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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Teachers' Support for the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL-Reading) Program: A Qualitative Study of School-Based Reading Intervention

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored teachers' support for the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL-Reading) Program at Maddela South Central School. The study aimed to examine teachers' experiences, instructional practices, and support mechanisms in implementing school-based reading interventions for struggling readers within the context of the ARAL-Reading Program. Using a descriptive qualitative research design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving teachers and selected learners participating in the reading intervention program. Thematic analysis revealed four major themes: (1) learner-centered and remedial reading instructional practices, (2) collaborative teacher support and learner motivation, (3) contextualized and adaptive literacy intervention strategies, and (4) challenges in implementing school-based reading recovery programs. Findings showed that teachers demonstrated strong commitment and instructional adaptability in supporting struggling readers through differentiated reading activities, individualized guidance, peer-assisted learning, and contextualized literacy materials. Learners became more engaged and confident when reading instruction was interactive, supportive, and aligned with their reading levels and learning needs. However, limited instructional resources, time constraints, learner diversity, and insufficient parental support affected the implementation of the ARAL-Reading Program. The study concludes that teacher support and learner-centered intervention practices significantly contribute to learners' reading engagement, confidence, and literacy improvement. Strengthening literacy resources, institutional support, and teacher professional development is recommended to improve school-based reading intervention programs in public elementary schools.

Keywords: reading intervention, ARAL-Reading Program, literacy education, learner engagement, remedial reading, qualitative study, elementary education, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Reading literacy is a fundamental component of academic success and lifelong learning. In elementary education, reading proficiency significantly influences learners' comprehension, communication skills, academic participation, and overall educational achievement. However, many learners in Philippine public schools continue to experience reading difficulties due to learning gaps, limited literacy exposure, socioeconomic challenges, and disruptions in classroom learning.

In response to these educational concerns, the Department of Education implemented the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy skills among struggling learners. The ARAL-Reading Program specifically aims to provide accessible, learner-centered, and intervention-based reading instruction to improve learners' reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary development, and confidence in literacy learning.

Teachers play a vital role in the successful implementation of school-based reading intervention programs. Through differentiated instruction, remediation activities, contextualized literacy materials, and individualized support, teachers help struggling readers overcome literacy difficulties and sustain meaningful engagement in reading activities. Teachers' instructional support and classroom interaction significantly influence learners' participation, confidence, and motivation during intervention sessions.

Learner engagement is particularly important in reading intervention programs because struggling readers often experience low confidence, anxiety, and reduced classroom participation. Behavioral engagement is reflected through participation in reading activities and task completion, emotional engagement through learners' confidence and motivation, and cognitive engagement through comprehension and active literacy involvement.

In rural public schools, teachers implementing reading intervention programs frequently encounter challenges related to inadequate instructional materials, limited reading resources, insufficient parental support, and diverse learner needs. Despite these difficulties, teachers continuously demonstrate adaptability and commitment in providing meaningful literacy support to struggling learners.

Previous studies revealed that learner-centered reading interventions and teacher support significantly improve learners' reading engagement and literacy development. However, limited qualitative studies have explored teachers' experiences and support mechanisms in implementing the ARAL-Reading Program within public elementary school contexts.

This study therefore aimed to explore teachers' support for the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL-Reading) Program at Maddela South Central School.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What instructional support practices are utilized by teachers in implementing the ARAL-Reading Program?
2. How do learners demonstrate engagement during reading intervention activities?
3. What challenges do teachers encounter in implementing school-based reading interventions?
4. What implications may be derived for improving the implementation of the ARAL-Reading Program in public elementary schools?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Reading Intervention and Literacy Recovery Programs

Reading intervention programs are designed to support struggling readers through targeted instructional strategies, remediation activities, and differentiated literacy instruction. According to Lev Vygotsky, learners develop literacy skills more effectively when guided through supportive instructional interaction and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Reading interventions provide opportunities for learners to receive individualized support according to their literacy needs and comprehension levels.

Research indicates that remedial and intervention-based reading programs significantly improve learners' reading fluency, comprehension, and classroom participation (Allington, 2012). Effective reading interventions frequently utilize differentiated instruction, guided reading, peer-assisted learning, and contextualized literacy activities to strengthen learner engagement.

Teacher Support in Literacy Instruction

Teacher support refers to instructional, emotional, and motivational assistance provided to learners during the teaching-learning process. Teachers play a significant role in promoting learners' confidence, motivation, and participation in literacy activities.

Studies revealed that supportive teacher-learner relationships positively influence reading engagement, classroom confidence, and literacy achievement among struggling readers (Pianta et al., 2012). Teachers who demonstrate patience, encouragement, and individualized guidance create more positive and engaging literacy learning environments.

Learner Engagement in Reading Intervention

Learner engagement refers to learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in literacy learning activities (Fredricks et al., 2004). In reading intervention programs, engagement is reflected through participation in reading tasks, willingness to read aloud, interaction during literacy activities, and active comprehension processes.

Research suggests that struggling readers become more engaged when reading activities are interactive, contextualized, and aligned with their literacy levels and interests (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Learner-centered reading instruction contributes positively to reading confidence and literacy development.

Challenges in School-Based Reading Programs

Public elementary schools frequently encounter challenges related to inadequate reading materials, limited instructional resources, insufficient parental support, and diverse learner literacy needs (OECD, 2019). Teachers implementing reading interventions often modify instructional strategies and improvise literacy materials according to available school resources. Despite these limitations, teachers demonstrate commitment and adaptability in sustaining literacy intervention programs. However, strengthened institutional support and literacy resource allocation remain essential in improving school-based reading recovery initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design to explore teachers' support for the ARAL-Reading Program and learners' engagement experiences in school-based reading intervention activities. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to examine participants' lived experiences, instructional practices, and literacy intervention realities within natural educational settings.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Maddela South Central School. The school serves learners from rural communities and reflects the realities of literacy intervention and remedial education in Philippine public elementary schools.

Participants of the Study

The participants included six teachers involved in implementing the ARAL-Reading Program and ten selected learners participating in school-based reading intervention activities. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement and experiences in the implementation of the reading intervention program.

Data Gathering Procedures

Interviews explored teachers' instructional support practices, learner engagement experiences, literacy intervention strategies, and implementation challenges. Classroom observations focused on teacher-learner interaction, reading participation, learner confidence, and literacy engagement during intervention sessions.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). Coding, categorization, and theme generation were conducted systematically to identify meaningful patterns and interpretations from the collected qualitative data.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Credibility was established through triangulation and member checking. Dependability was ensured through audit trails and systematic documentation of research procedures. Confirmability and transferability were strengthened through detailed descriptions of the research process, literacy intervention context, and findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and respect for participants were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Permission from school authorities and parental consent for learner participants were secured prior to data gathering activities.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Theme 1: Learner-Centered and Remedial Reading Instructional Practices

The findings revealed that teachers implementing the ARAL-Reading Program at Maddela South Central School primarily utilized learner-centered and remedial instructional practices to support struggling readers. Teachers emphasized the importance of differentiated instruction, guided reading, phonics activities, repetitive reading exercises, and individualized learner support in improving learners' literacy skills and classroom participation.

One participant shared:

"Kailangan talagang iayon ang activities sa reading level ng bawat bata."

Another teacher explained:

"Ginagamitan namin sila ng guided reading at paulit-ulit na practice para mas ma-develop ang reading skills nila."

Teachers frequently utilized word recognition drills, oral reading activities, phonics exercises, vocabulary development tasks, peer-assisted reading, and contextualized literacy activities during intervention sessions. Classroom observations revealed that learners became more participative

and responsive when teachers provided individualized instruction and simplified reading activities according to their literacy levels.

One learner shared:

"Mas naiintindihan ko po kapag tinutulungan ako ni teacher sa pagbabasa."

Another learner stated:

"Mas gusto ko po ang reading activities kapag mabagal at malinaw ang pagtuturo."

Teachers explained that struggling readers required patience, repetition, and consistent guidance to improve reading fluency and comprehension. Participants emphasized that learners demonstrated better engagement when reading activities were interactive, supportive, and developmentally appropriate.

One participant stated:

"Kapag supportive ang environment, mas lumalakas ang loob nilang magbasa."

Another teacher added:

"Unti-unti silang nagiging confident kapag may encouragement at guidance."

Behavioral engagement was observed through learners' participation in reading exercises and willingness to complete literacy tasks. Emotional engagement emerged through learners' confidence, motivation, and reduced fear during oral reading activities. Cognitive engagement was reflected in learners' improved word recognition, comprehension, and reading fluency during intervention sessions.

The findings suggest that learner-centered and remedial reading instructional practices significantly contribute to literacy engagement and reading improvement among struggling readers. Individualized instructional support created meaningful literacy learning experiences that strengthened learners' confidence and classroom participation.

These findings support the sociocultural learning theory of Lev Vygotsky, which emphasizes scaffolding and guided instructional support in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, Allington (2012) emphasized that differentiated and guided reading interventions significantly improve literacy outcomes among struggling readers.

Theme 2: Collaborative Teacher Support and Learner Motivation

Another major finding revealed that collaborative teacher support and positive teacher-learner relationships significantly strengthened learners' motivation and engagement during ARAL-Reading intervention sessions. Teachers emphasized that emotional encouragement, patience, and supportive classroom interaction helped learners become more confident and motivated to participate in reading activities.

One teacher explained:

"Importante talaga ang patience at encouragement lalo na sa mga batang hirap magbasa."

Another participant stated:

"Kapag pinapakita mong naniniwala ka sa kanila, mas ginaganahan silang magbasa."

Teachers frequently utilized positive reinforcement, praise, peer support, and motivational activities to sustain learners' confidence and participation. Classroom observations revealed that teachers consistently encouraged learners during oral reading, comprehension activities, and literacy exercises.

Learners likewise expressed appreciation regarding teachers' support during intervention sessions.

One learner shared:

"Hindi po kami pinapahiya ni teacher kapag nagkakamali kami."

Another learner stated:

"Mas gusto ko pong magbasa kasi tinutulungan po kami ni teacher."

Teachers explained that struggling readers often experienced low confidence and fear during reading activities. Participants emphasized that creating a supportive and non-threatening classroom environment was essential in sustaining learner engagement and literacy improvement.

One participant noted:

"Mas nagiging active sila kapag comfortable silang magbasa sa harap ng klase."

Another teacher added:

"Nagiging motivated silang magpractice kapag na-aappreciate ang effort nila."

Behavioral engagement was observed through learners' increased participation during intervention activities. Emotional engagement emerged through learners' confidence, enthusiasm, and willingness to read aloud during sessions. Cognitive engagement was reflected in learners' persistence and active involvement during literacy exercises and comprehension tasks.

The findings indicate that collaborative teacher support significantly influences learners' motivation, confidence, and literacy engagement in school-based reading intervention programs. Supportive teacher-learner relationships contributed positively to learners' emotional and academic participation.

These findings align with Pianta et al. (2012), which emphasized that positive teacher-learner relationships significantly influence learner motivation, participation, and literacy achievement. Similarly, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) highlighted that supportive literacy environments strengthen reading engagement and learner motivation.

Theme 3: Contextualized and Adaptive Literacy Intervention Strategies

The findings further revealed that teachers implemented contextualized and adaptive literacy intervention strategies to make reading instruction meaningful and accessible to struggling readers. Teachers integrated localized stories, familiar vocabulary, community experiences, and contextualized reading materials into intervention sessions.

One participant shared:

"Mas naiintindihan nila kapag ang stories ay related sa experiences nila."

Another teacher explained:

"Ginagamit namin ang local examples at simple vocabulary para mas makarelate sila."

Teachers utilized contextualized reading passages, localized stories, picture-based activities, and experiential literacy tasks to improve learners' comprehension and participation. Participants explained that learners became more engaged when reading materials reflected familiar situations and culturally relevant experiences.

Classroom observations revealed that learners demonstrated stronger participation and comprehension during activities involving contextualized stories and localized examples. Learners became more expressive and interactive during discussions involving familiar experiences and community-related reading materials.

One learner shared:

"Mas gusto ko po ang stories kapag tungkol sa totoong buhay."

Another learner stated:

"Mas naiintindihan ko po kapag simple at familiar ang words."

Teachers also modified instructional strategies according to learners' literacy levels and comprehension abilities. Participants emphasized the importance of flexibility and differentiation in addressing diverse learner needs during intervention sessions.

One participant stated:

"Hindi pare-pareho ang level ng mga bata kaya kailangan i-adjust ang activities."

Another teacher added:

"Mas effective kapag gradual at step-by-step ang reading activities."

The findings suggest that contextualized and adaptive literacy intervention practices contribute positively to learner engagement, comprehension, and literacy confidence. Flexible and culturally meaningful literacy instruction enabled learners to connect reading activities to their daily experiences and literacy needs.

These findings support contextualized literacy frameworks emphasizing culturally responsive and learner-centered instructional practices in reading education. The results likewise align with Vygotsky's sociocultural learning principles emphasizing meaningful learning through culturally familiar experiences and guided interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Theme 4: Challenges in Implementing School-Based Reading Intervention Programs

Despite the positive instructional support practices implemented by teachers, participants encountered several challenges affecting the implementation of the ARAL-Reading Program in the school setting.

One participant stated:

"Mahirap minsan kasi kulang ang reading materials at intervention resources."

Another teacher explained:

"May mga batang mabagal talaga ang progress kaya kailangan ng mas maraming time."

Teachers identified limited instructional materials, insufficient reading resources, learner diversity, time constraints, irregular learner attendance, and lack of parental support as major challenges affecting literacy intervention implementation.

One participant shared:

"Kulang minsan ang oras para matutukan lahat ng struggling readers."

Another teacher noted:

"May mga bata ring walang practice sa bahay kaya mabagal ang improvement."

Classroom observations revealed that teachers frequently improvised instructional materials and adjusted literacy activities according to available resources and learners' reading levels. Teachers exerted additional effort in preparing reading exercises, contextualized materials, and remediation tasks despite workload demands and limited support.

Learners also recognized instructional limitations.

One learner shared:

"Mas gusto po namin kung mas marami pang books at reading materials."

Another learner stated:

"Minsan po nahihirapan ako sa mahahabang babasahin."

Despite these difficulties, teachers demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and commitment in sustaining meaningful literacy intervention programs. Participants emphasized that learners' gradual improvement and increased confidence motivated them to continue implementing reading intervention strategies despite instructional limitations.

The findings indicate that while teacher support and learner-centered intervention strategies positively influence literacy engagement, strengthened institutional support, literacy resources, and parental involvement remain essential in sustaining effective school-based reading intervention programs.

These findings support OECD (2019), which emphasized that public schools frequently encounter literacy resource limitations affecting reading intervention effectiveness. Similarly, Dela Peña (2020) highlighted that rural teachers continuously adapt instructional practices despite resource-related classroom challenges.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that teacher support and learner-centered literacy intervention practices significantly contribute to learner engagement, confidence, and reading improvement among struggling readers participating in the ARAL-Reading Program. Teachers at Maddela South Central School demonstrated strong instructional commitment and adaptability in implementing school-based reading intervention strategies.

Learner-centered and remedial reading instructional practices strengthened learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement during intervention sessions. Guided reading, differentiated instruction, repetitive literacy exercises, and individualized support enabled struggling readers to participate more actively and confidently in reading activities.

Collaborative teacher support also emerged as an important factor influencing learners' motivation and literacy engagement. Positive teacher-learner relationships, encouragement, and emotional support helped reduce learners' fear and anxiety during reading activities while strengthening confidence and participation.

Contextualized and adaptive literacy intervention practices further contributed to learners' comprehension and classroom interaction. Learners became more engaged when reading materials reflected familiar experiences, localized stories, and culturally meaningful content.

However, implementation challenges related to inadequate reading resources, learner diversity, time limitations, and insufficient parental support continue to affect the sustainability of school-based reading intervention programs. Despite these difficulties, teachers demonstrated resilience, flexibility, and dedication in supporting struggling readers.

The findings highlight the importance of strengthening literacy intervention programs, contextualized reading instruction, and institutional support systems to improve reading engagement and literacy development in public elementary schools.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions

The study concludes that teacher support and learner-centered reading intervention practices significantly strengthen learner engagement, confidence, and literacy development among struggling readers participating in the ARAL-Reading Program. Teachers at Maddela South Central School implemented adaptive, contextualized, and supportive instructional strategies that promoted meaningful literacy learning experiences.

Guided reading, differentiated instruction, contextualized literacy materials, and supportive teacher-learner interaction enhanced learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement during reading intervention sessions. Learners became more motivated and confident when

literacy instruction was interactive, individualized, and developmentally appropriate. However, challenges related to limited reading resources, insufficient instructional materials, learner diversity, and inadequate parental support continue to affect the implementation of school-based reading intervention programs.

Despite these instructional limitations, teachers demonstrated resilience, creativity, and commitment in sustaining literacy support for struggling readers. The study emphasizes the importance of learner-centered, contextualized, and supportive literacy intervention practices in improving reading engagement and literacy recovery among elementary learners.

Implications of the Study

The findings imply that reading intervention programs should continuously emphasize learner-centered, contextualized, and differentiated literacy instructional practices to strengthen reading engagement and literacy improvement among struggling readers.

Educational leaders and policymakers may strengthen literacy intervention programs by providing adequate reading materials, intervention resources, contextualized literacy materials, and instructional support necessary for effective reading remediation in public elementary schools. Professional development programs focusing on remedial reading instruction, literacy intervention strategies, differentiated instruction, and learner engagement techniques may further enhance teachers' instructional effectiveness in implementing reading recovery programs.

Schools may also strengthen parental involvement and community literacy support programs to reinforce learners' reading development outside classroom intervention sessions.

Future researchers may conduct similar qualitative or mixed-methods studies exploring literacy intervention outcomes, reading engagement, and contextualized literacy innovations across diverse educational settings.

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