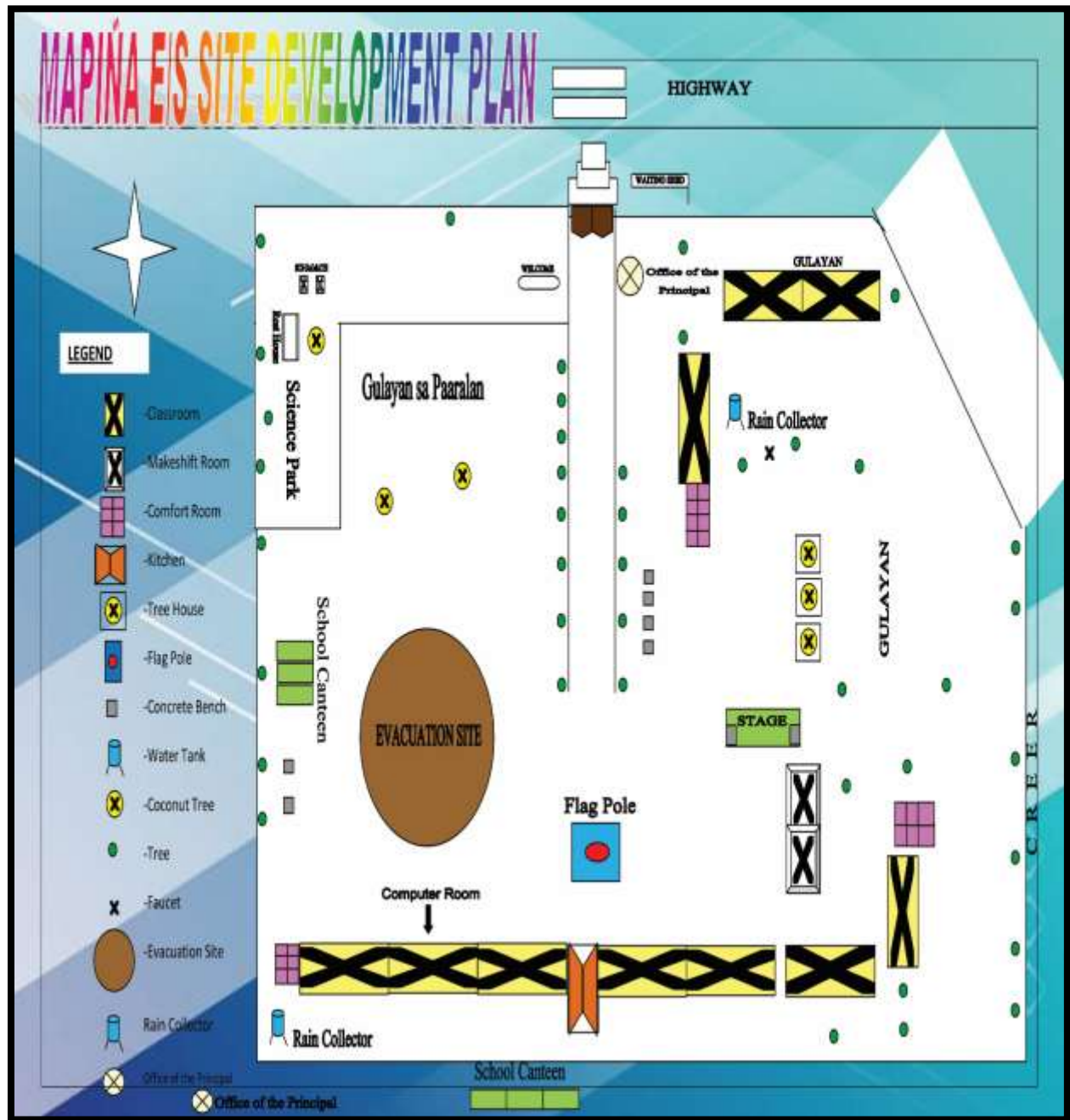


Figure 1. Site Development Plan Of Mapiña Elementary School

Literature Review

Foreign Literature

The increasing global concern over learning loss and widening educational inequalities has led to the large-scale adoption of learning recovery and intervention programs, particularly those centered on tutoring and remedial instruction. This shift is strongly grounded in international evidence showing that

disruptions in schooling—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic—resulted in significant declines in foundational literacy and numeracy skills across both developed and developing countries (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2022). In response, education systems have prioritized structured academic interventions to mitigate these losses and support struggling learners. As emphasized by the World Bank (2020), targeted instruction that aligns with learners' current competency levels is among the most effective strategies in improving learning outcomes, particularly for those who are lagging. These global developments provide a clear context for programs such as the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) initiative.

Central to many learning recovery efforts is tutoring, which has consistently demonstrated strong positive effects on student achievement. In a large-scale meta-analysis, Nickow, Oreopoulos, and Quan (2023) found that tutoring interventions significantly improve academic performance, particularly when delivered in small groups or one-on-one formats and implemented with high frequency. Similarly, Kraft and Falken (2021) argued that high-dosage tutoring—characterized by sustained, intensive instructional sessions—can accelerate student learning by several months within a short period. These findings are reinforced by Fryer (2017), whose experimental study revealed that intensive tutoring produced some of the largest gains in student achievement compared to other school-based interventions. These studies collectively affirm that structured tutoring is a highly effective mechanism for addressing learning gaps, thereby supporting the academic component of intervention programs like ARAL.

Beyond cognitive gains, international literature also underscores the role of intervention programs in enhancing learners' confidence, motivation, and engagement. Yeager et al. (2022) highlighted that interventions designed to support students' psychological needs—such as fostering a sense of belonging and competence—can significantly improve academic performance and persistence. In the same vein, Dietrichson et al. (2021) found that targeted academic support not only improves test scores but also positively influences students' attitudes toward learning. These findings suggest that learners' experiences in intervention programs extend beyond academic improvement, encompassing affective dimensions such as self-efficacy and confidence, which are critical to sustained learning.

Qualitative investigations further deepen the understanding of learners' lived experiences in intervention programs. Slavin, Madden, and Neitzel (2020) noted that students participating in structured remedial programs often report increased motivation, improved study habits, and a stronger sense of responsibility for their learning. However, the study also pointed out persistent challenges, including limited instructional time, insufficient materials, and varying levels of learner readiness. Complementing this, a study by Banerjee et al. (2017) on remedial education in India found that while targeted instruction significantly improved learning outcomes, implementation challenges such as teacher capacity and program consistency influenced overall effectiveness. These insights highlight that while intervention programs are beneficial, their success is shaped by contextual and operational factors that directly affect learners' experiences.

Another important dimension in the literature is the integration of socio-emotional learning (SEL) within academic interventions. Durlak, Mahoney, and Boyle (2022) emphasized that SEL-enhanced programs contribute not only to improved academic performance but also to better emotional regulation and interpersonal skills among learners. Angrist et al. (2023) further demonstrated that combining tutoring with socio-emotional support results in more sustained and meaningful learning gains. This suggests that effective intervention programs must address both the academic and emotional needs of learners, particularly those who may have experienced prolonged educational disruption.

The role of technology in supporting learning recovery has also gained prominence in recent years. Escueta et al. (2020) found that technology-assisted instruction can enhance learning outcomes when it is used to complement, rather than replace, teacher-led instruction. Similarly, Bettinger et al. (2022) reported that computer-assisted learning programs are most effective when integrated into structured instructional

frameworks. However, these studies also caution that access to technology and the quality of implementation remain critical determinants of success, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

Despite the strong evidence supporting intervention programs, several challenges continue to affect their implementation. UNESCO (2021) identified issues such as resource limitations, teacher workload, and inequitable access to learning support as major barriers to effective program delivery. The World Bank (2022) further emphasized that while tutoring is one of the most effective interventions, its scalability and sustainability require substantial investment and institutional support. In addition, Andrabi, Daniels, and Das (2021) pointed out that aligning instruction with students' actual learning levels remains a persistent challenge in many education systems, underscoring the need for continuous assessment and adaptive teaching strategies.

In sum, foreign literature provides compelling evidence that learning recovery and intervention programs play a critical role in improving academic performance, strengthening learner confidence, and shaping positive educational experiences. However, their effectiveness is contingent upon several factors, including instructional quality, program design, socio-emotional support, and resource availability.

Local Literature

In the Philippine education system, the development of structured learning recovery programs is a direct response to what policymakers and researchers describe as a persistent and deepening learning crisis. The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) reported that a substantial proportion of Filipino learners are not meeting the expected grade-level competencies, particularly in foundational literacy and numeracy (EDCOM II, 2026). These findings highlight systemic gaps that have long existed but were further exacerbated by disruptions in schooling. As a result, the Department of Education (DepEd) has intensified efforts to implement targeted interventions aimed at addressing learning loss and improving learner outcomes.

Even prior to the institutionalization of the ARAL Program, several national interventions had already been implemented to address foundational learning gaps. One of the most prominent is the Bawat Bata Makababasa Program (BBMP), which focuses on ensuring that all learners acquire basic reading skills at the early grade levels. This initiative emphasizes teacher-led remediation, regular assessment of reading proficiency, and the use of localized instructional materials to support struggling readers (DepEd, 2018). Similarly, the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP), formalized through DepEd Order No. 013, s. 2023, was introduced as a comprehensive response to pandemic-induced learning loss. The NLRP outlines strategies such as remediation, tutoring, and curriculum adjustments to help learners regain lost competencies (DepEd Order No. 013, s. 2023).

In addition to these programs, DepEd has implemented various school-based and division-level reading interventions, including intensified reading campaigns, pull-out classes, and peer-assisted learning strategies. These interventions are often guided by assessment tools and are designed to provide targeted instruction to learners who are identified as non-readers or struggling readers. Reports from the Philippine Information Agency (2025) indicate that such localized interventions have contributed to gradual improvements in reading proficiency, particularly when supported by strong school leadership and community involvement.

Building on these earlier initiatives, the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program represents a more structured and system-wide approach to learning recovery. The program is institutionalized through DepEd Order No. 018, s. 2025, which provides comprehensive guidelines for its implementation. This issuance defines ARAL as a national intervention program that delivers structured tutorial sessions in reading, mathematics, and science, targeting learners who are below grade-level proficiency (DepEd Order No. 018, s. 2025). The program emphasizes the use of diagnostic assessments, differentiated instruction, and continuous monitoring to ensure that learners receive appropriate support.

The implementation of ARAL is further operationalized through DepEd Memorandum No. 064, s. 2025, which specifically outlines the rollout of ARAL-Reading. This memorandum mandates schools to conduct targeted reading interventions based on learners' proficiency levels, as determined through standardized assessment tools such as the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) (DepEd Memorandum No. 064, s. 2025). The focus on data-driven instruction ensures that interventions are responsive to the actual needs of learners, thereby increasing the likelihood of improved learning outcomes.

To support effective implementation, DepEd has also issued DepEd Memorandum No. 058, s. 2025, which disseminates the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act No. 12028, otherwise known as the ARAL Act. This memorandum provides detailed guidance on program governance, funding, and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring that the program is implemented consistently across regions and divisions (DepEd Memorandum No. 058, s. 2025). At the operational level, monitoring is reinforced through issuances such as Division Memorandum No. 569, s. 2025, which mandates regular evaluation of program implementation to ensure alignment with national standards (DepEd, 2025).

Early implementation reports provide evidence of the effectiveness of ARAL in improving learner outcomes. According to DepEd (2026), schools have reported notable increases in reading proficiency, with significant reductions in the number of struggling readers following sustained participation in the program. Similarly, EDCOM II (2026) noted that some schools achieved improvements of up to 30–40% in reading proficiency between BOSY and MOSY assessments, indicating the positive impact of structured and intensive interventions. These gains are attributed to focused tutorial sessions, continuous progress monitoring, and the use of evidence-based instructional strategies.

Despite these promising outcomes, local literature also highlights several challenges in the implementation of intervention programs. EDCOM II (2026) identifies issues such as teacher workload, limited instructional resources, and inconsistencies in program delivery across different contexts. The large-scale nature of ARAL, while beneficial in terms of reach, also presents challenges in maintaining quality and sustainability. Furthermore, the success of the program depends heavily on teacher competence and the availability of support systems, underscoring the need for continuous professional development and resource allocation.

This local literature demonstrates that the ARAL Program is part of a continuum of intervention efforts aimed at addressing the country's learning crisis. Earlier initiatives, such as BBMP and the National Learning Recovery Program, laid the foundation for targeted remediation, while ARAL represents a more comprehensive and systematized approach to learning recovery.

Foreign Studies

A substantial body of international research has examined the effectiveness of learning interventions, particularly tutoring and remedial programs, in improving students' academic performance and shaping their learning experiences. These studies are closely aligned with the present investigation, as they explore how learners experience intervention programs, how such programs influence academic performance and confidence, and what challenges learners encounter during participation.

One of the most consistently supported findings in the literature is the strong impact of tutoring on academic achievement. In a comprehensive meta-analysis, Nickow, Oreopoulos, and Quan (2023) found that tutoring interventions produce significant positive effects on student learning, particularly when conducted in small groups or one-on-one settings. The study further noted that frequent and structured tutoring sessions lead to greater improvements, especially among low-performing learners. Similarly, Kraft and Falken (2021) emphasized that high-dosage tutoring—delivered multiple times per week—can accelerate learning and help students recover lost competencies within a relatively short period. These findings suggest that structured intervention programs like ARAL are effective in improving academic performance when implemented with consistency and focus.

Experimental studies further support the effectiveness of targeted instructional interventions. Banerjee, Cole, Duflo, and Linden (2007) demonstrated that remedial education programs in India significantly improved learners' test scores, particularly among those who were initially performing at the lowest levels. The study highlighted the importance of aligning instruction with learners' current ability levels, a principle that is central to many intervention programs. In a similar vein, Fryer (2017) found that intensive tutoring programs produced some of the largest gains in student achievement among various educational interventions, reinforcing the value of individualized and focused instruction.

Beyond academic performance, foreign studies also emphasize the role of intervention programs in shaping learners' confidence and engagement. Yeager, Walton, and Brady (2022) found that interventions designed to support students' psychological needs—such as fostering a sense of competence and belonging—can significantly improve both academic outcomes and persistence. This is supported by Dietrichson, Bøg, Filges, and Klint Jørgensen (2021), who reported that targeted academic interventions not only enhance achievement but also improve students' attitudes toward learning. These findings indicate that learners' experiences in intervention programs are not limited to cognitive gains but also involve affective development, particularly in terms of confidence and motivation.

Qualitative and mixed-method studies provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of learners in intervention settings. Slavin, Madden, and Neitzel (2020) reported that students participating in structured remedial programs often develop better study habits, increased motivation, and a stronger sense of responsibility for their learning. However, the study also identified challenges such as limited instructional time, insufficient resources, and varying levels of learner readiness, which may affect the overall effectiveness of the program. These findings highlight the importance of examining learners' perspectives to fully understand how intervention programs operate in practice.

In addition, research has shown that the integration of socio-emotional support within academic interventions enhances their effectiveness. Durlak, Mahoney, and Boyle (2022) found that programs incorporating socio-emotional learning (SEL) components significantly improve both academic performance and students' emotional well-being. Angrist, Bergman, Evans, and Matsheng (2023) further demonstrated that combining tutoring with socio-emotional support leads to more sustained improvements in learning outcomes. These results suggest that learners benefit most from interventions that address both academic and emotional needs, which is relevant in understanding their overall experiences in programs like ARAL.

The role of technology in supporting intervention programs has also been explored in international studies. Escueta, Quan, Nickow, and Oreopoulos (2020) found that technology-assisted instruction can enhance learning outcomes when used alongside teacher-led interventions. Similarly, Bettinger et al. (2022) reported that computer-assisted learning programs are effective when integrated into structured instructional frameworks. While these studies highlight the potential of technology, they also emphasize that the success of such interventions depends on proper implementation and alignment with learners' needs.

Despite the positive outcomes associated with intervention programs, foreign studies also identify several challenges that affect their implementation. According to UNESCO (2021), disparities in access to resources, teacher capacity, and instructional support remain significant barriers to effective learning recovery efforts. The World Bank (2020) further noted that while targeted instruction is one of the most effective strategies for improving learning outcomes, its success depends on the ability of education systems to accurately assess learners' needs and provide appropriate support. These challenges underscore the importance of examining not only the outcomes of intervention programs but also the conditions under which they are implemented.

The foreign studies provide strong empirical support for the effectiveness of tutoring and remedial interventions in improving academic performance, enhancing learner confidence, and shaping positive

learning experiences. At the same time, they highlight the importance of instructional quality, socio-emotional support, and contextual factors in determining program success.

Local Studies

Academic support programs in the Philippines have increasingly become the subject of inquiry as educators and researchers seek to understand not only their effectiveness in improving student performance but also how learners experience and make sense of these interventions. What emerges across multiple contexts is a recognition that participation in structured academic support contributes to cognitive growth, emotional readiness, and heightened academic confidence when learner perceptions and support structures are meaningfully aligned.

Eden, Prado, and Esteban (2025) explored the lived experiences of education students who served as peer tutors in the Tara, Basa! tutoring initiative. Although the focus was on tutors rather than tutees, the findings foreground key dynamics that directly shape learning experiences: resource limitations, diverse learner needs, instructional pacing challenges, and the necessity for adaptive instructional strategies. Tutors reported encountering significant fluctuations in learner engagement, necessitating not only pedagogical adjustment but also emotional resilience. Educommunicative interactions, according to the researchers, became sites where tutors and learners co-constructed meaning, thus illustrating how academic support programs are experienced relationally and dynamically.

Sapid et al. (2024) similarly examined the lived experiences of Tara, Basa! tutors, situating their narratives within a broader framework of cognitive and affective growth. Tutors articulated that initial uncertainties and challenges, such as ambiguity in instructional guidance and differing learner capacities, eventually became opportunities for refining teaching strategies. Although the study focused on tutors, it suggests that learners' experiences — including confusion, engagement shifts, and recognition of progress — are critical aspects of the tutoring relationship that influence self-efficacy and confidence. This orienting principle informs the present research, emphasizing that student experiences in tutoring environments shape attitudes toward learning and perceived competence.

Villanueva and colleagues (2026) investigated the benefits of peer tutoring among Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences students at Bestlink College of the Philippines. The study found that peer tutoring correlated with improved academic performance, particularly in areas requiring critical comprehension and analytical skills. Importantly, students reported increased confidence in their ability to grasp complex concepts when supported by peer facilitators, indicating that learning confidence is an outcome not only of performance gains but of interactions that validate learner capacities. Nonetheless, challenges included inconsistent commitment levels and varied peer facilitator competencies, highlighting that academic support programs must attend to both structural design and participant experience.

In basic education, peer tutoring approaches have also been examined for their impact on early learners. Ordoñez and Reyes (2026) conducted a study at Gabi Central Elementary School which revealed that Grade 2 pupils who participated in structured peer tutoring exhibited measurable improvements in academic proficiency. Pupils in the program reported feeling more capable and engaged, particularly when tutoring sessions allowed them to articulate their understanding and seek clarification in a low-pressure environment. At the same time, some learners expressed frustration when the pace of instruction or content difficulty exceeded their current comprehension levels, suggesting that challenges encountered during participation can influence motivation and perceived usefulness of support programs.

Heretape and Paglinawan (2024) examined academic support services and formal review programs within tertiary contexts, focusing on their influence on preparedness for licensure examinations. Students who experienced structured review and mentoring support reported greater readiness and reduced exam anxiety, providing evidence that academic intervention programs can enhance learners' confidence and self-efficacy even beyond performance outcomes. This aligns with findings in basic education contexts where confidence in learning emerges as a salient indicator of the perceived impact of academic support.

Contextual studies on literacy experiences among Filipino learners provide further grounding for understanding learner experiences within intervention programs. Kilag, Pulvera, Gabotero, and Adlawan (2023) documented how persistent reading challenges among basic education learners — such as difficulties with decoding, comprehension, and contextual application—shape learners’ self-perceptions and engagement. These challenges often necessitate supplemental support programs that go beyond classroom instruction, reinforcing the need to explore how tutees experience and navigate such interventions.

Tomas, Villaros, and Galman (2021) also examined learners’ perceived challenges in reading, uncovering that learners frequently encounter frustration, low confidence, and reluctance to engage with texts independently. These affective responses are significant because they shape learners’ motivation to participate in academic recovery programs. When interventions provide supportive scaffolding attuned to learners’ emotional and cognitive needs, students report increased willingness to engage and higher confidence in their capacity for academic growth.

Chavez, Adalia, and Alberto (2023) explored parental support strategies in English language learning, finding that learners whose parents actively supported academic engagement exhibited higher motivation and self-confidence. Learner testimonies in this study reflect the interplay between external support systems and tutees’ own perceptions of their academic abilities. This interdependence points to the broader ecology of support — where schools, families, and structured intervention programs collectively influence learner experiences and outcomes.

Writing experiences among senior high school students were examined by Tomas, Villanueva, and Mañalac (2025), revealing that learners’ confidence in performing academic writing tasks significantly relates to instructional support, task familiarity, and feedback quality. Students who received constructive guidance and positive reinforcement reported improved confidence and engagement, again underscoring that learner experience is shaped by both instructional design and support culture.

Pereda, Picardal, Baiddin, and Ricamara (2025) investigated the experiences of provincial students adapting to new educational environments, highlighting that learners undergo significant emotional and academic adjustments when confronted with unfamiliar expectations and instructional demands. This study illustrates that educational transition and adaptation challenges are intrinsic to the learner experience, particularly within intervention settings where learners seek to bridge gaps in understanding and performance.

Finally, research by Cruz and del Pilar (2024) on supplemental learning programs in elementary schools found that learners perceive structured review sessions as instrumental in clarifying difficult concepts, reducing academic anxiety, and strengthening test preparedness. However, learners also expressed that inconsistent scheduling and insufficient personalization of support limited their ability to fully leverage these interventions. These dual insights — perceived benefit and experienced constraint — resonate with the present research’s inquiry into how tutees describe both the impact and the challenges of participating in an academic support program.

This body of local literature collectively demonstrates that academic support interventions are not monolithic in impact; rather, they entail multi-dimensional learner experiences that combine cognitive improvement, emotional responses, confidence development, and challenge negotiation.

Synthesis of the State-of-the-Art

The current literature and studies show that academic recovery and intervention programs, such as the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program, are supported by strong global and local evidence. These programs effectively reduce learning loss and improve student outcomes. Research finds that structured tutoring and targeted instruction boost academic performance. Interventions work best when they match students’ current skills, are sustained, and are high-intensity (Nickow et al., 2023; Kraft & Falken, 2021; Fryer, 2017; World Bank, 2020). These programs also increase motivation, confidence,

and engagement, especially when they offer socio-emotional support (Yeager et al., 2022; Durlak et al., 2022; Angrist et al., 2023). However, global studies highlight ongoing challenges. Limited resources, heavier teacher workload, and inconsistent implementation reduce effectiveness and sustainability (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

In the Philippines, the ARAL Program builds on earlier learning recovery efforts, such as the *Bawat Bata Makababasa* Program and the National Learning Recovery Program. The ARAL Program responds to the national learning crisis (EDCOM II, 2026; DepEd Order No. 013, s. 2023; DepEd Order No. 018, s. 2025). Local research shows that academic interventions improve performance and boost learner confidence. However, experiences vary depending on enabling and limiting factors. These include instructional quality, available resources, and learner readiness (Villanueva et al., 2026; Ordoñez & Reyes, 2026; Cruz & del Pilar, 2024). Learners' feelings, such as motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy, matter for program success (Tomas et al., 2021; Kilag et al., 2023). The literature and studies conclude that programs like ARAL are most effective when they address cognitive and socio-emotional needs within a strong, context-sensitive framework.

Gap Bridged by the Study

Although extensive foreign and local research has established the effectiveness of tutoring and remedial programs in enhancing academic performance and learner confidence, there remains a significant gap in understanding learners' lived experiences, particularly within structured national interventions such as the ARAL Program. Most international studies emphasize quantitative outcomes or overall program effectiveness (Nickow et al., 2023; Kraft & Falken, 2021; Fryer, 2017), while qualitative research often generalizes learner experiences without anchoring them in specific local contexts. In the Philippines, existing studies primarily focus on tutors' perspectives, program outcomes, or general learner improvements (Eden et al., 2025; Sapid et al., 2024; Villanueva et al., 2026), with limited exploration of the detailed narratives of elementary-level tutees involved in government-implemented interventions. This study addresses this gap by conducting a phenomenological investigation of the experiences of ARAL tutees at Mapiña Elementary School in the Division of Masbate City, providing context-specific insights into how learners perceive and respond to the program. Hence, the present study bridges the gap.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is based on the systems approach, which comprises three components: input, process, and output.

The *input* comprises research questions and the lived experiences of ARAL tutees regarding their participation in the ARAL Intervention Program, including its effects on their academic performance and confidence in learning, as well as the challenges and support encountered during participation.

The *process* involves qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews with selected participants, followed by analysis and interpretation of the data using Thematic Analysis.

The *output* of the study will consist of narratives from tutees in the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program at Mapiña Elementary School, structured according to the research questions.

The feedback mechanism is represented by a dotted line indicating the flow from the output back to the input and process stages.

Figure 2 shows the Conceptual Paradigm of the study.

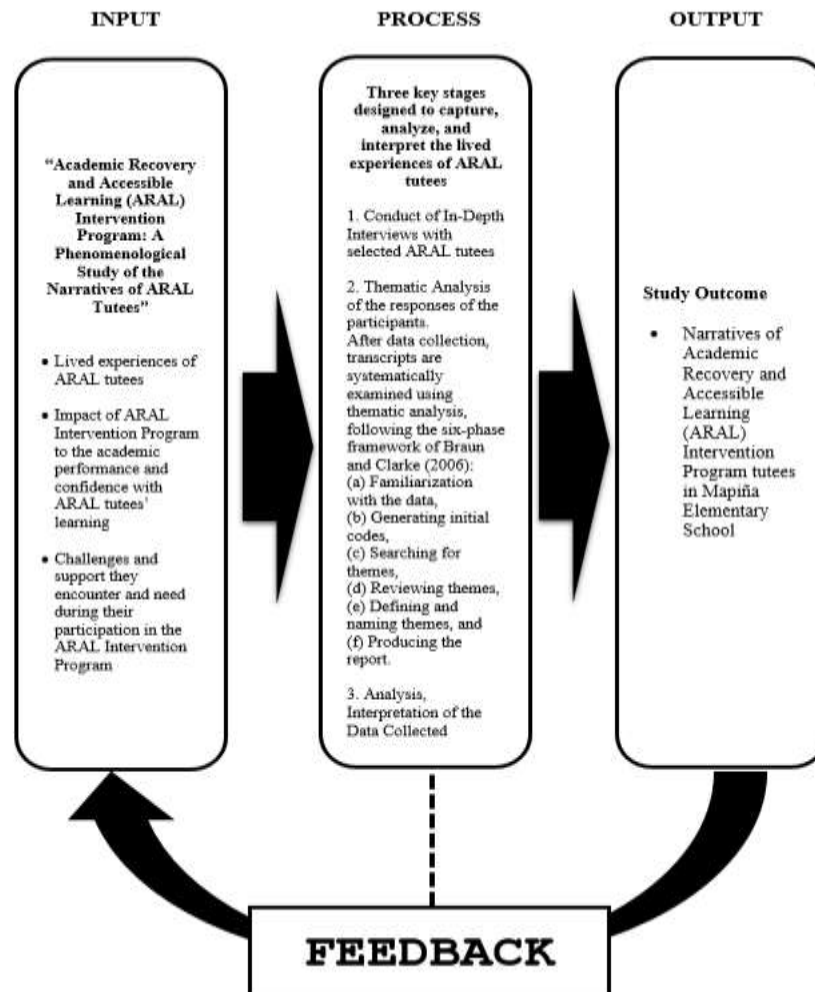


Figure 2. *Conceptual Paradigm*

METHODS

Research Design

To examine and gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of ARAL tutees in relation to the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program of the Department of Education in Mapiña Elementary School, Division of Masbate City, this study employed a type of qualitative research method called a phenomenological research design.

Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems (Moser, A., & Korstjens, I., 2017). Instead of collecting numerical data points or intervening or introducing treatments, just like in quantitative research, qualitative research helps generate hypotheses to further investigate and understand quantitative data. Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior. It answers the *hows* and *whys* instead of how many or how much. A phenomenological case study design permits people to share their experiences of a particular phenomenon (Ohman, 2005). Phenomenology is the "study of the meaning of phenomena or the study of the particular" (Huston P., & Rowan M., 1998). As indicated by Moustakas (1994), phenomenological specialists create

vibrant portrayals of the lived encounters of participants. According to Finlay (2012), “a phenomenological approach enables researchers to investigate how people interpret their experiences and translate the comprehension of said experience into awareness” (p. 12). “This awareness, in turn, can be used separately—on behalf of the participant—and inside group settings, such as when shared with others” (Finlay, 2012, p. 12). Moreover, Creswell (2013) asserted that the fundamental goal of this approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon. Through this process, the researcher may construct a universal meaning of the event, situation, or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

For this study, qualitative data were collected from the responses of selected ARAL tutees in Mapiña Elementary School in relation to the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program. The analysis and interpretation of these data were conducted using Thematic Analysis. Therefore, the phenomenological research design was deemed fitting for this research endeavor.

Sampling Technique

To identify the selected pupil-participants of this study, a purposive sampling technique was utilized.

Purposive sampling technique is a strategy often employed in qualitative research to ensure that participants are information-rich cases who can meaningfully contribute to the understanding of the research problem (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling is ‘used to select respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information’ (Kelly, 2010: 317) and is a way of identifying and selecting cases that will use limited research resources effectively (Palinkas et al., 2015).

These participants were chosen based on the following pre-determined criteria: 1) must be enrolled in the school for the ARAL program at the beginning of the school year, 2) must fall in any of the following reading levels—Emerging, Developing, and Transitioning, and 3) must be at-risk of failing in their respective classes.

Participants of the Study

Eighteen ARAL tutees served as the main participants of this study. These pupils were chosen from the seventy-seven identified ARAL tutees in Mapiña Elementary School from grades 1 to 6.

The sample size of eighteen is consistent with qualitative research standards, which emphasize the value of depth in data collection and analysis rather than generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since the present study employs a phenomenological approach, a type of qualitative method of research, a relatively small and purposively selected sample may be employed (Miles and Huberman, 1994), with the aim of increasing the depth (as opposed to breadth) of understanding (Palinkas et al., 2015).

To ensure the confidentiality of these participants, each individual was assigned a unique code (*AT1* for *ARAL Tutee 1*, *AT2* for *ARAL Tutee 2*, and so on) instead of using their real names and identities in all data records, transcripts, and reports. These codes were used consistently throughout the study, as part of the ethical standards in qualitative research. As indicated by Dane (1990) and Miles and Huberman (1994), researchers should make every effort to protect the anonymity of the research participants and the privacy of data.

Data Gathering Instrument

A researcher-made interview guide question was used to gather data in examining and gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of ARAL tutees in relation to the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program of the Department of Education in Mapiña Elementary School, Division of Masbate City. According to May (1997), semi-structured interviews permit scope for individuals to answer questions more on their own terms than the standardized interview permits, yet still provide a good structure for comparability over that of the focused

interview. Kumar (2005) views the interview as the most suitable approach for studying complex and sensitive areas, as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare a participant before asking sensitive questions and to explain complex ones to them in person.

It consists of three main questions, along with the lived experiences of ARAL tutees, the impact of the ARAL program on their academic performance, and the challenges and support needs ARAL tutees encountered. Each question comprises three guide questions.

The tool underwent a content validation by a language expert and a qualitative content specialist.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the actual data gathering, the researcher proposed the study and presented it to the Thesis Adviser for scrutiny. After a thorough review of the proposal, suggestions were provided to ensure that the guide questions are aligned with the main objective of the study. The researcher then proceeded to incorporate the recommendations to finalize the proposal. Then, the same research proposal was presented before the panel members during the Thesis Outline Defense. All the given corrections to the research proposal presented were incorporated into the original output. The next procedure the researcher followed was to secure all the necessary communication letters, essential during the data gathering process. These communication letters are signed by the Thesis Adviser and the Dean of the Graduate School. It was submitted to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Masbate City through the recommendation of the Senior Education Program Specialist (SEPS) for Planning and Research, for approval. Once approved, the researcher proceeded with the actual data gathering procedure.

The researcher held an orientation with the parents and the ARAL tutees on the nature and purpose of the study being conducted, their rights to privacy and confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw their participation from the study at any time without consequences. A consent and assent form was distributed to the parents before the conduct of an interview. This step was crucial in ensuring that the parents and ARAL tutees agreed on the proposition that these pupil-participants would undergo an interview with the researcher. Kumar (2005) acknowledges that it is unethical to accumulate information without the knowledge of participants, and their expressed willingness and informed consent. Therefore, all these ethical considerations will be observed by the researcher throughout the process of data gathering. Then, the researcher proceeded with the actual semi-structured interview with the participants. Individual interviews were conducted in a quiet room within the school premises, ensuring a conducive environment for open communication, together with their parents or guardians. Each session lasted between ten and fifteen minutes and was audio-recorded with the permission of the participants and their parents or guardians. The recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher and were stored securely to maintain confidentiality.

Throughout the interview process, the researcher maintained a reflective journal to capture observations, non-verbal cues, and potential biases, which later contributed to the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Finally, the stored audio-recorded responses of the ARAL tutees were analyzed, transcribed, and interpreted using Thematic Analysis.

Data Analysis

Since the study employed a qualitative design, the data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis rather than statistical computation. Thematic Analysis is a widely accepted method in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, Thematic Analysis is a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a data set; it often leads to new insights and understanding (Boyatzis, 1998; Elliott, 2018; Thomas, 2006). However, it is critical that researchers avoid letting their own preconceptions interfere with the identification of key themes (Morse & Mitcham, 2002; Patton, 2015).

The researcher began by familiarizing herself with the transcripts through repeated listening to the audio recordings of the participants' answers before generating initial codes aligned with the research questions of the study. After transcription, the data underwent coding, analysis, interpretation, and verification. This process allowed the researcher to deepen her understanding of the subject matter by continually listening to and reviewing the transcribed material. Coding the data begins once all the data are fully transcribed (See Appendix C). The codes applied were keywords that were used to categorize or organize text and were considered an essential part of qualitative research (Sarantakos, 1998). The data were then analyzed, categorized, and organized into themes and further sub-themes, which emerged through the coding process. The themes that emerged were assigned a specific code accordingly. The next stage involved interpreting any similarities and differences in the data. The final stage involved data verification. This process involved a process of checking the validity of understanding by rechecking the transcripts and codes, thus allowing the researcher to verify or modify hypotheses already arrived at previously (Sarantakos, 1998).

Ethical Considerations

In the conduct of this research, the participants, together with their parents or guardians, were informed of the following ethical standards so that their privacy and anonymity would not be compromised (Dane, 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994), and, therefore, will not affect the results of this study. All participants involved in this study were treated with the utmost respect, regardless of their sex, race, or religion, to name a few (BERA, 2004:9). Secondly, the researcher established a clear and transparent relationship and interaction with all the participants during the different phases of research, especially if the participants of this study have a direct relationship with the researcher, since this concern is one of the ethical considerations to be strictly observed (Halasa, 2005; Mack et al., 2005; BERA, 2018). Thirdly, the researcher secured "voluntary informed consent" of every participant before the data collection session (BERA, 2004:6). A "researcher-participant contract" (Dane, 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994) was established, and the researcher sought their consent and agreement before proceeding with the collection of data. All these considerations are part of this study to ensure that the provisions of Republic Act 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and those of CHED Memorandum Order No. 15, s. 2019, are properly applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lived Experiences of ARAL Tutees in Participating in the ARAL Intervention Program

The Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program aims to close learning gaps among struggling students through structured tutoring sessions. These sessions focus on basic skills, especially in literacy and numeracy. While research shows that intervention programs can improve academic performance (Nickow, Oreopoulos, & Quan, 2023; Kraft & Falken, 2021), it is important to understand how students experience these programs in actual classrooms. In phenomenological inquiry, the emphasis is on how learners describe, interpret, and find meaning in their participation, rather than on the results alone.

When analyzing the learners' responses about their experiences as ARAL tutees, six interrelated themes emerged: (1) Structured Literacy Activities in Daily Sessions, (2) Positive Emotional Experiences and Enjoyment, (3) Anxiety and Difficulty During Performance, (4) Perceived Simplicity Compared to Regular Classes, (5) Teacher Support as a Key Learning Factor, and (6) Emerging Literacy Development. These themes show that ARAL is seen not just as an academic intervention but also as an emotional, social, and developmental learning environment.

Structured Literacy Activities in Daily Sessions

Structured Literacy Activities in Daily Sessions was the first theme that emerged. This refers to the consistent, well-guided teaching practices in ARAL sessions that focus on basic literacy skills, such as reading, writing, comprehension, and completing exercises. This structure reflects the intervention's aim of closing foundational learning gaps through repeated and supported tasks that match learners' current abilities (World Bank, 2020; UNESCO, 2021).

The participants' narratives consistently show this structured pattern of activities. AT1 shared, "nagbasa kag nag-answer," while AT2 stated, "nagaparapa-answer kag nagapabasa." Similarly, AT3 mentioned, "nagabasa kami kag naga-answer," and AT5 emphasized, "nagabasa, nagasurat, kag naga-exam." AT4 further described, "nagabasa kag naga-answer sa blackboard," while AT6 stated, "nagpabasa, nagapa-answer, kag nagapasurat."

These recurring descriptions highlight that learners experience ARAL as a highly routine-based learning environment where literacy and basic academic skills are repeatedly practiced through guided instruction. The consistency of responses suggests that learning activities are deliberately structured, emphasizing repetition to reinforce skills such as reading, writing, and answering exercises. This implies that ARAL functions as a structured intervention program, where mastery is supported through continuous practice and teacher-led learning experiences rather than incidental exposure.

This finding aligns with Batistis and Siat (2025), who emphasized that ARAL implementation is anchored in structured remediation activities such as guided reading and targeted literacy instruction. Their study found that routine-based literacy sessions help learners become familiar with reading tasks and gradually improve their decoding and comprehension skills.

This finding also aligns strongly with Nickow, Oreopoulos, and Quan (2023), who emphasized that structured tutoring significantly improves foundational literacy, especially for low-performing learners. Kraft and Falken (2021) also noted that frequent instructional sessions accelerate learning by reinforcing basic skills. Locally, DepEd Order No. 018, s. 2025 establishes structured, diagnostic-based intervention strategies that are clearly reflected in learners' experiences.

However, while the literature presents structure as an instructional advantage, lived experiences show that structure is also a key part of learners' daily academic routine. This expands the existing literature by revealing that learners do not just benefit from structured instruction; they also experience schooling itself through this structure.

This means that structured literacy instruction is crucial for bridging foundational gaps. However, teachers must ensure that repetition is meaningful and tailored to avoid learner fatigue and maintain engagement.

Positive Emotional Experiences and Enjoyment

The second theme that emerged was positive emotional experiences and enjoyment. This theme reflects learners' feelings of happiness, relaxation, satisfaction, and emotional comfort during ARAL sessions. It emphasizes the emotional side of learning as a key part of the overall experience.

As participants expressed, AT1 simply said "relax," while AT3 shared "maayo man, happy, kay maayo magtukdo." A strong pattern of positive affect was also evident as AT5, AT8, AT9, AT11, AT13, AT17, and AT18 repeatedly responded with "masaya" or "masadya." AT7 added, "maayo man po kag masaya," while AT16 stated, "nakaaram ako magbasa kaya maayo man kag masaya."

These responses show that learners often associate the ARAL program with positive experiences such as happiness, relaxation, and enjoyment. Importantly, these feelings relate to how effective learners perceive their teachers to be and how accomplished they feel in their tasks. This indicates that emotional satisfaction in ARAL arises when learners feel supported, successfully engage in learning activities, and see their teachers as helpful guides.

This finding aligns with Yeager et al. (2022), who pointed out that programs promoting competence and belonging boost emotional well-being and commitment to learning. Dietrichson et al. (2021) also discovered that specific academic interventions improve learners' attitudes toward learning. Locally, Villanueva et al. (2026) reported similar results, with learners in tutoring programs reporting enjoyment and increased confidence.

Batistis and Siat (2025) similarly found that learners in ARAL programs often develop positive emotional responses when they begin to experience small academic successes. This supports the idea that structured remediation can foster emotional comfort when learners feel supported and capable.

These findings expand the existing literature by demonstrating that emotional positivity is not just a result of achievement but also a regular part of learning interactions. This suggests that emotional engagement is vital in recovery programs. Teachers should focus on creating a supportive, encouraging environment to maintain high motivation and participation.

Anxiety and Difficulty During Performance

The theme Anxiety and Difficulty During Performance was the third theme to emerge. It reflects learners' experiences of nervousness, discomfort, and occasional physical or emotional strain during ARAL activities. This shows that, despite support, learning challenges persist.

As shared by AT7, "ginakulbaan po minsan," indicating feelings of nervousness during ARAL activities. AT4 also expressed, "minsan nagasakit ang ulo ko Mam... kag nakasabat man ako sa blackboard," which reflects both difficulty in coping with tasks and the pressure experienced during performance activities. However, AT7 further stated, "ginatatagan ko kay para makabasa ako," showing determination and effort to persist despite challenges.

These responses indicate that while ARAL tutees may face emotional and cognitive challenges, such as anxiety, pressure, and stress related to tasks, they also show resilience and a desire to improve. This means the program not only presents academic challenges but also offers chances for learners to develop coping strategies and persistence in their studies.

These findings align with Slavin et al. (2020), who recognized that learners in remedial programs encounter difficulties due to varying readiness levels. UNESCO (2021) also points out that learners struggle with emotional adjustment during recovery situations. Locally, Tomas et al. (2021) found that struggling readers often deal with frustration and low confidence when reading. Batistis and Siat (2025) also noted that learners with low literacy levels may experience initial discomfort in structured interventions before gradual improvement occurs.

Crucially, the presence of coping responses shows that learners are not just passive recipients of difficulty. They actively try to overcome challenges, suggesting that ARAL programs should include emotional support and gradual scaffolding to ease anxiety and boost learner confidence during tasks.

Perceived Simplicity vs Regular Classes

The next theme that emerged was "Perceived Simplicity vs Regular Classes", referring to learners' comparisons between ARAL sessions and regular classroom instruction in terms of difficulty and learning experience.

As shared by AT1, "mas mahirap ang sa klase. Masayon lang ang sa ARAL," which is supported by AT6, who stated, "an sa aral madali lang." AT2 also emphasized, "sa hapon minsan may pa-activity... sa aga wara," pointing out that ARAL sessions provide structured activities that are often not experienced in regular classes. On the other hand, AT9, AT10, AT11, AT12, and AT13 responded, "parehas lang," while AT4 and AT14 also stated, "wara man san pinagkaiba," indicating that some learners do not perceive a significant difference between ARAL and their regular classes.

These responses indicate that learners have different views on the difficulty of ARAL sessions and the teaching methods used in them compared to those in regular classes. Some tutees find ARAL easier and

more focused on activities, which suggests a more engaging and supportive learning environment. Others, however, see it as similar to their usual classroom experience. This suggests that the experience of ARAL varies among learners, likely due to differences in facilitation, teaching strategies, or levels of engagement during the sessions.

This variability highlights differences in learners' experiences and readiness. Andrabi et al. (2021) noted that instruction tailored to learners' abilities is perceived as easier. Kraft and Falken (2021) noted that tutoring reduces cognitive load through focused instruction. Similarly, Cruz and del Pilar (2024) found mixed perceptions among learners in local supplemental programs. Batistis and Siat (2025) explain that ARAL is designed as a simplified instructional environment tailored to learners' current proficiency levels. This supports the perception of reduced difficulty among participants.

This study builds on that research by showing that learners do not share a common view of difficulty; instead, their perspectives vary according to their individual academic backgrounds and confidence levels. This finding underscores the need for tailored instruction within ARAL to make sure both struggling and advanced learners are adequately challenged.

Teacher Support as Key Learning Factor

The next theme is "Teacher Support as Key Learning Factor." This highlights the important role of teachers in promoting understanding, motivation, and emotional support during ARAL sessions.

As shared by AT5, "maayo sa ARAL kay nagatukdo san maayos." AT15 stated, "ginabuligan ako san akon teacher sa ARAL." AT16 mentioned, "maayo magtukdo si Sir." Likewise, AT18 and AT15 added, "masaya kay nagatukdo" and "ginatukduan san maayo," respectively.

These responses show a consistent appreciation for teachers' roles in the ARAL program, especially in providing clear instruction, guidance, and support. The learners' stories suggest that their positive learning experiences depend heavily on how well teachers help them understand and offer assistance. This indicates that the quality of teachers and their instructional support are vital for learners' engagement and perceived success in the program, reinforcing the need for effective teachers in intervention initiatives like ARAL.

This is strongly supported by Batistis and Siat (2025), who emphasized that teacher scaffolding, adaptive instruction, and guided remediation are essential for learner improvement in ARAL. Their findings show that learners progress more effectively when teachers provide continuous guidance and individualized support.

This finding connects with Fryer (2017) and Nickow et al. (2023), who highlighted instructional quality as a major factor in tutoring effectiveness. Locally, Eden et al. (2025) also discovered that adaptive teaching practices greatly influence learner engagement and success.

The findings clearly show that ARAL is not just focused on content delivery but is greatly influenced by meaningful teacher-learner interaction. This suggests that, in their regular classes, learners may not have received the same level of individual support and attention as they did from their ARAL tutors. The results further emphasize the need for ongoing teacher training and constant support to maintain instructional quality and ensure effective program implementation.

Emerging Literacy Development

The last theme that emerged was "Emerging Literacy Development." This theme refers to learners' self-reported improvements in reading skills, comprehension, and literacy confidence.

AT14 shared, "maaram na ako magbasa san English," while AT16 stated, "nakaaram ako magbasa sa English." AT17 mentioned, "an ARAL kay mga letra lang." Similarly, AT11 expressed a positive view, saying, "maayos man kay nakaaram ako." However, AT15 pointed out a limitation, stating, "putol-putol ang pagbasa ko sa ARAL." This reflects uneven progress in reading fluency among the learners.

These responses show that ARAL tutees generally feel they have improved in their basic reading skills, particularly in recognizing words and gaining initial reading confidence. However, the mention of “putol-putol” or choppy reading suggests that, while foundational skills are developing, fluency and smooth reading are still inconsistent among some learners. This implies that ARAL is effective in building early literacy skills, but continued support and practice are needed to achieve more consistent and fluent reading performance.

This finding aligns with Banerjee et al. (2007) and Nickow et al. (2023), who found that structured interventions significantly improve literacy skills. Locally, Kilag et al. (2023) and Ordoñez and Reyes (2026) also reported similar improvements in reading development. Batistis and Siat (2025) confirmed that ARAL leads to measurable improvements in reading fluency and comprehension when instruction is sustained and structured.

The study adds to these findings by capturing learners’ awareness of their own literacy growth, not just their measured performance. Continuous assessment and individualized support are necessary to ensure steady literacy progress among all learners.

The experiences of ARAL tutees show that the program provides a structured, engaging, and teacher-supported learning environment that supports the development of emerging literacy. While largely consistent with existing studies, these findings broaden our understanding by highlighting the mixed feelings of enjoyment and anxiety, along with varied perceptions of difficulty, within a single intervention.

This shows that ARAL is not just an academic support program. It is a complex educational experience shaped by instruction, emotions, and the development of learner identity.

ARAL Tutees’ Perceptions of the Program’s Impact on Academic Performance and Learning Confidence

ARAL tutees were asked to describe the impact of the ARAL Intervention Program on their academic performance and confidence in learning. From a phenomenological perspective, this impact goes beyond measurable academic gains and includes changes in self-perception, motivation, learning behaviors, and learner agency.

The analysis of their narratives generated five themes: (1) Improved Literacy and Academic Skills, (2) Increased Confidence and Participation, (3) Positive Changes in Study Habits and Responsibility, (4) Increased Motivation and Interest in Learning, and (5) Mixed or Limited Changes in Behavior. These findings suggest that the ARAL Intervention Program influences both the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning, although the extent of its effects varies among learners.

Improved Literacy and Academic Skills

The first theme to emerge is “Improved Literacy and Academic Skills.” This refers to learners’ perceived gains in reading fluency, comprehension, writing, and basic academic skills due to their participation in ARAL.

AT1 shared, “nagtibay ako pagbasa” and “nagtulin ako medyo sa pagbasa,” which show stronger reading skills and better reading speed, a view echoed by AT18. AT2 stated, “an pagbasa Mam... ginatukdo... kung pan-o intindihon an ginbasa,” highlighting growth not only in decoding text but also in understanding what is read. AT4 mentioned, “mas nag-ayo ako magbasa. Nakaaram ako magbasa kag magsurat,” while AT15 added, “nag-improve ako magbasa,” reflecting their perceived progress in literacy skills. AT10 described, “durudiretso na po ang pagbasa ko,” which indicates improved fluency and smoother reading. AT14 noted, “maaram na po magbasa san English,” pointing to an improvement in English reading skills. AT17 remarked, “medyo nag-ayo an akon pagklase...,” suggesting a general improvement in academic engagement.

These responses show consistent perceived academic gains among the learners, particularly in literacy development. The accounts indicate improvements in reading speed, accuracy, fluency,

comprehension, and language-specific abilities. This suggests that the ARAL program effectively strengthens basic literacy skills and helps learners gradually become more confident and capable in reading and academic performance. However, ongoing monitoring of progress is necessary to ensure long-term retention and mastery.

This finding aligns with Nickow, Oreopoulos, and Quan (2023), who found that structured tutoring significantly improves reading achievement. Kraft and Falken (2021) also noted that frequent, targeted instruction accelerates skill acquisition. In the local context, the DepEd ARAL guidelines (DepEd Order No. 018, s. 2025) emphasize literacy remediation as a main goal.

Increased Confidence and Participation

The theme, “Increased Confidence and Participation,” highlights learners’ growing self-belief, reduced anxiety, and willingness to join in classroom activities.

AT1 expressed, “kaya ko kay A, B, C, D man lang,” showing basic confidence in foundational learning tasks. AT2 said, “naga-answer na ako... kag nagataas na san kamot,” indicating more participation in class. AT3 shared, “dili na ako ginakulbaan pag naga-answer,” reflecting less anxiety when responding. AT18 noted, “nakabatyag ako na confident ako san nag-ARAL,” confirming a stronger sense of self-confidence. AT4 emphasized, “naging confident na ako kay ginatukduan sa maayos,” linking confidence to effective teaching support. AT13 expressed a goal to succeed, saying, “gusto ko makapasar sa grade 6,” while AT14 mentioned, “ginkusugan ko an akon kursonada,” showing increased determination to study. AT15 added, “ginapirit lang ako... nagkusog an akon kursonada,” suggesting that outside encouragement helped boost their academic drive.

These responses show that ARAL not only improves academic skills but also significantly builds learners’ confidence, participation, and motivation. The stories indicate that as learners achieve success and receive supportive instruction, they are more likely to participate in classroom activities, feel less anxious about learning, set stronger academic goals, and show greater determination.

This supports the findings of Yeager et al. (2022), who observed that competence-building interventions enhance confidence and persistence. Dietrichson et al. (2021) also highlighted improvements in learner attitudes alongside academic growth. Locally, Villanueva et al. (2026) reported similar boosts in learner confidence in tutoring situations. This suggests that building confidence is a key way ARAL promotes learning engagement, underscoring the importance of teacher support and positive feedback.

Positive Changes in Study Habits and Responsibility

“Positive Changes in Study Habits and Responsibility” was the next theme that emerged. This refers to improvements in learners’ discipline, independent study behaviors, and their sense of academic responsibility.

As shared by AT1, “naga-assignment na ako,” while AT4 stated, “naga-assignment dayon.” AT9 further shared, “nagabasa sa balay. Naga-assignment.” Similarly, AT3 added, “nagabasa na ako pag-uli ko,” and AT16 stated, “nagapamati na ako.” AT15 mentioned, “yana nagasurat na ako,” while AT17 expressed, “nagabasa na para makaaram.”

These stories consistently show a shift toward more independent and self-directed learning behaviors. Learners are no longer limited to classroom activities. They are extending their learning by reading, writing, completing assignments, and listening actively, even at home. This suggests that ARAL is promoting greater learner accountability and encouraging the development of positive study routines.

This finding supports Slavin et al. (2020), who discovered that tutoring programs improve study habits and learner responsibility, and Banerjee et al. (2007), who emphasized that structured interventions promote learner independence and ongoing engagement in learning tasks. Batistis and Siat (2025) observed similar behavioral improvements, noting increased responsibility and engagement among learners.

The implication of this finding is that ARAL not only helps academic performance but also fosters long-term learning habits. This indicates that its impact goes beyond mastering content to developing responsible, self-regulated learners.

Increased Motivation and Interest in Learning

The next theme that came up is increased motivation and interest in learning. This shows that learners have a stronger desire to engage in academic tasks and pursue their educational goals.

As expressed by AT2, “dili na ako nakakanam kay naga ARAL na,” while AT3 stated, “nagabasa na ako... para makaaram.” AT13 shared, “gusto ko na makapasar...,” and AT9 added, “excited na ako mag grade 5.” AT15 also noted, “Ginapirit ko lang... pero yana nagasurat na ako,” while AT5 expressed, “mas naging happy ako.”

These responses show a mix of intrinsic motivation, like personal interest in learning and the desire to achieve, and extrinsic motivation, such as support and guidance from the program. Learners are not only more willing to participate in academic tasks but also have a clearer sense of purpose and greater enjoyment in their learning activities.

This finding aligns with what Yeager et al. (2022) reported. They highlighted that supportive educational interventions boost learner motivation and persistence. Similarly, Tomas et al. (2025) discovered locally that learners feel more motivated when they feel supported, capable, and successful in their learning experiences. Batistis and Siat (2025) also found that motivation increases when learners experience progress in literacy tasks.

This suggests that motivation is a key factor in maintaining engagement in learning. Therefore, the ARAL program should continue to refine strategies such as encouragement, reinforcement, and goal-setting activities to further foster learners’ interest and persistence in academic tasks.

Mixed or Limited Changes in Behavior

The last theme that emerged is Mixed or Limited Changes in Behavior. This reflects learners who reported no clear improvement or uncertainty about their academic progress.

As shared by AT6, “wara man san nagbag-o, naga TV ako,” indicating continued engagement in non-academic activities. AT7 stated, “di ko man po sure, bagan an aram ko maaram ako magbasa,” reflecting uncertainty about perceived learning gains. Meanwhile, AT12 mentioned “nagakanam,” suggesting inconsistent participation in learning sessions.

These responses show that not all learners experienced noticeable behavioral or academic changes. Some remained disengaged or unsure about their progress. This suggests differences in how learners react to the ARAL intervention, particularly regarding participation, motivation, and perceived learning outcomes.

This finding matches what Slavin et al. (2020) observed. They noted that the effects of intervention programs differ depending on learner readiness, consistency of participation, and level of engagement. Similarly, UNESCO (2021) noted that learning recovery outcomes vary among learners, especially in post-disruption educational settings where vulnerabilities persist.

The implication is that ARAL needs to better respond to learner diversity. It should strengthen support strategies for learners who are making slow progress, are at risk, or are less engaged, to ensure fairer learning outcomes.

These themes show that ARAL has a positive effect on academic performance, confidence, motivation, and study habits. However, the impact varies among learners, reflecting differences in readiness, engagement, and support systems.

Challenges and Support Needs Encountered by ARAL Tutees During Their Participation in the ARAL Intervention Program

The challenges and support needs of ARAL tutees during their time in the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program are outlined by six related themes: (1) Difficulties in Literacy and Language Skills, (2) Need for Teacher Guidance and Instructional Support, (3) Desire for Program Improvement and Varied Learning Activities, (4) Desire for Self-Improvement in Reading and Learning, (5) No Challenges Encountered, and (6) Need for Emotional and Social Support. These themes show that the difficulties learners face in ARAL are complex. They involve cognitive, linguistic, instructional, and emotional aspects that together shape their learning experience.

From a phenomenological viewpoint, these challenges are not just obstacles to learning. They are significant experiences that show how learners struggle, adjust, and find meaning within intervention settings. Similarly, the support needs highlight what learners believe are necessary for effective learning, emotional safety, and academic growth.

Difficulties in Literacy and Language Skills

The first theme, Difficulties in Literacy and Language Skills, shows that learners continue to struggle with reading fluency, comprehension, spelling, writing, and English language use. These challenges indicate that basic literacy gaps persist even after participating in structured intervention sessions.

AT4 reported difficulty understanding English texts, noting that English questions feel more challenging and require simplification due to limited reading ability. AT14 reported difficulty in spelling and reading, “an nalisudan ko ang pag-spelling kag minsan ang pagbasa”, while AT15 mentioned struggles in cursive writing. Similarly, AT18 stated, “nalisudan ako sa English,” and other respondents, such as AT10, AT12, and AT13, consistently identified English as a major area of difficulty.

These experiences reveal that literacy problems are not just isolated skill deficits. They are interconnected barriers that impact comprehension, participation, and confidence. The frequent mention of difficulties with English suggests that the instructional language significantly influences learners' academic struggles.

This pattern aligns with Kilag et al. (2023), who found ongoing literacy gaps in decoding and comprehension among struggling learners. Similarly, Tomas et al. (2021) observed that reading difficulties often lead to frustration, avoidance, and lower engagement in academic tasks. Batistis and Siat (2025) also confirm that despite ARAL gains, foundational literacy gaps persist. UNESCO (2021) also notes that learning recovery programs need to address deep-rooted foundational gaps rather than just surface issues.

The stories in this study build on these findings, showing that literacy difficulties are both cognitive and emotional. Learners tend to feel increased pressure and lower confidence when faced with English tasks. This underscores the need for ongoing support, where instruction progresses gradually from simple to complex tasks while reinforcing comprehension at every level of learning. In practical terms, ARAL sessions should not only repeat literacy tasks but also gradually adjust them to match the learners' readiness, ensuring real skill development.

Need for Teacher Guidance and Instructional Support

The theme, Need for Teacher Guidance and Instructional Support, highlights learners' strong dependence on teacher facilitation to understand lessons, complete tasks, and make sense of reading activities. This dependence indicates that learning is still highly mediated by instructional support rather than independent mastery.

As shared by AT1, “magtukdo lang pagbasa,” learners explicitly requested continued support for reading instruction. AT3 stated, “dagdagan an ginapabasa,” while AT9 similarly called for more reading activities. AT14 emphasized the need for step-by-step guidance in spelling, “tukdukan pag spelling san usad

na letra,” and AT15 directly stated, “buligan ako pagbasa kag pagsurat.” AT18 also expressed the need for continued assistance in English reading. AT7 added, “tukduan po tapos buligan po kag maging mapagpakumbaba sa estudyante,” highlighting both instructional support and teacher approach, while AT6 stated, “ayuson ang pagpabasa. Dili lang pagtukduan san answer,” pointing to the need for improved and more comprehensive reading instruction beyond simple answer-focused tasks.

These narratives suggest that learners see teacher presence as crucial to their understanding, skill development, and task completion. Instruction is not just about delivering content; it is a vital support that helps them understand, process, and perform academic tasks effectively. This means learners highly value guided instruction, in which teachers actively help them learn step by step, especially in basic literacy skills such as reading, spelling, and writing.

This finding aligns with Fryer's (2017) findings, which identified instructional quality as a key factor in tutoring effectiveness. Batistis and Siat (2025) highlight that scaffolding is essential for learner progress. Nickow et al. (2023) emphasized that structured tutoring is most effective when teachers provide consistent feedback and guidance. Eden et al. (2025) also pointed out that tailored instructional support is essential for learner progress in tutoring settings.

The reliance on teacher guidance shown in this study suggests that ARAL serves not only as a program to address content gaps but also as a guided learning environment in which teachers act as cognitive and emotional supports. This highlights the need to strengthen teachers' ability to provide scaffolded instruction since learners' academic progress is closely linked to the quality and consistency of teacher support.

Desire for Program Enhancement and Varied Learning Activities

The next theme that emerged is Desire for Program Enhancement and Varied Learning Activities, reflecting learners expressed need for more engaging, interactive, and diversified instructional strategies beyond repetitive reading tasks.

As shared by AT2, learners expressed dissatisfaction with monotonous activities and a desire for variety beyond reading, stating, “gusto ko may kanam dili lang puro basa.” AT6 suggested integrating drawing and other interactive tasks to make learning more engaging. AT3 requested variation in reading activities, “iba-ibahon ang pagbasa,” while AT5 proposed expanding instruction to include other subject areas such as Mathematics. AT14 emphasized a more structured progression in literacy development, “usad-usad na letter kag pagbasa san usad na letter.”

These responses suggest that while structured repetition helps reinforce basic skills, too much uniformity in teaching may decrease learner engagement and interest. Learners notice instructional monotony and express a preference for varied, meaningful, and engaging learning experiences that combine reading and writing with creative activities across subjects.

This finding aligns with Escueta et al. (2020), who found that learning outcomes improve when instruction includes interactive and varied strategies rather than focusing solely on repetitive tasks. Durlak et al. (2022) also noted that engagement rises when learning environments include active participation and emotional elements.

The narratives build on this research by showing that learners recognize the need for innovation in teaching. This underscores the importance of designing ARAL sessions that mix structured literacy development with interactive, multimodal learning experiences. These can include games, visuals, group tasks, and activities that connect to real-life contexts. This approach not only boosts engagement but also deepens processing skills.

Desire for Self-Improvement in Reading and Learning

The next theme that emerged is Desire for Self-Improvement in Reading and Learning, which reflects learners' intrinsic motivation to enhance their academic performance and pursue long-term educational goals despite existing difficulties.

As shared by AT1, learners expressed a desire to strengthen their reading skills, “gusto ko magtibay pa sa pagbasa.” AT7 similarly indicated a goal to further improve reading fluency. AT10 expressed a need to learn English due to current difficulty, stating, “gusto ko makaaram sa English kay di pa ako maaram.” AT14 and AT15 articulated long-term aspirations for fluent reading and academic success, including future academic progression up to college. AT11 added, “gusto ko gihapon mag-ARAL. Gusto ko makaaram sa English kay maluya pa ako,” reflecting a strong sense of perseverance and continued commitment to learning despite self-identified difficulty. The statement shows that the learner recognizes a current weakness in English proficiency (“maluya pa ako”) but remains willing to continue participating in ARAL. This indicates both awareness of learning gaps and a positive attitude toward improvement.

These responses show that learners are not just passive receivers of the intervention; they actively shape their own learning. Their goals stem from academic challenges, suggesting that struggles do not always lower motivation. When learners receive the right support, such as through ARAL, these difficulties can even boost their determination to improve and achieve their educational goals.

This finding aligns with Yeager et al. (2022), who reported that programs that support a growth mindset and build self-confidence can increase motivation and persistence. Tomas et al. (2025) also discovered that learner aspirations rise when teaching environments offer support and encouragement.

The study broadens this view by revealing that motivation among ARAL tutees is closely linked to their situation, influenced by present challenges and hopes for the future. This highlights the need to strengthen learners' aspirations through ongoing support, goal-setting activities, and recognition of small successes to sustain motivation over time.

No Challenges Encountered

The fifth theme that emerged is No Challenges Encountered. This reflects learners (AT1, AT3, AT9, and AT17) who reported no difficulties with their participation in ARAL, as shown in statements such as “wara man.”

While these responses might suggest that there are no challenges, they also reveal differences in how learners perceive their situations and their self-awareness. Some learners might overlook difficulties, or they may not have developed the awareness needed to recognize barriers to their learning.

This interpretation aligns with Slavin et al. (2020), who noted that learners' responses to intervention programs vary widely depending on engagement and individual readiness. UNESCO (2021) also emphasizes that not all learners recognize their learning gaps, especially in basic literacy contexts.

The existence of these responses indicates that assessing the effectiveness of interventions should not depend only on self-reported difficulties. It should also include ongoing diagnostic assessments and teacher observations to identify hidden learning needs.

Need for Emotional and Social Support

The last theme that emerged is the need for emotional and social support, which highlights learners' need for patience, encouragement, and a supportive learning environment. This reflects the emotional aspect of learning recovery, where emotional safety and positive relationships serve as the foundation for active learning engagement.

As shared by AT4, learners emphasized the need for continued guidance even when exhibiting challenging behavior, stating, “ginatukduan gihapon ako miski pasaway ako,” which reflects a desire for consistent patience and understanding from teachers. AT7 highlighted the importance of respectful and humble instruction, “maging mapagpakumbaba sa estudyante,” emphasizing how the teacher's attitude

shapes learners' comfort and responsiveness. Meanwhile, AT18 expressed a preference for positive emotional experiences during learning sessions, stating "malipay," underscoring the importance of happiness and emotional well-being in the learning process.

These stories show that learners are very aware of teacher behavior, interpersonal interactions, and the overall classroom climate. Emotional and social support is seen not as an extra part of instruction but as a crucial element that directly affects learners' willingness to participate, engage, and stick with learning activities.

This aligns with Durlak et al. (2022), who noted that socio-emotional learning components greatly improve academic engagement and outcomes. Angrist et al. (2023) also found that emotional support boosts the effectiveness of academic interventions.

The findings expand on this literature by showing that emotional support in ARAL is not just beneficial but essential. Learners link emotional safety with their willingness to learn, suggesting that instruction is intertwined with relational dynamics.

The challenges and support needs of ARAL tutees reveal a complex mix of cognitive, linguistic, instructional, and emotional factors. While learners face ongoing literacy challenges and rely on instruction, they also show strong motivation and clear goals for improvement. These findings confirm existing literature while deepening understanding by stressing that the issues in intervention programs are not merely academic shortcomings; they are emotional and relational experiences that shape engagement and learning outcomes.

Summary

This study aimed to examine and deepen the understanding of the lived experiences of ARAL tutees regarding the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Intervention Program of the Department of Education of Mapiña Elementary School in the Division of Masbate City.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of ARAL tutees in participating in the ARAL Intervention Program?
2. How do ARAL tutees describe the program's impact on their academic performance and confidence in their learning?
3. What challenges and support needs do ARAL tutees encounter during their participation in the ARAL Intervention Program?

Education is essential for developing students' reading and math skills, which are key to academic success and lifelong learning. Early abilities are strong predictors of future achievement. Unfortunately, many students who do not develop these basic skills face long-term academic challenges and fewer opportunities. Despite global pledges for inclusive and quality education under SDG 4, large learning gaps remain, especially in the Philippines. Assessments like PISA 2022 and EDCOM II (2025) show that students struggle with reading and math.

To tackle these gaps, the Department of Education has introduced several remedial programs, including DEAR, the National Reading Program, the Literacy Remediation Program, 8-Week Intervention Packages, and Catch-Up Fridays. These programs have positively impacted reading fluency, comprehension, and student engagement, but their effectiveness relies on consistent execution, teacher training, and available resources.

Building on these efforts, the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program (DepEd Order No. 18, s. 2025) was created to provide structured, inclusive support for at-risk learners. At Mapiña Elementary School, many students were identified as struggling readers, with small improvements noticed over time, particularly in higher grade levels.

This study explored the experiences of ARAL tutees using a qualitative phenomenological design and thematic analysis. By focusing on 18 carefully chosen participants, it sought to understand students'

perceptions, challenges, and support needs within the ARAL Program. This provides valuable insights to improve learner-centered intervention strategies.

Findings

Salient findings of the problems in the study included:

1. For the first research question, which explored the experiences of ARAL tutees in the ARAL Intervention Program, the findings showed that learners generally view the program as a structured, routine-based literacy intervention. This involves repeated reading, writing, answering, and guided exercises. Most tutees shared positive emotions, describing ARAL as enjoyable, relaxing, and satisfying, especially when they feel supported by teachers. However, some learners experienced anxiety, nervousness, and difficulty during performance tasks, particularly when required to read or answer questions. Their views on ARAL versus regular classes were mixed. Some found it easier and more supportive, while others noticed little difference. A key aspect of their experience was strong teacher support, which learners identified as essential to their understanding and success. As a whole, ARAL was found to help develop literacy skills, especially in reading fluency, comprehension, and basic writing, though progress varied among learners.
2. For the second research question, which focused on the perceived impact of the ARAL Intervention Program on learners' academic performance and confidence, the findings indicated that learners noticed improvements in literacy and academic skills. This was especially true for reading speed, comprehension, fluency, spelling, writing, and English reading ability. The program also led to increased confidence and participation in class, as learners reported lower anxiety and a greater willingness to engage in academic tasks. Additionally, participants described positive changes in their study habits. They began completing assignments more regularly, reading at home, writing more, and paying closer attention in class. ARAL further boosted learners' motivation and interest in learning, as evidenced by increased enthusiasm, goal-setting, and a stronger desire to succeed academically. Despite these positive results, some learners showed mixed or limited behavioral changes, suggesting that the program's impact is not the same for everyone.
3. For the third research question, which examined the challenges and support needs of ARAL tutees in the program, the findings revealed that learners still face ongoing difficulties in literacy and language skills, particularly in reading fluency, comprehension, spelling, writing, and English proficiency. They showed a clear need for teacher guidance and support, emphasizing the importance of step-by-step instruction and ongoing help during reading and writing tasks. Participants also expressed a desire for improvements to the program and more varied learning activities, suggesting that repetitive teaching methods might lower their engagement over time. Despite these challenges, many learners showed a strong desire to improve in reading and learning, including goals for academic success and better English proficiency. However, some learners reported no perceived challenges, indicating differences in awareness, engagement, and experiences. In general, learners also noted the need for emotional and social support, emphasizing the importance of patience, encouragement, respectful treatment, and a positive classroom environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The ARAL Intervention Program is primarily experienced as a structured, teacher-guided literacy remediation program that strengthens foundational academic skills through repetition and guided practice.

2. The program is not only academic but also emotional and relational, as learners' experiences are strongly shaped by feelings of happiness, anxiety, support, and the classroom climate.
3. ARAL is effective in improving literacy skills, confidence, motivation, and study habits, although the level of improvement varies among learners.
4. Teacher support plays a central and indispensable role in learner engagement and learning success, functioning as both instructional and emotional scaffolding.
5. Despite positive outcomes, learners continue to experience persistent literacy gaps and language difficulties, indicating the need for sustained intervention.
6. Learner engagement is influenced by a combination of instructional quality, emotional support, and activity design, underscoring the multidimensionality of learning recovery.
7. The effectiveness of ARAL is not uniform across learners, as differences in readiness, participation, and awareness lead to mixed or limited behavioral changes for some tutees.
8. ARAL functions as a holistic learning recovery environment that supports academic, emotional, and behavioral development, but requires continuous enhancement to fully address learner diversity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were offered:

1. Teachers should strengthen differentiated instruction in ARAL sessions by tailoring activities to learners' proficiency levels to address varying literacy needs and prevent instructional monotony.
2. Teachers should engage in continuous professional development focused on scaffolding strategies, literacy instruction, and learner-centered teaching approaches.
3. ARAL sessions should incorporate varied and interactive learning activities such as games, visuals, writing tasks, oral activities, and cross-subject integration to sustain learner engagement.
4. Teachers should maintain a supportive, patient, and encouraging classroom climate to reduce learner anxiety and increase participation.
5. Teachers should regularly monitor learner progress to identify slow-progress learners and provide timely intervention.
6. Schools should provide intensified and individualized support for learners with persistent difficulties in literacy and language.
7. Teachers should help learners set realistic academic goals and recognize small achievements to sustain motivation and engagement.
8. Schools should strengthen collaboration with parents or guardians to support learners' study habits and reinforce learning at home.
9. Schools should ensure standardized implementation of ARAL instructional practices while allowing flexibility for learner-centered adjustments.
10. Future researchers may explore the long-term impact of ARAL, including sustained academic progress and transition effects beyond the intervention period.

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