Perceived Reading Comprehension Difficulties and Academic Performance of Intermediate Learners

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ABSTRACT

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| Reading comprehension plays a crucial role in the overall academic success of elementary pupils, as it serves as a foundation for learning across all subject areas. However, many learners continue to face challenges in understanding texts, which may hinder their academic performance and confidence in the classroom.  The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between perceived reading comprehension difficulties and the academic performance of Grade 5 pupils. A descriptive correlational research design was employed, using a complete enumeration sampling technique with 41 respondents. Data were analyzed using percentage, mean, and Pearson r correlation analysis.  The findings imply that moderate reading comprehension difficulties can significantly affect pupils’ academic outcomes. This highlights the need for targeted interventions and reading support strategies to strengthen learners' comprehension skills, which in turn may enhance their performance in various academic subjects. Teachers and curriculum developers should consider integrating comprehension-focused activities in lesson plans and provide scaffolded support for struggling readers.  Future research may explore the specific types of reading comprehension difficulties encountered by pupils and their impact on different subject areas. It is also recommended to conduct a longitudinal study with a larger and more diverse sample to examine the long-term effects of reading comprehension on academic growth. Additionally, investigating the role of teacher interventions or reading programs could provide insights into effective strategies for improving reading outcomes. |

*Keywords: Reading Comprehension, Academic Performance, Elementary Pupils, Intermediate Learners*

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic performance refers to a student’s degree of knowledge, abilities, and competences acquired in an educational settings, which is frequently measured through grades earned in the topics that comprise to the study plan. However, it is a difficult concept to examine because it may be measured in a variety of ways, not just by the pupils’ academic average (Vargas, 2022). According to the study of Lee (2021) academic performance has decreased among some pupils since the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, teachers complain about the difficulty in making students interested in reading (Miksikova, 2019). Children who refuse to do reading activities can affect their reading proficiency (Rohimah, 2021).

Furthermore, one of the major issues in Philippines education is the poor academic performance of pupils (Nicolas, 2022). Moreover, one of the main causes of students’ bad performance in class is the chaotic, passive environment created by having more students in classroom than available space (Khan, 2022). This can hinder their ability to gain necessary knowledge and skills, leading to lower academic achievement (Balqis, 2022).

Academic performance is the most important aspect of a pupil’s academic success on how they perform well academically. According to York, Gibson and Rankin, (2015), grades and GPA are the most commonly measure of academic success. However, pupils who struggle with reading comprehension often fall far behind their classmates academically in multiple areas (Lynch, 2020). Furthermore, in spite of the issues in academic performance of the pupils, many pupils feel unintelligent due to their slow reading and inaccurate reading comprehension.

The Elementary School encountered reading comprehension problems, and it was found out that there were pupils belong to non-reader and some of them belonged to frustration level of reading comprehension. That was according to the Phil-IRI test results conducted by the reading Phil-IRI coordinator at the Elementary School. Moreover, according to the Grade 5 adviser some of the pupils reach the excellent level of their academic performance in the academic year 2022-2023. Thus, the researchers conducted this study to investigate the relationship between reading comprehension difficulties and academic performance of Grade 5 learners of the Elementary School.

2. OBJECTIVES

The study focused on the pupils reading comprehension difficulties among Grade 5 pupils in William Joyce Sr. Elementary School (WJSES), Lapuan Don Marcelino Davao Occidental, during school year 2023-2024.

Specifically, it answered the following objectives:

1. Determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:

1.1 Age; and

1.2 Gender

2. Determine the level of reading comprehension difficulties among Grade

5 pupils of William Joyce Sr. Elementary School;

3. Determine the academic performance of Grade 5 pupils; and

4. Determine the significant relationship between the reading

Comprehension difficulties and academic performance of Grade 5 pupils.

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3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research Design**

The study was conducted employing the quantitative research method, particularly the descriptive correlational research design. Descriptive research design is a scientific method that involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way (Shuttleworth, 2008). The researchers used the descriptive method to obtain reliable and accurate data about the level of perceived reading comprehension difficulties and academic performance of the Grade 5 Pupils.

A correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them (Bhandari, 2021). Correlation research design was utilized to determine the relationship between the academic performance and reading comprehension difficulties of the respondents.

**Research Instrument**

The instrument used to gather data was a survey on reading comprehension difficulties. This instrument was adapted by the researchers from Abu Abeeleh and Al-Ghazo's (2021) study, “Reading Comprehension Problems Encountered by EFL Students at Ajloun National University.” In this study, the researchers used a single survey questionnaire to collect data on the reading comprehension difficulties of the pupils. The study was conducted during the school year 2023-2024. Additionally, respondents rated the items using a 5-point Likert scale: 1 indicated strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 sometimes, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree. Understanding the results of this questionnaire could help pupils identify the level of reading comprehension difficulties they experienced.

The data to determine the level of reading comprehension were taken from the Phil-IRI results provided by the school head of William Joyce Sr. Elementary School.

**Respondents of the Study**

The respondents of the study were the Grade 5 pupils of William Joyce Sr. Elementary School for the school year 2023-2024, with a total of forty-one (41) respondents. The study was limited to William Joyce Sr. Elementary School based on the pupils' Phil-IRI results. The subjects of the study were from two sections of Grade 5 pupils, to assess their level of reading comprehension difficulties. These difficulties were assessed and evaluated using a one-part survey questionnaire. The survey was conducted face-to-face by the researchers.

The distribution of respondents is detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Distribution of the Respondent of the Study.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade 5** | **Population (N)** |  |  |
| **Section Aquino** | 21 |  |  |
| **Section Jacinto** | 20 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Total: | 41 |  |  |

**Data Gathering**

The researchers followed the following process: First, they wrote a letter to the Dean of the Institute of Teacher Education and Information Technology (ITEIT) to seek permission to conduct the research. Upon approval, the researchers requested a copy of the pupils' reading comprehension levels using the Philippines Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) materials. The researchers processed only the pre-test results. They then asked for permission from the school principal and the Grade 5 advisers of William Joyce Sr. Elementary School, specifically for the two sections of Grade 5 pupils. Second, with the principal's approval, the researchers personally administered the questionnaire to the Grade 5 pupils at WJSES. The responses were checked by the researchers. Third, the researchers requested permission from the Grade 5 class advisers to obtain the pupils' General Percentage Average (GPA).Lastly, the researchers gathered, tabulated, coded, analyzed, and interpreted the respondents' answers..

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents in terms of age, and gender. The study revealed that 18 respondents, or 43.9%, were 12 years old, indicating that most of the Grade 5 pupils were 12 years old. In terms of gender, 21 females (51.2%) participated in the study, while 20 males (48.8%) took part. This implies that slightly more than half of the respondents were female Grade 5 pupils at William Joyce Sr. Elementary School.

**Table 2.** Demographic Profile of the Respondents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Particular | Frequency  (f) | Percentage  (%) |
| Age  11 years old  12 years old  13 years old  Gender | 10  18  13 | 24.4  43.9  31.17 |
| Male | 20 | 48.8 |
| Female | 21 | 51.2 |
| **Total** | **123** | **200.00** |

**4.1 Level of Perceived Reading Comprehension Difficulties among the Grade 5 Pupils**

Table 3 presents the descriptive results on the level of reading comprehension difficulties among Grade 5 pupils. A grand mean of 3.05 was obtained, which is described as moderate. This implies that the Grade 5 pupils sometimes struggle with reading comprehension. When a pupil can't understand what they read, they miss out on a significant amount of knowledge. The results of the study support the findings of Sari et al. (2020), who stated that reading comprehension is still low, particularly in understanding the meaning and context of a text.

The results of this study is in contrast with Thelma's (2019) research, which found that Grade 5 pupils performed poorly in reading, with their reading comprehension ranking at a moderate level. Similarly, Bilbao et al. (2016) found that pupils' reading difficulties are often at a moderate level of comprehension difficulties. In general, pupils struggle to understand complex reading texts at the literal and interpretive levels, especially with less supervision.

Among the 13 response items, statement number 11, "I keep thinking that other pupils are better at language than I am," received the highest mean score of 3.39, described as high. This indicates that Grade 5 pupils often struggle with reading comprehension due to self-comparison with their peers. Many pupils experience self-doubt regarding their reading abilities, particularly when comparing themselves to others. According to Elkhayma (2020), 6 out of 20 students believe that other students are better than them. A lack of self-belief in reading is likely to influence students' reading behavior, resulting in lower reading skills (Kavanagh, 2019). Research has shown that the amount of time a child spends reading is a key factor in reading skill development (Retelsdorf, 2019).

On the other hand, statement number 9, "I feel stressed when reading a text in English in the classroom," received the lowest mean score of 2.56, described as low. This indicates that Grade 5 pupils rarely struggle with reading comprehension in this context. This result is supported by Hasbrouck (2020), who emphasized the importance of expressing confidence in a child's ability to learn by highlighting positives in the face of challenges without overpromising outcomes. She stresses that "the time struggling readers spend reading independently, without the opportunity for errors to be corrected or for encouragement, can deepen their misunderstandings and reinforce frequent errors."

In contrast, a study of fourth and fifth-grade struggling readers found that stress related to reading was more strongly associated with poorer reading comprehension than with basic reading skills (Macdonald et al., 2021). Most research into reading comprehension difficulties has focused on children with poor understanding of reading texts, often resulting in lower grades (Snowling, 2020).

**Table 3.** Level of Perceived Reading Comprehension Difficulties among the

Grade 5 Pupils

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Particular** | **Mean** | **Description** |  |
| 1. Face a problem in figuring out the meanings of some new words in the reading text. | 3.25 | Moderate |  |
| 2. Face a problem in identifying the aim behind reading comprehension.  3. Face difficulty in guessing the meanings of some new words. | 2.92  3.09 | Moderate  Moderate |  |
| 4. Face a problem in distinguishing main ideas from supporting ideas in the reading text. | 3.04 | Moderate |  |
| 5. Face difficulty in extracting main and detailed ideas in the text.  6. Face difficulty in recognizing the total meaning of the text.  7. Face difficulty in summarizing the main ideas of the text.  8. Usually translate word by word when I am reading.  9. Feel stressed when reading a text in English in the classroom.  10. Never feel quite sure of myself when I am reading in the classroom.  11. Keep thinking that the other pupils are better at language than I am.  12. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.  13. Feel upset when I don’t understand what I read in English. | 3.02  3.12  3.17  3.00  2.56  3.12  3.39  2.92  3.02 | Moderate  Moderate  Moderate  Moderate  Moderate  Moderate  Moderate  Moderate  Moderate |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Mean | **3.05** | **Moderate** |  |

## **4.2 Academic Performance of the Grade 5 Pupils**

Table 4 shows the academic performance of Grade 5 pupils at William Joyce Sr. Elementary School (WJSES) for the school year 2023-2024. The grades of the respondents were taken from their 2nd grading period. The results revealed that the grand mean for the pupils' academic performance was 81.61, which is described as approaching proficiency. This implies that the pupils at this level have developed fundamental knowledge and skills and, with guidance from the teacher or peers, can apply this understanding through authentic tasks. According to Nuthanap (2016), some students study more but fail to achieve more, while others study less but achieve more. The success of each student depends on their ability, intelligence, and effort, which ultimately brings academic success.

As shown in Table 4, the majority of respondents (60.98%) received a grade of 80-84, which is described as Approaching proficiency. This suggests that the pupils at this level have developed fundamental knowledge, skills, and understanding and can transfer them automatically and flexibly through authentic tasks. According to Tus et al. (2021), learners' academic performance was often between 80-84, which was interpreted as satisfactory, even amidst the new normal of education. Similarly, Salud (2022) found that while most respondents struggled slightly with reading, they still performed satisfactorily in academics.

Additionally, 9 respondents (21.95%) received a grade of 75-79, described as Developing. This implies that pupils at this level possess the minimum knowledge, skills, and core understanding but require assistance when performing authentic tasks. Although these students achieved a passing grade, their academic performance needs improvement. This finding supports Bakana's (2022) study, which revealed that factors related to reading are closely associated with academic achievement, with struggling readers often receiving the lowest grades.

Lastly, the results revealed that 6 respondents (14.63%) received a grade of 85-90, which is labeled as Proficiency. This indicates that pupils at this level have developed strong fundamental knowledge, skills, and understanding, and can apply them automatically and flexibly through authentic tasks. There was also 1 respondent (2.44%) who received a GPA below 75, indicating that this pupil struggled to acquire or develop the necessary prerequisite knowledge or skills.

In general, Grade 5 pupils need to study and work harder to improve their academic performance. Many pupils fall within the average or satisfactory level, highlighting the need for further improvement. Interventions should be conducted to identify factors that could help students enhance their academic performance. According to Almuammria (2015), poor academic performance is an incidental experience from which students can learn valuable lessons that lead to success. For this reason, it is crucial to identify children with reading problems early and implement appropriate interventions to address these issues (Kuruyer & Özdemir, 2019). Grade 5 pupils generally need to study and work harder to improve their academic performance, as many perform at only average levels (Franca, 2019), and interventions are necessary to identify factors that could support their academic growth (Franca et al., 2024).

**Table 4.** The academic performance of grade 5 pupils

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Range of Grades** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** | **Description** |
| 85-90 | 6  25 | 14.63  60.98 | Beginning  Developing |
| 75-79 | 9 | 21.95 | Beginning |
| 75 below  Mean | 1 | 2.44  81.61 | Beginning  Approaching Proficiency |

**Relationship between Perceived Reading Comprehension Difficulties and Academic Performance of Grade 5 Pupils**

Table 5 shows the significant relationship between perceived reading comprehension difficulties and the academic performance of Grade 5 pupils. The table reveals that the perceived reading comprehension difficulties and academic performance have an r-value of 0.59, suggesting a positive moderate correlation. This means that there is a moderate relationship between reading comprehension difficulties and academic performance when vocabulary knowledge increases, reading comprehension also improves.

Additionally, the variables have a p-value of 0.00, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that reading comprehension difficulties and academic performance have a significant relationship. This finding aligns with the study by Galang et al. (2023), which observed a positive relationship between reading comprehension difficulties and academic performance. In contrast, Suso et al. (2020) found that difficulties in understanding reading texts and poor reading skills negatively impact performance, often leading to academic failure.

Moreover, Ambad et al. (2019) stated that pupils who experience difficulties in reading and balancing schoolwork, such as tests and assignments, often see a decline in their academic performance. According to Ansari and Khan (2020), there is ongoing discussion about using social media platforms for collaborative learning, which is expected to improve both reading comprehension and academic performance. Shaffer (2019) revealed that extracurricular activities, such as sports attendance, can positively influence pupils' academic performance and improve their grades. Conversely, poor reading comprehension has a negative impact on students' academic performance (Cortezano, 2023), hindering their ability to acquire essential knowledge and skills, ultimately leading to lower academic achievement (Pasahol & Labios, 2022).

Furthermore, Compe (2018) found that the majority of pupils struggled with reading comprehension and needed to improve their academic English abilities. This suggests that students' reading comprehension significantly affects their academic success—when reading comprehension declines, so does academic performance, and vice versa.

**Table 5.** Test on the significant relationship between perceived reading

Comprehension difficulties and academic performance of the

pupils.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Particular | Mean | r-Val | Description | p-Val | Interpretation |
| Perceived Reading Comprehension  Difficulties | 3.05 | 0.59 | Moderate correlation | 0.00 | Significant |
| Academic  Performance | 81.61 |  |  |  |  |

**5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Conclusion**

Pupils' perceived reading comprehension difficulties were described as moderate. Therefore, pupils at William Joyce Sr. Elementary School still need to enhance their reading comprehension skills to improve their academic performance.

Regarding academic performance, it was shown that the majority of the pupils were at a satisfactory level, achieving grades between 80-84. This indicates that pupils have developed fundamental knowledge and skills, and with guidance from teachers or peers, they are capable of achieving better academic performance.

Furthermore, a significant relationship was found between pupils' perceived reading comprehension difficulties and academic performance. As a result, the researcher was able to reject the null hypothesis.

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**Recommendation**

Based on the summary, findings, and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Since the reading comprehension difficulties are moderate, pupils should explore readily available resources such as picture symbol libraries, online visual schedules, and peer tutoring programs. These resources can streamline the learning process and save time and effort.

2. Given that the pupils' academic performance is satisfactory, parents should actively monitor their child's academic progress and identify areas requiring additional support. Reviewing their children's grades and homework assignments at least twice a week is recommended.

3. Given the positive moderate correlation between perceived reading comprehension difficulties and academic performance, teachers should tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of students with reading comprehension difficulties. This may involve providing shorter reading passages, using audiobooks, or offering alternative assessment methods.

4. The Department of Education (DepEd) should implement programs to improve reading comprehension among learners, such as Brigada Pagbasa and the Intensive Reading Program. These initiatives are designed to enhance students' abilities to understand and interpret written texts. By addressing reading comprehension difficulties through various strategies and programs, DepEd aims to improve overall literacy rates among students.

5. Future researchers should investigate other factors or domains of perceived reading comprehension difficulties that may affect or correlate with pupils' academic performance.

**Ethical Approval:**

The researcher obtained the approval from the school principal and the Grade 5 advisers of William Joyce Sr. Elementary School

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3.

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