TEACHING STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING READING COMPREHENSION AMONG MULTIGRADE LEARNERS

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Abstract
This study generally examined the teaching strategies employed to enhance reading comprehension among multigrade learners in select elementary schools in the Municipality of Calanasan, Apayao. Specifically, the study determined the teachers' profile, the strategies they used to teach reading, the learners' reading performance based on their Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) exam results, and the relationship of the variables in the study. A total of 105 Grades 1 to 6 learners and 30 multigrade teachers drawn from ten schools across the municipality that participated in the study. Quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed. Data were collected through validated researcher-made questionnaires and official FLAT records were used, ensuring ethical and accurate data handling. Descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics, particularly Pearson's Chi-square test, were used to test the relationship of the variables under study. Findings revealed that across all schools, teachers consistently applied a variety of research-backed reading strategies, all of which received mean ratings indicating they were "Always" used in class, with guided reading ranking highest. However, despite the strong implementation of these strategies, learners' reading performance remained varied. The correlation analysis showed no significant relationship between the teachers' profiles and the teaching strategies they used. Likewise, no significant association was found between the strategies employed and learners' FLAT results, suggesting that reading comprehension is shaped by multiple external and contextual factors beyond instructional method alone.

Keywords: Calanasan Apayao, FLAT reading test, multigrade learners, reading comprehension, reading performance

Suggested citation:

INTRODUCTION

Reading served as a cornerstone of learning, enabling individuals to acquire knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and engage meaningfully with the world. It was a foundational skill that supported academic success and lifelong learning. However, global literacy reports indicated that many young learners struggled to attain reading proficiency at the expected grade level.

According to UNESCO (2022), disparities in reading skills persisted due to various factors, including economic conditions, access to quality education, instructional approaches, and parental involvement. These concerns highlighted the need to examine the factors influencing reading performance, particularly in early grade levels where foundational literacy skills were developed.

International studies emphasized multiple factors that shaped reading proficiency. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted by Mullis et al. (2019) identified home literacy environment, instructional quality, and teacher preparedness as key determinants of reading success. Similarly, research from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2021) underscored the importance of early interventions, phonemic awareness, and structured reading programs in improving literacy rates among young learners. Countries with well-established reading programs and strong teacher support systems consistently reported higher literacy outcomes, reinforcing the impact of targeted interventions on early-grade reading performance.

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In the Philippines, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533) recognized literacy as a core competency in early education. Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) were implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd) to assess and enhance reading skills among Filipino learners. Despite these initiatives, national and international assessments reflected persistent reading difficulties among Filipino students. The 2018 and 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results showed that the Philippines ranked among the lowest in reading comprehension, revealing the urgent need for effective literacy interventions (OECD, 2023). A study by Bernardo et al. (2020) further highlighted the significant influence of teacher expertise, instructional strategies, and home environment on students' reading development.

Public schools in rural areas faced even greater challenges in literacy instruction due to limited resources, varying teacher qualifications, and socioeconomic constraints. In Lower Calanasan, Apayao, schools within the SEND Cluster (Sabangan Elementary School, Naguilian Norte Elementary School, and Don Roque Elementary School) experienced similar difficulties. Reports from teachers suggested that many Grade 1–3 learners exhibited reading struggles, with gaps in fluency, comprehension, and word recognition. Factors such as economic hardships, parental involvement, teacher experience, and availability of learning materials might have contributed to these reading challenges. However, limited research had been conducted to comprehensively analyze these issues in this specific context.

The core of this study focused on identifying the underlying factors that influenced reading performance at early grade levels, particularly in rural settings such as the SEND Cluster in Lower Calanasan, Apayao. Understanding how learner demographics (age, gender, language

background), teacher-related factors (teaching experience, instructional methods), and external variables (parental involvement, socioeconomic status) impacted literacy outcomes uncovered patterns and trends that could have guided effective educational interventions.

A particular focus was placed on the Apayao Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program (LEAP), which aimed to assess and enhance reading skills in the region. LEAP served as a comprehensive tool for monitoring literacy development, providing a clearer picture of the literacy challenges faced by learners in these schools. This study explored how LEAP results correlated with various factors, including the availability of resources, the frequency and quality of parental engagement, and the consistency of instructional practices across classrooms.

Through thorough analysis, this research aimed to generate data-driven insights that could have informed local educational policies and interventions. The findings not only highlighted the critical factors affecting reading performance but also proposed targeted strategies to improve literacy outcomes. Emphasis was placed on early literacy interventions, professional development for teachers, and community involvement in promoting literacy both inside and outside the classroom.

The study also sought to contribute to the larger body of research on literacy development in rural and underserved areas, helping to bridge the gap in education equity. Focusing on the SEND Cluster provided a unique, localized perspective on the challenges and opportunities in improving reading performance among young learners, laying the groundwork for sustainable solutions applicable to similar contexts.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the factors affecting the reading performance of Grades 1 to 3 learners in the SEND Cluster namely Sabangan Elementary School, Naguilian Norte Elementary School, and Don Roque Elementary School in Lower Calanasan, Apayao. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:
1. What is the profile of the learner and teacher- respondents?
2. What are the factors affecting the reading performance of Grade 1-3 learners as assessed by their teachers?
3. What is the reading performance of Key Stage 1 learners (Grades 1-3) as assessed by the Apayao Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program (LEAP) tool?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the identified factors affecting their reading performance?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and their reading performance?
6. Is there a significant relationship between their reading performance and the identified factors affecting their reading performance?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the factors affecting the reading performance of Grade 1–3 learners in the Schools for the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Cluster (Sabangan Elementary School, Naguilian Norte Elementary School, and Don Roque Elementary School) in Lower Calanasan, Apayao. This design was

appropriate as it enabled the researcher to describe existing conditions and determine the relationships between and among the variables.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools in the SEND Cluster located in the Municipality of Lower Calanasan, Apayao, under the Schools Division of Apayao. The cluster included Sabangan Elementary School, Naguilian Norte Elementary School, and Don Roque Elementary School. These schools were selected based on their accessibility, unique characteristics, and the presence of Grade 1 to Grade 3 learners, who were the primary focus of the research.

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The respondents of the study included Grades 1-3 learners and their teachers from the identified schools. Total enumeration was employed to ensure an unbiased representation of the population. A total of 6 teachers and 66 learners were included in the study. The participating teachers assessed the reading performance of learners and provided insights into the factors affecting literacy development. Meanwhile, the learners' Apayao Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program (LEAP) results served as the basis for measuring their reading proficiency. The study ensured that ethical considerations, such as confidentiality and voluntary participation, were upheld throughout the research process.

Data Gathering Instruments

Survey questionnaire as the primary research instrument to gather data on the factors affecting the reading performance of Grade 1–3 learners in the Sabangan Elementary School, Naguilian Norte Elementary School, and Don Roque Elementary School (SEND Cluster), as assessed through the Apayao Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program (LEAP) results. The questionnaire was structured into three major parts, ensuring comprehensive data collection from both learners and teachers. Part 1 collected the profile of respondents. Part 2 identified the factors affecting reading performance, as assessed by teachers along six categories: instructional methods, availability of learning resources, home literacy environment, parental involvement, class size, and school support programs in a 5-point likert scale. The third part focused on the reading performance as assessed by the Apayao Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program (LEAP) tool.

Data Gathering Procedure

A structured approach was followed in collecting data to ensure the validity and reliability of the study's findings. Before the administration of the research instruments, necessary permissions were secured from relevant education authorities and school administrators. After completing the data collection, responses from the survey and LEAP results were organized, encoded, and analyzed to determine relationships between the learners' profiles, identified reading-related factors, and reading performance. The structured data-gathering process ensured that findings were accurate, credible, and useful in formulating recommendations for improving literacy development in the SEND Cluster schools.

Data Analysis

The study employed both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and interpret the demographic

profiles of the respondents, while inferential statistics determined relationships between the identified factors and the reading performance of Grade 1-3 learners in the Sabangan Elementary School, Naguilian Norte Elementary School, and Don Roque Elementary School (SEND Cluster). The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to ensure accurate and reliable statistical computations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal Profile of the Learners

Results reveal that as to age, the average age computed is 7.79, rounding to 8 years. This suggests that most learners are within the expected age range for Grades 1 to 3; however, the presence of overaged learners particularly those aged 9 and 10 raises concerns about late school entry or grade repetition, both of which have been linked to weaker academic performance and literacy development, as confirmed by UNICEF (2022), which notes that overage enrollment in primary education often correlates with poor reading fluency. In terms of sex, 54.55% of the learners were male, and 45.45% were female. Most notably, the data reveal that the average household income is ₱7,151.52. This socioeconomic disadvantage may hinder access to literacy materials and supportive learning environments, as supported by Mullis et al. (2021) in the PIRLS report, which links lower family income to reduced reading exposure and weaker comprehension skills. These findings underscore the interplay of age appropriateness, gender differences, and economic constraints as critical variables influencing the reading performance of learners in the SEND Cluster schools.

Profile of the Teachers

Results reveal that as to age, the average age computed 36.58 years, indicating a relatively mature teaching workforce with a mix of early-career and veteran educators. In terms of sex, 100% of the respondents were female, which reflects the national trend observed in Philippine early-grade education, where teaching remains a female-dominated profession. This is consistent with the findings of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2021), which noted that women constitute over 80% of the teaching force in elementary schools. With regard to educational attainment, all six teachers (100%) had earned units toward a Master's Degree, demonstrating a highly qualified teaching cohort. This level of professional advancement suggests that the respondents are well-versed in current pedagogical approaches and literacy instruction frameworks. The importance of teacher qualifications in literacy outcomes has been extensively supported by research, including Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who found that advanced teacher preparation is significantly associated with improved student reading performance. As for teaching experience, the average years of teaching experience was calculated to be 10.05 years, which implies a teaching staff with sufficient classroom exposure and professional competence. According to the findings of Pianta, Burchinal, and Justice (2020), teacher experience particularly beyond the fifth year is linked to stronger literacy instruction quality, learner engagement, and early reading development. The professional maturity, advanced education, and extensive experience of the teachers in this cluster suggest a solid instructional foundation that could positively influence the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners, provided that structural and contextual challenges are equally addressed.

Summary Assessments on the Factors Affecting the Reading Performance of Grades 1-3 Learners as Assessed by Their Teachers

Table 1 presents the summary of assessments on the factors affecting the reading performance of Grades 1 to 3 learners in the SEND Cluster, as evaluated by their teachers. The data reveal an overall composite mean of 4.25, interpreted as "Always," suggesting that, in general, the key instructional, structural, and institutional components that support reading development are consistently implemented across the schools.

Among the six domains assessed, the highest composite mean was recorded under Instructional Methods (M = 4.87), followed closely by Class Size (M = 4.85) and School Support Programs (M = 4.67). These findings highlight those learners are regularly exposed to effective, differentiated reading instruction in appropriately sized classrooms and that schools provide comprehensive programs and interventions to reinforce reading outcomes. These are in line with Shulman's (2017) emphasis on pedagogical content knowledge and Slavin et al. (2011) who emphasized the importance of teacher training and sustained interventions in reading success.

The domain of Availability of Learning Resources also yielded a strong rating of 4.48 (Always), indicating that teachers and learners have regular access to essential instructional materials such as books, charts, and supplementary tools. However, Parental Involvement (M = 3.46) and Home Literacy Environment (M = 3.18) received lower mean scores, with the former interpreted as "Often" and the latter as "Sometimes." These results reinforce earlier findings that, while schools maintain strong instructional and institutional practices, challenges persist in engaging families and creating consistent, print-rich environments at home. According to Neuman and Moland (2019),and supported by local findings from EDCOM II (2023), limited home literacy exposure and inconsistent parental involvement remain critical barriers to early reading success, particularly in low-income and rural contexts.

The data suggest that although in-school variables are generally strong, out-of-school factors especially related to family engagement and literacy exposure require strategic enhancement. These discrepancies underline the need for strengthened school-home partnerships, structured take-home reading programs, and community-led literacy initiatives to bridge the gap.

Looking at each indicator closely, as to the assessment of the factors affecting the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners in terms of instructional methods, as evaluated by their teachers, the results show a very high level of application of effective reading instructional practices in the classroom. The strong implementation of these practices among SEND Cluster teachers suggests that instructional methods, as a factor, are not a limiting issue but rather a strength that supports the reading development of their learners. However, the overall effectiveness of these methods may still be influenced by external variables such as home literacy environment and learner motivation, which warrant further investigation.

In relation to the teachers' assessment of the availability of learning resources as a factor influencing the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners in the SEND Cluster. The results indicate that reading instruction is well-supported by a wide range of materials and instructional tools. The findings indicate that the classroom-level availability of reading resources is high, largely due to teacher initiative and institutional support. However, the limited functionality of the school library and the moderate integration of digital tools suggest that expanding access to structured and technology-enhanced reading spaces could further boost learners' reading performance in the SEND Cluster

As to home literacy environment as a factor affecting the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners in the SEND Cluster. The composite mean indicates a moderately supportive home environment with inconsistent literacy practices across households. The results suggest that while there is some literacy encouragement at home, the lack of consistent reading routines and material access could be a contributing barrier to reading proficiency among SEND Cluster learners.

In relation to parental involvement as a factor affecting the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners in the SEND Cluster, the results suggest that while parents are moderately engaged in their children's reading development, their involvement remains uneven and may benefit from further support and structure. The moderate level of parental involvement observed may partially explain persistent gaps in learners' reading performance, particularly among those who lack consistent reading reinforcement at home.

As to assessment on class size as a factor affecting the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners in the SEND Cluster, as evaluated by their teachers. The results indicate that teachers perceive the current class sizes as highly favorable for delivering effective reading instruction. The findings suggest that class size in the SEND Cluster is not a limiting factor but a clear instructional advantage, enabling the implementation of individualized and interactive reading instruction. The favorable teacher-learner ratio serves as a strong enabler of literacy development.

In terms of school support programs as a factor affecting the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners in the SEND Cluster, as evaluated by their teachers, the results could mean that schools in the cluster consistently implement comprehensive literacy support systems that reinforce classroom instruction.

The findings suggest that school-level literacy initiatives in the SEND Cluster are robust, strategic, and well-integrated into both classroom and community practices. With teacher training, stakeholder involvement, targeted interventions, and evaluation mechanisms firmly in place, the reading environment is highly conducive to learner progress. Nonetheless, enhancing library infrastructure remains a priority area to further strengthen the literacy ecosystem and support learners' independent reading experiences.

Table 1. Summary Assessments on the Factors Affecting the Reading Performance of Grade 1-3 Learners as Assessed by Their Teachers

Factors	Composite Mean	Descriptive Value
A. Instructional Methods	4.87	Always
B. Availability of Learning Resources	4.48	Always
C. Home Literacy Environment	3.18	Sometimes
D. Parental Involvement	3.46	Often
E. Class Size	4.85	Always
F. School Support Programs	4.67	Always
OVERALL COMPOSITE MEAN	**4.25**	**ALWAYS**

Level of Reading Performance of Pupils as Reflected in their Apayao Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program (LEAP) Results

The Apayao Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program (LEAP) is a localized reading initiative developed by the Schools Division of Apayao to address the persistent literacy challenges faced by early-grade learners, particularly those in geographically isolated and disadvantaged schools. Designed as both an assessment and remediation tool, LEAP adopts diagnostic approaches similar to the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and provides tailored interventions based on learners' specific reading needs. It serves as a critical mechanism for identifying learners who require targeted support and for guiding schools and teachers in delivering evidence-based reading instruction.

The results of the LEAP assessment provide valuable insights into the current state of reading performance among Grade 1 to 3 learners in the SEND Cluster, which includes Sabangan Elementary School, Naguilian Norte Elementary School, and Don Roque Elementary School in Lower Calanasan, Apayao. The findings show that out of the total 66 pupils assessed, 3 learners or 4.55% were classified as non-readers, 36 learners or 54.55% were categorized under the frustration level, and 27 learners or 40.91% were placed at the instructional level. Notably, no learners reached the independent reading level, highlighting the pressing need to intensify literacy interventions.

A closer look at the grade-level data reveals distinct patterns. This distribution shows some progress but still indicates widespread reading difficulties. But, the improvement suggests that learners may gradually develop better reading skills as they advance through the grades, though none are yet reading independently.

These findings underscore the critical role of LEAP not merely as a diagnostic instrument but as a long-term remediation framework. The high percentage of frustrated readers across grade levels confirms the presence of significant reading gaps that hinder learners' academic development. The presence of instructional-level readers in Grade III suggests potential for progress, but the complete absence of independent readers points to a systemic gap in fostering reading autonomy. Furthermore, the program's effectiveness will depend on the full engagement of school heads, teachers, parents, and the wider community. The inclusion of localized materials in both the mother tongue and English, as well as the active participation of parents in learners' reading habits at home, is vital in reinforcing school-based interventions. LEAP's success hinges on its ability to connect assessment data with responsive and sustained instruction. If adequately supported, it can become a transformative literacy initiative that empowers struggling readers and helps bridge the equity gap in education, particularly for learners in remote communities like those in the SEND Cluster.

The LEAP results indicate that while some progress has been made, a substantial number of learners remain at risk of reading failure. The program must continue to evolve into a more robust and comprehensive literacy framework that not only assesses reading levels but also delivers effective and differentiated interventions. Strengthening LEAP as a data-driven and equity-oriented initiative is essential to ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, is given the opportunity to become a proficient and independent reader.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution on the Level of Reading Performance of Pupils as Reflected in Their LEAP (Apayao Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program) Results

GRADE LEVEL	Non-Reader	Frustration	Instructional	Independent
Grade I	2	20	2	0
Grade II	0	11	5	0
Grade III	1	5	20	0
TOTAL	3	36	27	0

Correlation Result on the Association Between the Profile of the Respondents and the Identified Factors Affecting their Reading Performance

Table 3 presents the correlation results between the profile variables of both learners and teachers and the identified factors affecting the reading performance of Grade 1–3 learners in the SEND Cluster. The analysis was conducted using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r), with significance levels tested at both 0.05 and 0.01 (2-tailed). The findings reveal a number of statistically significant associations, indicating that several demographic variables are indeed related to the presence or strength of specific reading-related factors.

For learners, age showed significant positive correlations with instructional methods (r = .418, p = 0.000), availability of learning resources (r = .571, p = 0.000), home literacy environment (r = .339, p = 0.005), and parental involvement (r = .281, p = 0.022). This suggests that older learners are more likely to benefit from enhanced instructional support, more resources, and more home engagement in reading activities. This aligns with developmental findings from Shonkoff and Phillips (2000), which indicate that as children mature, they become more responsive to structured literacy inputs and gain more independence in literacy tasks. However, age was not significantly correlated with class size (r = -0.231, p = 0.062) or school support programs (r = 0.043, p = 0.734), indicating these institutional factors are applied consistently regardless of learner age.

Learner sex did not significantly correlate with most variables except for school support programs (r = .301, p = 0.014), where female learners may be benefiting more from institutional reading initiatives. In contrast, socioeconomic status was significantly correlated with home literacy environment (r = .390, p = 0.001) and parental involvement (r = .298, p = 0.015), confirming findings from Neuman and Moland (2019) that children from higher-income families are more likely to receive consistent reading support and have access to print-rich environments.

For teachers, age was significantly correlated with class size (r = .378, p = 0.002), indicating that older teachers may be more adept at managing small classes to optimize reading instruction. Years of teaching experience showed strong positive correlations with instructional methods (r = .349, p = 0.004) and class size (r = .496, p = 0.000), affirming that experienced educators tend to apply more varied and differentiated approaches in literacy teaching and may manage class composition more effectively. This is supported by the work of Pianta, Burchinal, and Justice (2020), who emphasize the impact of sustained teaching experience on early reading outcomes.

The school variable, referring to the learners' assigned school within the SEND Cluster, exhibited significant positive correlations with all six factors: instructional methods (r = .416, p =

0.001), availability of learning resources (r = .371, p = 0.002), home literacy environment (r = .393, p = 0.001), parental involvement (r = .507, p = 0.000), class size (r = .550, p = 0.000), and school support programs (r = .650, p = 0.000). These strong correlations indicate that the specific school environment its leadership, culture, resource availability, and community engagement play a substantial role in shaping literacy-related conditions. This supports the notion that school-based context matters significantly in reading outcomes, as affirmed by the World Bank (2021), which emphasizes school-level investment and governance as key drivers of foundational literacy success.

Notably, teacher sex and highest educational attainment were excluded from computation due to lack of variability, as all six teacher respondents were female and had attained the same educational level (Master's units earned).

The correlation analysis highlights that learner age and socioeconomic background, as well as teacher experience and school environment, are all significantly associated with critical factors that influence reading performance. These results reinforce the multidimensional nature of early literacy development and point to the need for context-sensitive, data-driven interventions that address both home and school variables.

Table 3. Correlation Result on the Association Between the Profile of The Respondents and The Identified Factors Affecting Their Reading Performance

Profile		Factors Affecting the Reading Performance					
		A. Instructional Methods	B. Availability of Learning Resources	C. Home Literacy Environment	D. Parental Involvement	E. Class Size	F. School Support Programs
LEARNERS							
a. Age	Pearson -r	.418**	.571**	.339**	.281*	-0.231	0.043
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.022	0.062	0.734
b. Sex	Pearson -r	-0.051	-0.196	0.068	0.047	0.059	.301*
	P-value	0.685	0.114	0.587	0.705	0.641	0.014
c. Socio-economic Status	Pearson -r	-0.060	0.059	.390**	.298*	-0.064	-0.059
	P-value	0.631	0.637	0.001	0.015	0.608	0.639
TEACHERS							
a. Age	Pearson -r	0.091	-0.180	0.117	-0.008	.378**	-0.012
	P-value	0.469	0.148	0.348	0.948	0.002	0.924
b. Years of Teaching Experience	Pearson -r	.349**	0.072	0.161	0.053	.496**	0.100
	P-value	0.004	0.564	0.197	0.670	0.000	0.424
School	Pearson -r	.416**	.371**	.393**	.507**	.550**	.650**
	P-value	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000

b. Sex	
c. Highest Educational Attainment	Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).	
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).	

Correlation Result on the Association Between the Profile of The Respondents and The Reading Performance of the Learners

Table 4 displays the correlation results between the profile of learners and teachers and the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners, as measured through their LEAP assessment results. The analysis employed Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) to determine the strength and significance of relationships, with significance levels set at 0.05 and 0.01 (2-tailed).

Among learner-related variables, a highly significant positive correlation was found between age and reading performance (r = .613, p = 0.000). This indicates that older learners tend to achieve higher reading proficiency levels, possibly due to greater developmental maturity, longer exposure to reading instruction, or prior repetition of grade levels. This finding echoes the conclusions of Shonkoff and Phillips (2000), who noted that cognitive and language capacities increase with age, enhancing the ability to decode and comprehend texts. Conversely, learner sex (r = -0.022, p = 0.859) and socioeconomic status (r = -0.021, p = 0.864) showed no significant correlation with reading performance. These results suggest that, in this particular context, reading outcomes may not be markedly influenced by gender or household income alone, possibly due to compensatory school-based interventions that mitigate home-based disadvantages.

The school variable also showed no significant relationship with reading performance (r = -0.132, p = 0.291), indicating that learner performance did not vary significantly across the three schools in the SEND Cluster, and that institutional differences may have been minimized through shared literacy programs or standardized interventions such as LEAP.

Among teacher-related variables, teacher age was significantly correlated with learners' reading performance (r = .399, p = 0.001), suggesting that more experienced or mature teachers may exert greater influence on learner literacy gains. This supports findings by Harris and Sass (2011), which emphasize that teacher effectiveness improves with age and experience, especially in early grade reading. Likewise, years of teaching experience was significantly associated with reading performance (r = .262, p = 0.034), indicating that longer-tenured teachers are better positioned to deliver impactful instruction, manage learner differences, and implement targeted reading strategies effectively.

Due to uniformity in teacher characteristics, the variables of sex and highest educational attainment could not be computed, as all respondents were female with Master's level qualifications. While this limits the statistical variability, it also reinforces the consistent qualification standard among teachers in the SEND Cluster.

The correlation analysis reveals that learner age, teacher age, and teaching experience are all significantly associated with reading performance, underscoring the importance of developmental readiness and educator expertise in early literacy success. Other demographic factors such as sex, income, or school assignment appear to have less direct influence on outcomes

in this context, likely due to the strong and uniform implementation of reading interventions across the cluster.

Table 4. Correlation Result on the Association Between the Profile of the Respondents and the Reading Performance of the Learners

LEARNERS			
Profile Variables	Pearson -r	P- value	Remarks
a. Age	.613**	0.000	Highly Significant
TEACHERS			
a. Age	.399**	0.001	Highly Significant
b. Years of Teaching Experience	.262*	0.034	Significant
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Correlation Results on the Association Between the Reading Performance of The Learners and The Identified Factors Affecting Their Reading Performance

Table 5 presents the correlation results examining the association between the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners and the identified instructional, home, and institutional factors. The analysis utilized Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and two-tailed significance tests at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels. The findings reveal that three out of the six factors show statistically significant relationships with learners' reading performance, highlighting their importance in shaping early literacy outcomes.

A highly significant positive correlation was found between instructional methods and reading performance (r = .368, p = 0.002). This indicates that the quality and consistency of instructional strategies such as phonics-based instruction, guided reading, comprehension strategies, and differentiated teaching are closely linked with improved reading outcomes. This finding aligns with research by the National Reading Panel (2000) and further supported by Rasinski et al. (2022), which emphasize that well-structured, explicit, and engaging reading instruction significantly boosts literacy proficiency among early grade learners.

Likewise, the availability of learning resources demonstrated a highly significant correlation (r = .328, p = 0.007) with reading performance. This suggests that learners who have access to adequate books, visual aids, instructional guides, and supplementary materials are more likely to attain higher levels of reading proficiency. The positive effect of resource-rich classrooms on reading achievement is well-documented, with Duke and Cartwright (2021) confirming that frequent access to high-quality texts fosters both motivation and comprehension skills.

A significant positive correlation was also found between home literacy environment and reading performance (r = .249, p = 0.044), albeit at a slightly lower strength. This finding supports previous studies by Neuman and Moland (2019) and van Steensel et al. (2011), which affirm that children exposed to books, storytelling, and family engagement in reading at home are more likely to develop foundational reading skills earlier than their peers in print-poor environments.

In contrast, the correlation between parental involvement and reading performance ($r = .235$, $p = 0.058$) was found to be not statistically significant, though it approached the 0.05 threshold. Similarly, class size ($r = .145$, $p = 0.245$) and school support programs ($r = .193$, $p = 0.120$) did not show significant correlations with reading performance. These results echo the interpretation of Krueger (2003), who emphasized that once optimal thresholds are met in class size or resource provision, other learner-specific factors (e.g., instructional quality or home environment) may become more predictive of performance.

The findings suggest that instructional quality, learning resources, and home literacy conditions are the most critical variables associated with reading performance among Key Stage 1 learners in the SEND Cluster. These highlight the importance of focusing interventions on classroom strategies and home-school literacy partnerships, while maintaining supportive institutional systems.

Table 5. Correlation Result on the Association Between the Reading Performance of The Learners and The Identified Factors Affecting Their Reading Performance

Factors	Pearson -r	P- value	Remarks
A. Instructional Methods	.368**	0.002	Highly Significant
B. Availability of Learning Resources	.328**	0.007	Highly Significant
C. Home Literacy Environment	.249*	0.044	Significant
D. Parental Involvement	0.235	0.058	NS
E. Class Size	0.145	0.245	NS
F. School Support Programs	0.193	0.120	NS
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The findings of the study led to the conclusion that the reading performance of Grade 1 to 3 learners in the SEND Cluster of Lower Calanasan, Apayao was significantly influenced by a combination of learner characteristics, teacher profiles, instructional practices, and environmental factors. Among the learners' profile variables, age was found to have a strong positive relationship with reading performance, suggesting that developmental readiness played a key role in learners' ability to decode and comprehend text. Socioeconomic status, while not directly correlated with reading scores, significantly influenced the home literacy environment and parental involvement both of which were found to affect learners' reading development. Among the identified factors assessed by teachers, instructional methods, availability of learning resources, and home literacy environment were significantly correlated with learners' reading performance. Teacher-related variables such as age and years of teaching experience were also found to significantly influence learners' reading performance.

Recommendations

1. School heads have to craft data-driven School Reading Action Plans (SRAPs) based on actual reading proficiency profiles and teacher input. These plans should focus on resource mobilization, reading remediation programs, and sustained professional development in reading pedagogy.
2. Teachers need to continuously adopt differentiated instruction and evidence-based reading strategies. Peer coaching, teacher learning circles, and localized resource-sharing platforms should be promoted within the cluster to enhance collective instructional efficacy.
3. Learners have to grab daily reading opportunities, personalized remediation sessions, and access to culturally relevant reading materials provided by the school.
4. Teachers have to monitor progress through tools such as LEAP and Phil-IRI and it should be institutionalized to tailor interventions according to individual learner profiles.
5. Parents should be given sustained orientation and literacy training programs to empower them as partners in their children's reading journey. Parent engagement should extend beyond mere compliance and move toward purposeful involvement in home-based reading routines.
6. Community and school should forge formal partnerships. Memoranda of Agreement should be drafted between barangay councils, NGOs, and local stakeholders and the school to support literacy-focused infrastructure such as reading hubs, book donation drives, and weekend literacy camps.
7. Future researchers are encouraged to employ longitudinal and comparative designs to evaluate the sustained impact of integrated school-community reading interventions, especially in marginalized or indigenous communities.

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