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Attendance, Phil-IRI Reading Level, and Academic Performance of Grade 7 Learners in Maharlika National High School, Bislig City Division: A Descriptive-Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-correlational study examined the relationships among school attendance, Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) reading level, and academic performance of Grade 7 learners in Maharlika National High School, Bislig City Division, during School Year 2025-2026. Documentary data from all 107 Grade 7 learners with complete available school records were included through total enumeration. A researcher-developed documentary data extraction sheet was used to organize days present and absent, attendance rate, Phil-IRI reading category, and general average. Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and Spearman rank-order correlation were applied. Learners demonstrated Excellent Attendance overall, averaging 189.77 days present (SD = 3.95), 7.22 days absent (SD = 3.96), and a 96.33% attendance rate (SD = 2.01). Most learners were at the Instructional Phil-IRI level (61.68%), followed by Frustration (21.50%) and Independent (16.82%). Academic performance was Satisfactory overall (M = 83.56, SD = 4.69; range = 73-93). Days present correlated positively with general average, $r(105) = .653$, $p < .001$, while days absent correlated negatively, $r(105) = -.655$, $p < .001$; attendance rate also showed a positive relationship, $r(105) = .655$, $p < .001$. Phil-IRI reading level was strongly and positively associated with academic performance, rho = .757, $p < .001$. Mean general averages increased across reading categories from Frustration (77.61) to Instructional (84.09) and Independent (89.22). The findings indicate that attendance and reading level are meaningful correlates of Grade 7 academic achievement and support a Learner Support Intervention Program integrating attendance monitoring, reading remediation, progress tracking, parent coordination, peer tutoring, and teacher-led support.

Keywords: *school attendance, Phil-IRI, reading level, academic performance, Grade 7 learners, learner support intervention*

INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is a central indicator of learners' progress through the curriculum and a practical basis for identifying students who need additional support. At the junior high school level, general averages reflect achievement across learning areas, but performance may also be shaped by foundational conditions such as regular school attendance and the ability to comprehend written material. Learning-loss evidence and learning-poverty frameworks emphasize that enrollment alone is insufficient when learners miss instruction or cannot access grade-appropriate texts (Betthäuser et al., 2023; World Bank, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

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Reading is particularly important because almost every school subject requires learners to understand directions, passages, questions, vocabulary, and written explanations. In PISA 2022, the Philippines remained below international benchmarks in reading, underscoring the need for school-level monitoring of foundational skills (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023). Philippine learning assessments have likewise highlighted continuing challenges in reading achievement and the need to connect assessment results with intervention (Department of Education, SEAMEO, & UNICEF, 2021).

Attendance represents a second foundational condition for learning because regular presence increases learners' opportunity to receive instruction, complete tasks, participate in assessment, and obtain feedback. Research on school absenteeism consistently links missed instructional time with weaker academic outcomes and identifies attendance data as useful for early intervention (Gubbels et al., 2019; Kearney & Graczyk, 2020; Keppens, 2023).

In Maharlika National High School, Grade 7 is a transition point from elementary to junior high school. The source thesis documented 107 Grade 7 learners and identified reading and literacy as recurring concerns in the local setting. Although attendance records, Phil-IRI results, and grades were available, limited school-level evidence had examined these three indicators together among Grade 7 learners. Philippine research has shown that Phil-IRI performance can be significantly related to academic performance, but much of that evidence focuses on elementary pupils (Casas & Tantiado, 2023; Corog-Jonson, 2025).

The study therefore described learners' attendance, Phil-IRI reading level, and academic performance; tested the relationship of attendance and reading level with general average; and used the findings as the basis for a Learner Support Intervention Program. The study was anchored on Opportunity to Learn Theory, the Simple View of Reading, and Stufflebeam's CIPP Evaluation Model, linking instructional exposure, reading competence, academic outcomes, and evidence-based school intervention (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Stufflebeam, 2003).

Literature Review

Attendance as Opportunity to Learn

Attendance is more than a compliance measure because it reflects the amount of formal instructional opportunity available to a learner. Regularly present learners have more opportunities to participate in lessons, guided practice, classroom discussion, assessment, and feedback. The Opportunity to Learn perspective therefore provides a direct rationale for examining days present, days absent, and attendance rate as correlates of achievement.

Empirical studies support this relationship. Keppens (2023), using administrative data from secondary learners, found that multiple forms of absenteeism were associated with lower end-of-year examination results and that timing also mattered. Gubbels et al. (2019) further showed that absenteeism and dropout are associated with learner, family, school, and community risk factors, suggesting that attendance can function as both a learning-exposure indicator and an early warning signal.

Because attendance problems are multidimensional, intervention should move beyond punishment. Kearney and Graczyk (2020, 2022) recommend multi-tiered systems that combine prevention, early identification, family coordination, and targeted support. This is especially relevant to school-based research in which attendance records can directly inform adviser follow-up and parent communication.

Phil-IRI Reading Level and Reading Comprehension

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory is a school-based assessment used to identify learners' reading performance and guide instructional planning. The Revised Phil-IRI categorizes learners as Independent, Instructional, or Frustration readers, distinguishing those who can manage text with minimal support from those who require guided or intensive assistance (Department of Education, 2018).

The Simple View of Reading explains reading comprehension as the product of decoding and language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). This framework is relevant because learners who cannot efficiently

recognize words or understand language are likely to experience difficulty accessing subject-area texts. Contemporary reading research similarly emphasizes the interaction of word recognition and comprehension in skilled reading (Castles et al., 2018; Elleman & Oslund, 2019).

Philippine evidence reinforces the academic importance of reading level. Casas and Tantiado (2023) found a significant relationship between Phil-IRI results and academic performance, while Corog-Jonson (2025) identified persistent challenges in moving learners from lower reading levels toward independent reading. Such findings justify using Phil-IRI categories not only for reading instruction but also as indicators of broader academic risk.

Academic Performance and School-Based Documentary Data

Academic performance in this study was represented by the learners' general average, a formal school-record indicator produced through classroom assessment. DepEd policy treats assessment as an integral component of curriculum implementation because grades communicate progress and help teachers plan appropriate support (Department of Education, 2015).

Documentary school data provide an advantage over perception-only measures because attendance, reading results, and grades are generated through regular school processes. When organized systematically, such records can support descriptive profiling and correlation analysis. Learning-analytics literature likewise emphasizes the value of existing learner data for identifying patterns in participation and achievement (Kaliisa et al., 2023).

The use of school records also strengthens the practical value of the study. Findings derived from actual attendance, Phil-IRI, and grade records can be translated directly into monitoring systems, reading interventions, and learner support plans. This aligns with current education-recovery priorities that emphasize foundational skills and evidence-based school action (Department of Education, 2023; World Bank, 2021).

Integrated Relationship and Intervention Framework

Attendance and reading level represent different but complementary conditions for learning. Attendance determines whether learners are exposed to instruction, whereas reading proficiency affects whether they can access and understand the written content encountered in school. A learner may attend regularly yet struggle academically because of weak comprehension, while a capable reader may underperform when absences reduce instructional continuity.

The CIPP Evaluation Model provides a practical bridge from descriptive findings to intervention. In the source thesis, Context represented Grade 7 learning needs; Input included attendance records, Phil-IRI results, general averages, teachers, parents, and existing school supports; Process included data gathering, statistical analysis, attendance monitoring, reading remediation, and progress tracking; and Product referred to the Learner Support Intervention Program (Stufflebeam, 2003).

Accordingly, the study's schematic framework moved from attendance, reading, and academic records through documentary analysis and relational testing toward a school-based support program. This structure preserved the descriptive-correlational nature of the study: relationships were examined without claiming that attendance or reading level alone caused the observed academic outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2019).

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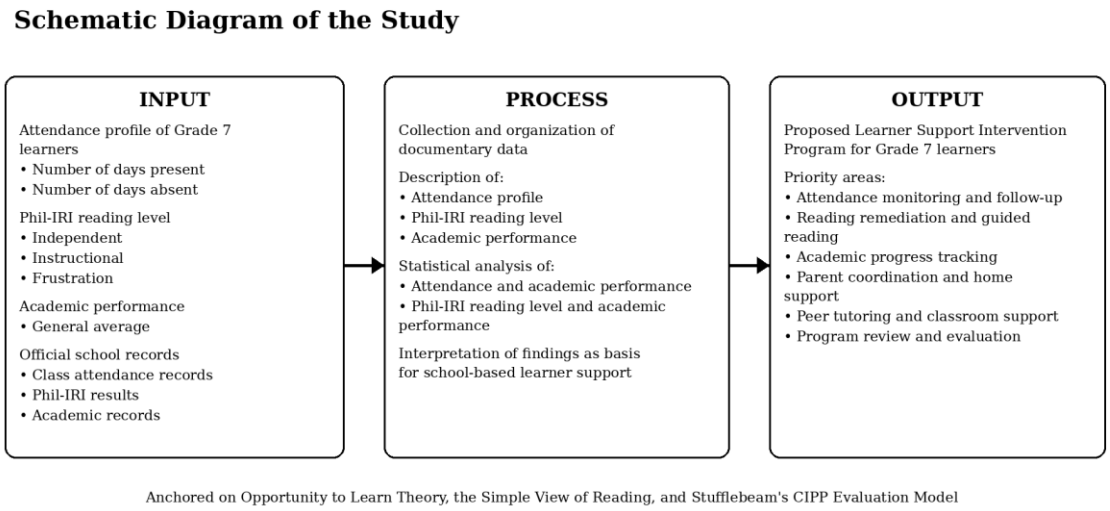
Figure 1. *Schematic Diagram of the Study*



METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design. The descriptive component summarized attendance, Phil-IRI reading level, and general average, while the correlational component tested whether attendance indicators and reading level were significantly associated with academic performance. No variables were manipulated, and the design did not establish cause-and-effect relationships.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Maharlika National High School in Bislig City Division, Surigao del Sur, Caraga Region, during School Year 2025-2026. The school had 633 learners, including 107 Grade 7 learners who constituted the study population. Grade 7 was selected because it represents the transition from elementary to junior high school and requires increased independence across multiple subjects and more complex texts.

Participants and Sampling Technique

All 107 Grade 7 learners with complete available records were included through total enumeration. The learners did not answer a questionnaire. The data subjects were represented through official attendance records, Phil-IRI reading-assessment records, and academic records. Learner names were replaced with codes before analysis.

Research Instrument

The researcher used documentary analysis supported by a researcher-developed documentary data extraction sheet. The sheet recorded learner code, sex, section, number of days present, number of days absent, attendance rate, Phil-IRI reading category, and general average. Attendance categories followed the study's interpretation scale, Phil-IRI categories followed DepEd reading classifications, and academic-performance descriptors followed the K to 12 grading scale (Department of Education, 2015, 2018).

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first obtained permission from concerned school authorities to access Grade 7 records. After finalizing the extraction sheet, official attendance, Phil-IRI, and academic records were reviewed and encoded. Data were checked for completeness and consistency, names were replaced with learner codes, and only records

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containing the required variables were retained. The completed dataset was then summarized and subjected to the planned statistical procedures.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were used for attendance categories, reading-level distribution, and academic-performance descriptors. Means and standard deviations summarized days present, days absent, attendance rate, and general average. Pearson product-moment correlation tested relationships between continuous attendance indicators and general average. Spearman rank-order correlation tested the relationship between ordinal Phil-IRI reading level and general average. Statistical significance was evaluated at alpha = .05.

Ethical Consideration

The study used confidential learner records and therefore emphasized authorization, data minimization, anonymity, and aggregate reporting. Learner names were not included in the analysis; codes were used instead, and only variables required by the research questions were encoded. These procedures were consistent with the Data Privacy Act and the source thesis's data-protection safeguards (National Privacy Commission, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attendance Profile of Grade 7 Learners

The 107 Grade 7 learners demonstrated favorable attendance. They averaged 189.77 days present (SD = 3.95) and 7.22 days absent (SD = 3.96). The mean attendance rate was 96.33% (SD = 2.01), interpreted as Excellent Attendance. Eighty learners (74.77%) were in the Excellent Attendance category and 27 (25.23%) were in Satisfactory Attendance; none were classified as At Risk or chronically absent.

Table 1. *Attendance Profile of the Grade 7 Learners*

Indicator	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Days present	107	189.77	3.95	180	196
Days absent	107	7.22	3.96	1	17
Attendance rate (%)	107	96.33	2.01	91.37	99.49

The high average attendance indicates that most learners had sustained access to instruction, but the 27 learners below the Excellent category still represent a group for monitoring. The finding is consistent with the Opportunity to Learn perspective and with evidence that absenteeism can interrupt continuity and reduce achievement (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020; Keppens, 2023).

Phil-IRI Reading Level

Most learners were classified at the Instructional level (n = 66, 61.68%), meaning that they could read and understand texts with teacher support. Twenty-three learners (21.50%) were at the Frustration level, while only 18 learners (16.82%) were independent readers.

Table 2. *Distribution by Phil-IRI Reading Level*

Reading Level	Frequency	Percentage
Instructional	66	61.68
Frustration	23	21.50
Independent	18	16.82
Total	107	100.00

The concentration at the Instructional level indicates that many learners still depended on guided support, while the Frustration group represented a more urgent reading concern. This pattern is consistent with the purpose of Phil-IRI as a basis for differentiated reading intervention and with evidence that comprehension difficulties can constrain learning across subjects (Department of Education, 2018; Elleman & Oslund, 2019).

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Academic Performance

The mean general average was 83.56 (SD = 4.69), with scores ranging from 73 to 93, corresponding to a Satisfactory overall descriptor. The largest group was Satisfactory (n = 41, 38.32%), followed by Very Satisfactory (n = 30, 28.04%), Fairly Satisfactory (n = 18, 16.82%), Outstanding (n = 15, 14.02%), and Did Not Meet Expectations (n = 3, 2.80%).

Table 3. *Academic Performance of Grade 7 Learners*

Descriptor	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretive Note
Outstanding	15	14.02	90-100
Very Satisfactory	30	28.04	85-89
Satisfactory	41	38.32	80-84
Fairly Satisfactory	18	16.82	75-79
Did Not Meet Expectations	3	2.80	Below 75

Overall M = 83.56, SD = 4.69, minimum = 73, maximum = 93; overall descriptor = Satisfactory.

Although the group average was passing, the 18 Fairly Satisfactory learners and three who Did Not Meet Expectations formed a clear priority group for intervention. This supports the use of school-record data to identify learners requiring closer academic monitoring and coordinated support (Department of Education, 2015; Kaliisa et al., 2023).

Relationship Between Attendance and Academic Performance

Attendance was significantly associated with general average. Days present had a positive relationship, $r(105) = .653$, $p < .001$, whereas days absent had a negative relationship, $r(105) = -.655$, $p < .001$. Attendance rate also correlated positively with general average, $r(105) = .655$, $p < .001$. The null hypothesis for attendance was therefore rejected.

Table 4. *Relationship Between Attendance and Academic Performance*

Attendance Indicator	Pearson r	p	Interpretation
Days present and general average	.653	< .001	Significant positive relationship
Days absent and general average	-.655	< .001	Significant negative relationship
Attendance rate and general average	.655	< .001	Significant positive relationship

The direction of the correlations is educationally coherent: learners with more instructional exposure tended to earn higher general averages, while those with more missed days tended to earn lower averages. The finding is consistent with secondary-school evidence on absenteeism and achievement (Keppens, 2023) and supports attendance monitoring as an early-warning strategy. Because the design was correlational, the coefficients indicate association rather than causation.

Phil-IRI Reading Level and Academic Performance

Academic performance increased systematically across Phil-IRI categories. Independent readers had the highest mean general average (M = 89.22, SD = 3.28), followed by Instructional readers (M = 84.09, SD = 2.93), while Frustration readers had the lowest mean (M = 77.61, SD = 2.84). Spearman correlation confirmed a strong, positive, and significant relationship between reading level and general average, rho = .757, $p < .001$; the second null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 5. Academic Performance by Phil-IRI Reading Level

Phil-IRI Level	N	Mean General Average	SD	Descriptor
Independent	18	89.22	3.28	Very Satisfactory
Instructional	66	84.09	2.93	Satisfactory
Frustration	23	77.61	2.84	Fairly Satisfactory

Spearman rho = .757, $p < .001$; significant positive relationship.

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The result supports the Simple View of Reading and the broader literature on reading comprehension as a foundation for academic learning (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Castles et al., 2018). It also parallels Philippine findings that Phil-IRI performance is significantly related to achievement (Casas & Tantiado, 2023). The sizeable difference between Independent and Frustration readers strengthens the practical case for targeted reading remediation.

Proposed Learner Support Intervention Program

The descriptive and correlational findings were translated into a school-based intervention focused on learners with Satisfactory Attendance, Frustration or Instructional reading levels, and lower academic-performance categories. The program combines early identification, reading support, progress monitoring, family coordination, peer assistance, and periodic program review.

Table 6. *Proposed Learner Support Intervention Program*

Program Component	Key Activities	Expected Output
Attendance Monitoring and Follow-Up	Monitor repeated absences; adviser follow-up; communicate with parents/guardians when attendance declines.	Updated attendance monitoring log and early follow-up records.
Reading Remediation and Guided Reading	Group learners by Phil-IRI level; guided and repeated reading; vocabulary and comprehension support.	Reading-remediation groups and progress-monitoring records.
Academic Progress Tracking	Review general averages each grading period and flag Fairly Satisfactory and Did Not Meet Expectations learners.	Quarterly monitoring sheet and priority-support list.
Parent Coordination and Home Support	Conduct parent conferences and provide simple home-reading and study-support guidance.	Parent coordination log and home-support agreements.
Peer Tutoring and Classroom Support	Assign peer buddies/study partners and provide short reading or review sessions during available support time.	Peer-support groups and documented participation.
Program Review and Evaluation	Review attendance, Phil-IRI, and general-average data after implementation and revise activities based on progress.	Learner-support intervention monitoring report.

The program is consistent with multi-tiered attendance support and assessment-based reading intervention because it uses actual school records to trigger follow-up rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all response (Department of Education, 2018; Kearney & Graczyk, 2020, 2022). Its central contribution is the integration of attendance, reading, and grade monitoring into one coordinated Grade 7 support system.

CONCLUSION

Grade 7 learners in Maharlika National High School generally maintained excellent attendance, but most remained at the Instructional Phil-IRI level and the group's overall academic performance was only Satisfactory. A meaningful subgroup also required closer attention because 23 learners were at the Frustration reading level, 18 were Fairly Satisfactory academically, and three Did Not Meet Expectations.

Attendance and Phil-IRI reading level were both significantly associated with academic performance. More days present and a higher attendance rate were related to higher general averages, while more absences were related to lower averages. Higher reading categories were also strongly associated with higher academic performance. These findings support the use of attendance records and Phil-IRI results as practical school-level indicators for identifying Grade 7 learners who may need early and coordinated support, while recognizing that the correlational design does not establish causation.

Recommendation

The school head may institutionalize regular review of Grade 7 attendance, Phil-IRI results, and general averages and integrate the proposed Learner Support Intervention Program into school improvement, reading, guidance, and class-adviser monitoring mechanisms.

The reading coordinator and Grade 7 chairperson should organize guided and intensive reading support according to Phil-IRI category, monitor movement across reading levels, and coordinate reading-comprehension support across subjects.

Class advisers and subject teachers should use attendance trends as early-warning indicators, provide make-up and guided learning opportunities following absences, document follow-up actions, and closely monitor learners in lower academic-performance categories.

Parents and guardians should be engaged when attendance begins to decline and should be provided with practical home-reading and study-support strategies, particularly for Instructional and Frustration readers.

Future studies may include other learner and school variables such as study habits, socioeconomic conditions, parental involvement, motivation, teacher factors, and access to learning resources, and may use longitudinal or multivariate designs to examine how attendance and reading development jointly relate to achievement over time.

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