

CORRELATION BETWEEN PHIL-IRI PERFORMANCE AND READING DIFFICULTIES OF GRADE FOUR LEARNERS IN BUGTONGNAPULO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: BASIS FOR AN ACTION PLAN

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Abstract

This study “Correlation Between PHIL-IRI Performance and Reading Difficulties of Grade Four Learners in Bugtongnapulo Elementary School: Basis for an Action Plan,” assesses learners' reading levels and the specific reading difficulties they encounter in word recognition and comprehension. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the Simple View of Reading study cites reading development as a connection between cognitive processes and environmental conditions, including parental support, socio-economic status, and access to literacy resources. Utilizing a quantitative research design, the researchers selected thirty-six Grade four learners through simple random sampling. Data were collected using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), and the researchers developed a survey questionnaire to identify common reading miscues. Results reveal that most learners fall within the Instructional Level, indicating that although they can read, they require consistent teacher guidance to comprehend texts fully. The most frequently observed reading difficulties include word repetition, mispronunciation, and challenges with decoding unfamiliar or similarly spelled words—problems that directly affect fluency and comprehension. The study also highlights the influence of socio-economic variables, particularly low household income and limited parental educational attainment, which reduce learners' exposure to reading materials and literacy support at home. These factors collectively contribute to lower Phil-IRI performance. Based on the findings, a structured Action Plan is proposed that emphasizes phonics-based instruction, remedial reading sessions, and the development of localized reading materials. The plan aims to enhance reading fluency, comprehension, and overall literacy development among Grade four learners.

Keywords – *Phil-IRI, reading, word recognition, reading comprehension*

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that involves interpreting written symbols to construct meaning. It is not merely a subject taught in school but a vital tool for lifelong learning, academic success, and career advancement. In English language education, reading enables learners to access global knowledge and opportunities. As emphasized by Arici (2020), reading develops early in schooling and becomes the foundation for learning across disciplines. Since most academic tasks require comprehension of written materials, learners' reading proficiency significantly influences their overall performance.

Reading is widely recognized as a complex process that involves both word recognition and comprehension. Arellano (2020) explained that reading requires learners to decode written

symbols accurately and construct meaning from them. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Manual (2018) further identifies three interconnected stages of comprehension: literal, inferential, and critical. Literal comprehension requires identifying explicitly stated details; inferential comprehension involves drawing conclusions based on clues in the text; and critical comprehension requires evaluating ideas and forming judgments. These stages highlight that reading goes beyond word recognition—it demands higher-order thinking skills essential for academic achievement.

Despite its recognized importance, reading literacy remains a pressing concern in the Philippines. The 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that the Philippines ranked 77th out of 81 countries in reading proficiency. Only 24% of Filipino learners achieved the minimum level of proficiency, which is significantly lower than the international average. These findings indicate systemic weaknesses in reading development and emphasize the urgent need for effective assessment and intervention strategies.

Local data further confirm the severity of the problem. Arellano (2020) reported that many elementary learners experience difficulties in both word recognition and comprehension based on Phil-IRI results. In SDO Lipa City for School Year 2024–2025, 59.59% of Grade 4 learners in the North District were identified at the frustration level during the pre-test. Similarly, in Bugtongnapulo Elementary School, only 13.97% of Grade 4 learners passed the Group Screening Test, while the majority were classified below grade level. These findings reveal that a large number of learners have not yet developed the expected reading competencies for their grade.

The Department of Education implements the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) under DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2018, as a diagnostic tool to assess learners' reading performance. It classifies learners into independent, instructional, and frustration levels based on word recognition accuracy and comprehension scores. While Phil-IRI effectively identifies learners' reading levels, existing reports mainly focus on descriptive results, such as the percentage of learners in each category. There is still a lack of comprehensive research examining the direct relationship between specific reading difficulties—particularly in word recognition and comprehension—and learners' Phil-IRI performance.

Moreover, although previous studies have examined factors such as gender and parental educational attainment in relation to reading achievement (Villamin, 2001, as cited in Ermita, 2023), there is still insufficient localized research that analyzes these variables alongside Phil-IRI performance within a specific school context. Most studies present general findings at the district or national level, leaving a gap in school-based evidence that can inform targeted intervention programs.

Given the high percentage of Grade 4 learners at the frustration level in Bugtongnapulo Elementary School, there is a clear need to move beyond simply identifying reading levels and instead examine the relationship between learners' Phil-IRI performance and their specific reading difficulties. Understanding this correlation is essential in designing structured, data-driven intervention plans tailored to the needs of the learners.

Monitoring Grade 4 learners is particularly critical because this stage marks the transition from primary to intermediate education, where learners are expected to read independently and comprehend increasingly complex texts. Strengthening reading literacy also supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

In this context, the study determined the correlation between Phil-IRI performance and the reading difficulties of Grade 4 learners at Bugtongnapulo Elementary School for School Year 2025–2026. By addressing the identified research gap, the study provided localized evidence that served as a basis for the development of a structured reading intervention plan. The findings contributed to a clearer understanding of learners' reading challenges and offered practical insights for school administrators and teachers in formulating data-driven strategies to enhance reading proficiency and overall academic performance.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a descriptive survey method to determine the profile background and reading difficulties of Grade 4 learners based on their Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) performance for School Year 2025–2026. Quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, examine relationships among variables, and generate measurable findings. Since the study aimed to describe learners' reading profiles and examine the relationship between reading difficulties and Phil-IRI results, the descriptive survey method was considered appropriate, particularly in identifying patterns and possible associations among variables.

The participants of the study were thirty-six (36) Grade 4 learners of Bugtongnapulo Elementary School. Simple random sampling was used to ensure equal representation and reduce selection bias, giving each learner an equal chance of being selected. The participants were chosen based on their enrollment in Grade 4, a critical stage in reading development where learners are expected to strengthen their word recognition and comprehension skills, and where reading difficulties are commonly identified through Phil-IRI results.

The study utilized a researcher-adapted survey questionnaire and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) in English. The survey questionnaire assessed learners' perceived reading difficulties in terms of word recognition and comprehension, while the Phil-IRI served as the standardized instrument for measuring actual reading performance. Both instruments were validated by experts to ensure their validity and reliability.

Before data collection, formal permission was secured from school authorities through a written request. Upon approval, the survey questionnaire was administered to the selected Grade 4 learners under the supervision of their teachers to ensure proper understanding and accurate responses. Phil-IRI pre-test results were also retrieved from school records and used as baseline data for analysis. These procedures ensured that both perceived reading difficulties and actual reading performance were properly gathered and aligned with the objectives of the study.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Informed consent was obtained from the school principal, teachers, and parents or guardians of the learners prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, and possible use of the data gathered. They were assured that their participation would not affect their academic standing in any way.

Confidentiality was maintained by assigning codes instead of using the learners' names. All data collected were securely stored and accessed only by the researchers and were used solely for academic purposes. The researchers ensured that no harm, pressure, or discomfort

was experienced by the participants during the entire process, and they were allowed to withdraw from participation at any time without any consequences.

Data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Frequency and Percentage were used to describe the profile of respondents in terms of demographic characteristics. Weighted Mean was used to determine learners' reading performance in word recognition and comprehension based on Phil-IRI results. Ranking was used to identify and prioritize the most common reading difficulties experienced by the learners. Pearson r was used to determine the significant relationship between learners' reading difficulties and their profile variables, including gender, family income, and parents' educational attainment. It measured the strength and direction of the relationship between variables, indicating whether the association was positive, negative, or negligible, and helped determine whether learner profile factors had a meaningful influence on reading performance.

Finding and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on data gathered from Grade 4 learner-respondents. It focuses on their demographic profile, reading performance, reading difficulties, and the relationships between profile variables, Phil-IRI performance, and reading difficulties. The data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, ranking, and Pearson r. The results reveal important patterns regarding learners' reading condition and influencing factors.

The demographic profile shows that females slightly outnumber males among the respondents. In terms of family income, most learners belong to households earning ₱5,000 and below, while only a small number come from higher-income groups. Regarding parental education, most mothers are high school graduates, while fathers are mostly elementary graduates. These findings suggest that many learners come from low socio-economic backgrounds with limited educational support at home. This supports Zhang et. Al. (2020) and Idris et. Al. (2020), who emphasized that socio-economic status and parental education influence learners' literacy development and access to learning resources.

In terms of reading performance, results show that most learners are at the instructional level based on the Phil-IRI assessment, while a smaller proportion are at the frustration level. This indicates that many learners still require guided instruction to improve reading proficiency. This aligns with DepEd Phil-IRI reports and Tolibas (2025), which found that a large percentage of Grade 4 learners fall under instructional reading levels, indicating the need for reading intervention programs.

For word recognition, learners moderately experience difficulties, with a composite mean indicating average agreement. The most common issue is repetition of words when reading too fast, while inserting extra words is the least observed difficulty. This suggests that learners still struggle with fluency and self-monitoring. These findings are consistent with Caacbay (2025) and Tapit (2025), who reported that repetition is the most frequent reading miscue among learners and is associated with limited fluency and reading confidence.

In terms of reading comprehension, learners generally do not strongly perceive difficulty, although summarizing texts in a single sentence remains a challenge. This indicates difficulty in higher-order thinking skills such as identifying main ideas and synthesizing information. This supports Li et. Al. (2023), who found that intermediate learners struggle with

summarization due to cognitive demands in processing texts. On the other hand, learners showed strength in blending sounds, suggesting relatively developed phonemic awareness. This aligns with Listyarini et. Al. (2022), who found that phonemic awareness supports reading comprehension and decoding skills. Overall, learners demonstrate basic comprehension skills but still struggle with higher-level comprehension tasks.

The relationship analysis shows that reading comprehension has a significant relationship with Phil-IRI performance, while word recognition does not. This indicates that comprehension plays a more important role in reading performance among Grade 4 learners. This finding supports the Simple View of Reading, which explains that as learners progress in grade level, language comprehension becomes a stronger predictor of reading success than word recognition. Villanueva (2025) also emphasized that comprehension difficulties are the primary barrier to academic reading performance in intermediate learners.

Among profile variables, only family income shows a significant relationship with Phil-IRI performance. Learners from lower-income households tend to perform lower in reading assessments. This is supported by Raudenská and Hampolavá (2022), who found that socio-economic status strongly influences academic achievement due to differences in access to learning materials and support. Meanwhile, gender and parental educational attainment showed no significant relationship in this study, although previous studies such as Lim (2021) and Thomas et. Al. (2022) suggested possible influences. This implies that socio-economic status is a more dominant factor in reading performance than demographic characteristics.

Similarly, family income was found to be significantly related to both word recognition and reading comprehension difficulties. Fathers' educational attainment showed a significant relationship with reading comprehension but not word recognition, while gender and mothers' educational attainment showed no significant relationships. These findings suggest that socio-economic conditions strongly influence reading development, particularly comprehension skills. This supports William (2025) and Idris et. Al. (2020), who emphasized that higher-income families provide richer literacy environments that enhance reading development, especially in higher-order reading skills.

Overall, the findings reveal that Grade 4 learners experience moderate reading difficulties, particularly in fluency and comprehension. While word recognition skills are developing, comprehension emerges as the more critical factor affecting reading performance. The results highlight the strong influence of socio-economic status, particularly family income, on learners' reading outcomes. These findings align with existing literature emphasizing the role of environmental and economic factors in literacy development. Therefore, targeted reading interventions focusing on comprehension, fluency, and support for low-income learners are necessary.

Based on the findings, a reading intervention program aligned with the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory is proposed. The program will focus on learners under instructional and frustration levels, emphasizing guided oral reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies such as summarizing and questioning. It will also include home-based reading support to encourage parental involvement, especially among low-income families. Grounded in the Simple View of Reading, the intervention aims to strengthen both fluency and comprehension to improve overall reading performance.

Conclusions

This study examined the correlation between PHIL-IRI performance and reading difficulties of Grade Four learners in Bugtongnapulo Elementary School, serving as the basis for a proposed reading intervention plan. Based on the findings, most of the Grade 4 learners were female and came from low-income families earning ₱5,000 or less per month. In terms of parental educational attainment, most mothers had reached high school level while most fathers had completed only elementary education. These results indicate that many learners come from socio-economically challenged backgrounds, which may limit their access to reading materials and literacy support at home.

The Phil-IRI results further revealed that most Grade 4 learners were classified under the Instructional Level, meaning they can read and comprehend texts with teacher guidance but still require structured assistance to achieve independent reading proficiency. This suggests that while foundational reading skills are already present, learners still need consistent intervention to strengthen their reading competence and progress toward higher levels of literacy.

In terms of reading difficulties, the study found that Grade 4 learners moderately experience challenges in word recognition, particularly in repetition and misreading of words, which negatively affect reading fluency. On the other hand, learners generally disagreed that they experience significant difficulties in reading comprehension, indicating that while higher-order skills such as summarizing may still pose challenges, most learners perceive themselves as capable of understanding texts at a basic level.

The correlation analysis revealed a highly significant relationship between Grade 4 learners' PHIL-IRI performance and their reading difficulties, particularly in reading comprehension. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that reading difficulties—especially in comprehension—have a strong influence on learners' reading performance. These findings highlight the importance of addressing comprehension-based challenges as a priority in reading instruction and intervention programs.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes that learners' reading performance is strongly influenced by their comprehension abilities and socio-economic conditions. To address these challenges, a month-long Remedial Reading Program is proposed. The program will include engaging reading activities, structured interventions, regular assessments, and orientation sessions for both parents and pupils. Through these interventions, the program aims to enhance learners' word recognition, fluency, and comprehension, ultimately improving their overall reading performance.

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