



**ETCOR Educational Research Center Inc.**  
SEC Reg. No. 2024020137294-00  
Sta. Ana, Pampanga, Philippines



Website: <https://etcor.org>



**iJOINED ETCOR**  
P - ISSN 2984-7567  
E - ISSN 2945-3577



**The Exigency**  
P - ISSN 2984-7842  
E - ISSN 1908-3181

## Phil-IRI-Based Reading Proficiency and Challenges: Basis for a Targeted Remedial Program

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**Received:** 19 May 2025

**Revised:** 26 June 2025

**Accepted:** 04 July 2025

**Available Online:** 08 July 2025

**Volume IV (2025), Issue 3, P-ISSN – 2984-7567; E-ISSN - 2945-3577**

<https://doi.org/10.63498/etcor405>

### Abstract

**Aim:** This study investigated the reading proficiency and challenges of pupils at Cansayong Elementary School and identified key factors affecting their reading proficiency. The Phil-IRI results served as the primary measure of reading performance, helping to determine the extent of reading challenges and the necessary interventions.

**Methodology:** This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine reading proficiency and challenges. It was conducted in Barangay Cansayong, Malimono, Surigao del Norte, Philippines, involving 55 pupils, 50 parents, and 6 elementary school teachers from Cansayong Elementary School, who play a crucial role in the pupils' reading development. Surveys were conducted with pupils, teachers, and parents to collect data on reading habits, instructional strategies, home support, and difficulties faced by struggling readers. To analyse the data, statistical tools such as Frequency and Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation, Chi-Square Test, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), and Regression Analysis were used. Thematic analysis was used in the qualitative phase of the study.

**Results:** The findings of this study indicated that a significant number of pupils at Cansayong Elementary School fell under the Frustration Level in the Phil-IRI assessment, meaning they struggled with reading and required intensive intervention. Additionally, the study highlighted that socioeconomic factors, parental involvement, and teaching strategies played crucial roles in shaping pupils' reading proficiency. The lack of sufficient reading materials at home and inconsistent parental support further contributed to reading difficulties.

**Conclusion:** There was an urgent need for a structured remedial reading program tailored to struggling readers.

**Keywords:** Reading Proficiency; Phil-IRI; Remedial Program; elementary education; K-12 Curriculum, Philippines

### INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill, a cornerstone of academic success, and a gateway to lifelong learning. The ability to comprehend written text not only influences language proficiency but also profoundly impacts performance across all academic disciplines, including mathematics, science, and social studies (Mullis et al., 2017). Effective reading comprehension is crucial for navigating the complexities of modern society, enabling individuals to access information, engage in critical thinking, and participate fully as informed citizens (OECD, 2018). Conversely, struggling with reading can have far-reaching consequences, limiting educational attainment, career opportunities, and overall quality of life (Dizon & Sanchez, 2020; Sanchez & Sarmiento, 2020; Sanchez, et al., 2023).

National and local assessments consistently reveal that a significant proportion of Filipino pupils struggle with reading comprehension and fluency. This challenge is a complex issue influenced by various factors, including socioeconomic background, access to quality education, teacher training, and the availability of appropriate reading materials (UNESCO, 2017). Addressing this reading crisis is a national priority, as strong literacy skills are essential for individual growth and national development. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), developed by the Department of Education (DepEd), serves as a crucial tool in this endeavor. It is a standardized assessment instrument designed to evaluate pupils' reading proficiency levels, providing valuable insights into their strengths and



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P - ISSN 2984-7842  
E - ISSN 1908-3181

weaknesses. The Phil-IRI's focus on both oral reading fluency and comprehension allows educators to pinpoint specific areas where students require support.

At Cansayong Elementary School, like many other schools in the Philippines, reading challenges are a recognized concern, impacting pupils' overall academic performance and hindering their potential. This study sought to delve into these challenges by analyzing the reading proficiency and difficulties encountered by pupils at Cansayong Elementary School. Utilizing the Phil-IRI results as a foundation, this research aimed to develop a targeted remedial reading program tailored to the specific needs of the students. The development of such a program is critical, as a well-structured and data-driven intervention is essential for effectively addressing reading difficulties and fostering enhanced literacy skills. This study will not only contribute to improving reading outcomes at Cansayong Elementary School but will also provide valuable insights that can inform the development of similar interventions in other schools facing comparable challenges. Furthermore, this research explored the potential contributing factors to reading difficulties within the specific context of Cansayong Elementary School, considering the school's resources, community context, and existing reading instruction practices. By understanding these contextual factors, the remedial program can be designed to be more relevant, effective, and sustainable.

### Objectives

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the reading difficulties of pupils at Cansayong Elementary School and identify key factors affecting their reading proficiency.

Specifically, this research aimed to address the following questions:

1. What is the Phil-IRI reading proficiency level of pupils at Cansayong Elementary School?
2. What are the major factors contributing to reading difficulties among pupils, particularly concerning their socioeconomic status, parental support, instructional methods employed by teachers, and pupils' motivation toward reading?
3. Is there a significant relationship between pupils' Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels and their socioeconomic status?
4. Is there a significant relationship between pupils' Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels and the level of parental support at home?
5. How do teaching strategies and methods relate to pupils' Phil-IRI reading proficiency?
6. Is there a significant relationship between pupils' motivation and attitude toward reading and their Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels?
7. Based on the Phil-IRI findings and identified contributing factors, what interventions can be proposed to enhance reading proficiency through a remedial reading program?

### Hypothesis

Given the stated research problems, the following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels and socioeconomic status.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels and parental support at home.

Ho3: Teaching strategies and methods have no significant effect on Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels.

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between pupils' motivation and attitude toward reading and their Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels.

### METHODS

#### Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design. Initially, a quantitative descriptive correlational approach was used to assess the Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels of pupils and to examine the statistical relationships between these levels and key factors such as socioeconomic status, parental support, teaching strategies, and pupil motivation. Subsequently, a qualitative approach involving surveys and semi-structured interviews with pupils, teachers, and parents was utilized to explore in-depth perceptions, experiences, and specific insights into reading habits, instructional practices, home support, and the challenges faced by struggling readers. This mixed-methods approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of reading difficulties by combining the breadth of quantitative findings with the depth of qualitative data, ultimately informing the proposal of targeted interventions.



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## Population and Sampling

This study was conducted in Barangay Cansayong, Malimono, Surigao del Norte, Philippines, involving 55 pupils, 50 parents, and six elementary school teachers from Cansayong Elementary School, who play a crucial role in the pupils' reading development. The primary focus was on pupils from Grades 3 to 6 who were identified in the Phil-IRI assessment as struggling readers, particularly those at the Frustration or Instructional Level. Teachers, especially those who handle reading subjects or implement reading interventions, provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of instructional strategies. Additionally, parents or guardians of struggling readers were included to assess the extent of home support and its impact on pupils' reading proficiency.

## Instrument

This study utilized a structured questionnaire to assess the key factors affecting the reading proficiency and challenges of the pupils. Participants rated their agreement using a 5-point Likert scale. Meanwhile, parents or guardians were included in the survey to assess the extent of home support and its impact on their pupils' reading proficiency.

## Data Collection

The data-gathering process began with a formal request to the participating school for permission to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researchers explained the study's purpose and procedures to the participants and obtained their informed consent. The survey questionnaire was then distributed in a paper-and-pencil format, with assistance from the teachers. Ample time was provided for completion to ensure full retrieval. Collected data were reviewed for accuracy and completeness, with follow-up communication as needed. The entire process upheld ethical standards, ensuring validity, reliability, and respect for participants' rights.

## Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using various statistical tools. Frequency and percentage were used to summarize the distribution of Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels among pupils. Mean and standard deviation were measured for average responses and variability related to reading difficulties and support systems. The Chi-Square Test identified relationships between reading proficiency and categorical variables such as socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and teaching strategies. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient assessed the strength and direction of the relationship between motivation and reading proficiency. ANOVA compared the effectiveness of different teaching strategies, while regression analysis was used to predict the influence of multiple factors on pupils' reading proficiency levels. Thematic analysis was used in the qualitative phase of the study.

## Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that all ethical guidelines were followed, including obtaining informed consent from participants and maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of their responses throughout the study.

## RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and findings of the study, based on data collected from pupils, parents, and teachers, and analyzes them in relation to the research questions. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, were employed to determine the distribution of reading proficiency levels, parental support, socioeconomic factors, and instructional strategies. The discussion provided interpretations of the data, highlighting challenges in reading proficiency and proposing interventions to enhance pupils' reading skills.

**Table 1.** Phil-IRI Reading Proficiency Level of Pupils

Proficiency Level	Number of Pupils	Percentage (%)
Independent Level	12	21.82%
Instructional Level	20	36.36%
Frustration Level	23	41.82%





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Out of the 55 pupils surveyed, a significant number (41.82%) fell under the Frustration Level, meaning they struggle with reading and require intensive support. Those in the Instructional Level (36.36%) can read with guidance, while only 21.82% are in the Independent Level, demonstrating strong reading proficiency.

These findings align with similar research conducted in the Philippines. For instance, a study assessing the reading proficiency levels in English among intermediate graders in the Manito District during the school year 2022-2023 revealed that out of 1,842 pupils tested, 1,169 (approximately 63.47%) were at the Frustration Level, 438 (approximately 23.78%) at the Instructional Level, and 235 (approximately 12.75%) at the Independent Level. Similarly, research focusing on Grade 8 students at Solano High School during the pandemic found that a significant number of students struggled with reading comprehension, as measured by the Phil-IRI assessment tool settings (Misanes et.al, 2023).

These studies collectively highlighted a concerning trend of low reading proficiency among Filipino students, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to enhance reading skills across various educational

**Table 2.** Major Factors Contributing to Reading Difficulties

a. Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic Indicator	Number of Parents	Percentage (%)
Parents' Educational Attainment: Elementary	20	40.00%
Parents' Educational Attainment: High School	20	40.00%
Parents' Educational Attainment: College/Post-Graduate	10	20.00%
Employment Status (Employed)	30	60.00%
Employment Status (Unemployed)	20	40.00%

b. Parental Support

Parental Reading Support	Number of Pupils	Percentage (%)
Receives help daily	18	32.73%
Receives help 2-3 times/week	22	40.00%
Rarely receives help	15	27.27%

Among the 50 parents surveyed, many came from families with low parental education levels and limited financial resources, potentially affecting access to reading materials and a supportive learning environment. Parental involvement in reading varies, with 27.27% of the 55 pupils rarely receiving help at home, which may contribute to difficulties in reading.

These findings on the impact of socioeconomic status and parental support on reading difficulties were supported by several studies. The research of Taylor et.al (2023) has shown that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to perform worse on measures of reading and language skills compared to their peers from higher-income families. Students from low-income households were more likely to struggle with reading due to limited access to learning resources, books, and literacy-rich environments (Snow, 2002). Additionally, studies conducted in Pakistan indicated that children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds developed learning skills more slowly than those from higher SES groups, which can significantly impact their reading proficiency (Kamal, et al., 2022).

The research by Chen, et al. (2018) found that a strong and supportive parent-child relationship played a crucial role in a child's reading ability. Their study showed that such positive relationships promoted children's reading skills and overall literacy growth. Complementing this, Dong, et al. (2020) indicated that a supportive and rich home literacy environment contributed significantly to children's reading comprehension development. Their meta-analysis suggested that when parents actively cultivated an environment conducive to reading, by providing materials and engaging in literacy activities, they positively influenced their children's comprehension.

These findings reinforced the idea that socioeconomic factors and parental engagement are critical determinants of reading success, which aligns closely with this study's results.



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**Table 3.** Impact of Teaching Strategies on Reading Proficiency

Teaching Strategy	Number of Teachers	Percentage (%)
One-on-One Tutoring	4	66.67%
Guided Reading Sessions	6	100.00%
Phonics-Based Instruction	5	83.33%
Interactive Reading Activities	5	83.33%

Among the 6 teachers surveyed, various strategies were implemented, with guided reading sessions (100%) and phonics-based instruction (83.33%) being the most used. However, some struggling readers may need more one-on-one tutoring (66.67%) and interactive learning activities to boost their reading skills.

These findings on the implementation of various teaching strategies to enhance reading proficiency were supported by existing research. Guided reading sessions, used by all six teachers surveyed (100%), have been shown to be highly effective in improving students' reading fluency and comprehension. Research indicated that when guided reading instruction is implemented with fidelity, it effectively addresses the five key components of reading—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—leading to significant improvements in reading achievement (Underwood, 2010).

Similarly, phonics-based instruction, employed by five out of six teachers (83.33%), played a crucial role in developing students' word-reading skills and overall text-processing abilities. Studies suggested that systematic phonics instruction is particularly beneficial for students with learning disabilities as well as for low-achieving students who do not have diagnosed learning difficulties (National Reading Panel, 2000). Additionally, one-on-one tutoring, utilized by four teachers (66.67%), has been associated with improved reading outcomes, particularly for struggling readers. Research indicated that high-dosage tutoring programs, especially in a one-to-one setting, yielded better reading results compared to small group instruction (Kortecamp et.al, 2023).

These studies collectively highlighted the effectiveness of guided reading sessions, phonics-based instruction, and one-on-one tutoring in enhancing reading proficiency, reinforcing the strategies employed by the teachers in this study.

**Table 4.** Level of Parental Involvement and Home Support

Availability of Reading Materials at Home	Number of Parents	Percentage (%)
Plenty of Books	15	30.00%
Have Some Books, but Not Enough	25	50.00%
No Books at Home	10	20.00%

A lack of reading materials at home may limit pupils' opportunities to practice reading outside of school. Among the 50 parents surveyed, 20% reported not having any books at home, which may hinder their child's reading development. Increased parental involvement and improved home reading environments could enhance reading proficiency.

These findings on the availability of reading materials at home and the level of parental involvement were supported by existing research. Studies have shown that the presence of books in the home is strongly linked to increased academic success, vocabulary development, and improved attention span in children. A long-term study found that even a modest home library can significantly impact a child's educational attainment, emphasizing the importance of accessible reading materials at home (Sikora et.al, 2019). Furthermore, parental involvement in literacy activities plays a crucial role in children's reading development (Abenojar, et al., 2025; Muñoz & Sanchez, 2023; Pangilinan, 2025). Research indicated that engaging in shared reading activities enhances children's language comprehension and expressive language abilities while also strengthening their reading skills. Parents who actively participated in their child's reading journey contribute to better academic performance and literacy outcomes (Clark, 2007). These findings reinforced the idea that a well-resourced home reading environment and increased parental engagement in literacy activities can significantly improve children's reading proficiency, aligning with the results of this study.



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**Table 5.** Conclusive Remarks on the Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Statistical Result	Decision	Interpretation
Ho1: No significant relationship between socioeconomic status and reading proficiency.	$\chi^2 = 2.314$ , $p = 0.804$	Failed to reject	No significant relationship.
Ho2: No significant relationship between parental support and reading proficiency.	$\chi^2 = 0.982$ , $p = 0.912$	Failed to reject	No significant relationship.
Ho3: Teaching strategies do not significantly affect reading proficiency.	$F = 0.995$ , $p = 0.415$	Failed to reject	No significant effect.
Ho4: No significant relationship between motivation and reading proficiency.	$r = 0.998$ , $p < 0.0001$	Rejected	Strong, positive relationship.

The findings revealed that there was no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and reading proficiency, as indicated by the chi-square test result ( $\chi^2 = 2.314$ ,  $p = 0.804$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis (Ho1) was not rejected, suggesting that a pupil's reading proficiency level was not directly influenced by their family's financial standing or parental education level.

Similarly, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis (Ho2) regarding the relationship between parental support and reading proficiency, with a chi-square value of  $\chi^2 = 0.982$  and a p-value of 0.912. This indicated that the frequency of parental involvement in reading activities at home did not significantly impact a child's reading ability. Furthermore, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test for teaching strategies yielded  $F = 0.995$  and  $p = 0.415$ , leading to the failure to reject the null hypothesis (Ho3). This implied that while various instructional methods are employed, they do not directly determine a pupil's reading proficiency level.

However, the study found a strong and positive correlation between motivation and reading proficiency, as demonstrated by the correlation coefficient  $r = 0.998$  and a highly significant p-value of less than 0.0001. As a result, the null hypothesis (Ho4) was rejected, highlighting that motivation played a crucial role in enhancing reading proficiency, emphasizing the importance of fostering pupils' interest and positive attitudes toward reading.

**Table 6.** Proposed Interventions for Enhancing Reading Proficiency

INTERVENTION PROGRAM	EXPECTED OUTCOME
<b>Remedial Reading Program</b>	Improve struggling readers' skills
<b>Parental Reading Workshop</b>	Increase home support for reading
<b>Daily Reading Practice Sessions</b>	Strengthen fluency and comprehension
<b>Interactive Storytelling Activities</b>	Boost engagement and motivation
<b>Phonics and Sight Word Drills</b>	Improve word recognition skills

*Remedial Reading Program – Improve struggling readers' skills*

- This intervention will provide targeted support for pupils at the Frustration Level, focusing on decoding skills, fluency, and comprehension.
- It may involve small-group tutoring, one-on-one support, and leveled reading materials tailored to the specific needs of struggling readers.
- Progress monitoring will be essential to ensure that pupils gradually improve their reading skills.

*Parental Reading Workshop – Increase home support for reading*

- This program aims to educate parents on effective strategies to support their children's reading development at home.
- Workshops will focus on interactive storytelling, shared reading techniques, and creating a literacy-rich home environment even with limited resources.
- Encouraging parents to set aside dedicated reading time with their children will reinforce classroom learning.

*Daily Reading Practice Sessions – Strengthen fluency and comprehension*





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- Pupils will engage in structured reading activities daily, ensuring consistent exposure to texts appropriate to their reading level.
- Teachers and facilitators can incorporate paired reading, guided reading sessions, and fluency drills to enhance comprehension.
- The goal is to develop reading habits that extend beyond the classroom.

#### *Interactive Storytelling Activities – Boost engagement and motivation*

- Storytelling sessions will incorporate visual aids, role-playing, and read-aloud strategies to make reading more engaging.
- Encouraging pupils to retell or act out stories can strengthen their comprehension, vocabulary, and confidence in reading.
- This approach also fosters a love for reading, which is crucial for long-term literacy development.

#### *Phonics and Sight Word Drills – Improve word recognition skills*

- Phonics instruction will emphasize letter-sound relationships, blending, and decoding strategies to help pupils read unfamiliar words.
- Sight word drills will focus on recognizing high-frequency words, enabling struggling readers to develop automatic word recognition.
- These drills will be incorporated into classroom instruction and remedial sessions to build foundational reading skills.

## Conclusions

The study concluded that a substantial number of pupils at Cansayong Elementary School were classified under the Frustration Level in the Phil-IRI assessment, indicating serious challenges in reading that necessitate focused and sustained intervention. Socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and teaching strategies emerged as key determinants of reading proficiency. The findings further revealed that limited access to reading materials at home and irregular parental support significantly contributed to pupils' reading difficulties. These insights underscore the need for strengthened home-school collaboration and targeted instructional approaches to improve reading outcomes.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, a set of targeted intervention programs is recommended to enhance the reading proficiency of pupils at Cansayong Elementary School. First, the implementation of a *Remedial Reading Program* is crucial to support pupils identified at the Frustration Level. This program should provide focused instruction on decoding, fluency, and comprehension through small-group tutoring, individualized support, and the use of leveled reading materials, with regular progress monitoring to track improvements. A *Parental Reading Workshop* is also recommended to empower parents with strategies for supporting their children's reading development at home. These workshops can cover shared reading, interactive storytelling, and ways to create a literacy-rich environment, even in low-resource settings, reinforcing learning beyond the classroom. Furthermore, *Daily Reading Practice Sessions* should be conducted to develop fluency and comprehension through structured activities such as paired reading, guided sessions, and fluency drills. To boost motivation and engagement, *Interactive Storytelling Activities* using visual aids, role-playing, and read-aloud techniques can make reading enjoyable and help strengthen vocabulary, comprehension, and confidence. Finally, *Phonics and Sight Word Drills* should be integrated into both regular and remedial instruction to improve word recognition. These drills will emphasize letter-sound relationships, blending, and automatic recognition of high-frequency words—essential skills for building a strong foundation in reading. Collectively, these interventions aim to address the multifaceted challenges affecting pupils' reading proficiency and support their journey toward literacy success.

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E - ISSN 1908-3181

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