Factors Affecting the Reading Comprehension Skills of Grade 3 Learners

Ramil P. Manguilimotan; Jocelyn T. Zabala; Chyke A. Encog; Gengen G. Padillo; Reylan G. Capuno

Main Campus, College of Education, Cebu Technological University, Philippines

E-mail: ramil.manguilimotan@ctu.edu.ph; Jocelyn.zabala@deped.gov.ph; Chyke.encog@deped.gov.ph; gengen.padillo@ctu.edu.ph; reylan.capuno@ctu.edu.ph

Abstract

This research determined the factors affecting the reading comprehension skills of Grade 3 learners at the identified public elementary schools in Talisay City Division Cebu for the school year 2022-2023. This employed a descriptive-correlational design to determine the factors that affect the reading comprehension difficulties of the Grade 3 learners. A total of 148 Grade 3 learners were the respondents that were selected using convenience sampling. Gathered data were statistically treated using frequency and percentage, weighted mean, and chi-square. Results have shown that reading comprehension is affected by interest and motivation, prior knowledge, and vocabulary knowledge. In addition, the level of reading comprehension skills of the respondents were instructional readers. Furthermore, results showed that there is no relationship between the identified factors and the reading comprehension skills of the respondents. It is concluded that the factors affecting the learners' reading comprehension skills are interest and motivation, prior knowledge, and vocabulary knowledge at the descriptive rating of affected. Hence, it is recommended that the enhanced reading comprehension enhancement plans be implemented.

Keywords: *Early Childhood Education; Reading Comprehension Skills; Descriptive Correlational; Talisay City; Cebu*

I. Introduction

The efficacy of reading comprehension is intricately shaped by a combination of individual factors such as vocabulary proficiency, cognitive abilities, and socio-economic background alongside external elements like teaching methodologies and resource availability. (Himashi, 2024) According to Solomons (2023), the key to successful reading comprehension lies in the mastery of essential skills

including decoding, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking, which collectively enable readers to understand and interpret written texts with depth and precision.

Reading comprehension is an essential ability that serves as the foundation for acquiring knowledge, fostering critical thinking, and facilitating effective communication (Khalilova, 2023). Readers who have trouble understanding what they read encounter issues regularly. (Snowling et al., 2020) A study by Torppa et al. (2020) demonstrates that there are alarmingly high reports of challenged readers in grades K–3, which indicates that reading comprehension among children has been poorer recently. Based on the personal experience of the researchers being elementary teachers, the development of reading comprehension among kindergarteners and students in grades one, two, and three (K–3) using modular/virtual learning settings has proven to be a significant problem. According to a study by Alinsunurin (2021), the Philippines had already achieved the lowest reading, math, and science scores among the nations that took part in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's triennial Program for International Student Assessment even before the pandemic.

This being the case, the Department of Education (DepEd) has launched the Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs Initiatives) to intensify the advocacy for reading and to pledge commitment to making every learner a reader at his or her grade level(Dorado & Medina, 2022). As observed by the researchers, some factors affect learners' academic success such as the number of siblings; specifically, the likelihood of being in a group of students with poor reading skills increases with the number of children in a family. This is supported by the study of Vadivel et al. (2023) which emphasized that low socioeconomic position has been linked to behavioral issues in learners that may hinder their intellectual and scholastic growth. This conduct can also have an impact on family interactions. Furthermore, financially precarious parents frequently battle with despair, low self-esteem, and a lack of coping skills, which they might pass on to their kids. (Randles, 2021)

The researchers were driven to conduct a research study on the factors affecting the reading comprehension of Grade 3 learners from two identified schools in Talisay City, Cebu, particularly Lawaan III Elementary School and Lagtang Elementary School. This determined the extent to which factors affect the reading comprehension of the learners so that they can be provided with a program that improves their reading abilities.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

This research determined the factors affecting the reading comprehension skills of Grade 3 learners at the identified public elementary schools in Talisay City Division, Cebu for school year 2022-2023 as the basis for the Reading Comprehension Skills Enhancement Plan. Specifically, it sought answers about the profile of the learners in terms of age and gender, number of siblings, parents' highest educational attainment, and combined family's monthly income; to what extent do the following factors affect the learners' reading comprehension as to interest and motivation, prior knowledge, and vocabulary knowledge; the level of the reading comprehension skills of the learners; and a significant relationship between the identified factors and the reading comprehension skills of the learners.

2. Materials and Methods

This section presents the research design, respondents, instrument, data gathering procedure, and statistical treatment of the data.

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized Descriptive Correlational Method. According to Seeram (2019), this method in research refers to a type of study that aims to describe relationship between two or more variables without manipulating them. This method used in the study to determine the factors that affect the reading comprehension difficulties of the Grade three learners. Quantitative method is the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques(Mohajan, 2020). The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and /or hypothesis pertaining to phenomena.

In this study, the descriptive correlational method was used to determine the relationship between the reading comprehension difficulties of the pupils and their age, gender, socio-economic status of parents as well as the factors that affect the reading comprehension difficulties of the Grade three learners of Lawaan III Elementary School, Lawaan III, Talisay City, Cebu and Lagtang Elementary School, Lagtang, Talisay City, Cebu.

2.2 Respondents

The respondents of the study were the Grade 3 learners who have trouble in reading comprehension. The respondents were selected using convenience sampling technique in identifying learners who struggle reading with comprehension.

In the Lawaan III Elementary School, with the 126 officially declared students in the grade 3 level, there were only four teachers responsible for distributing the questionnaire to pupils and parents at the same time as ensuring the implementation of education with an emphasis on the reading program. Out of it, there are 40 identified learners who have reading comprehension struggles that require special attention by the reading teachers.

At the center of Lagtang, Talisay City, Cebu, there is a sizable school called Lagtang Elementary School. The school is supervised by 1 principle and 1 administrative officer to support and assist the principal with some human resources-related responsibilities. Between kindergarten and grade 6, there are 59 teachers. There are 9 sections in the school. In this study, four sections were selected as the respondents. There are 2,008 pupils enrolled overall, of whom 286 are in grade 3.

2.3 Instrument

This study utilized survey questionnaires. These questionnaires were composed of two parts:

The first part focuses on the profile of the respondents. The parents answered the survey questionnaire. Survey focused on data pertaining to the name of the child, age, gender, how many siblings there are, the parents' highest level of education, and the monthly income of the entire family.

The second part of the research instrument focused to the three factors affecting the learners reading comprehension such as the interest and motivation, prior knowledge, and vocabulary knowledge. These were listed in the inventory statement outlining the elements affecting the learners' reading comprehension. In this survey, there were no right or wrong answers. They were given statements to read and comprehend in order to assess themselves as being true by checking the boxes next to their comments for strongly agreeing (4), agreeing (3), disagreeing (2), and severely disagreeing (1).

The Filipino version of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) was used by the classroom advisers to evaluate the learners' reading comprehension. It is an actual diagnostic tool used by teachers to evaluate each learner's strengths and weaknesses in order to ascertain their degrees of word recognition and comprehension. The results were collated and totaled by the researchers, who then divided them into three categories: independent, instructional, and frustrated levels of reading comprehension.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure of this study was categorized into three stages: the preliminary stage, the data gathering stage, and the post-data gathering stage.

Preliminary Stage. The researchers made a letter request to the Schools Division Superintendent asking for permission to conduct a research study at Lawaan III Elementary School and Lagtang Elementary School. After the approval, the approved memorandum was sent to the principals of both schools, along with a letter requesting permission to conduct research at the designated schools. Once granted, the researchers prepared a survey questionnaire, validated it, and reproduced it.

Data Gathering Stage. For approval to carry out the real survey, the researchers went to the research environment and spoke with the classroom adviser. Less than five minutes per respondent were spent on the survey for students. The survey's instructions were properly presented to the participants by the researchers. The researchers collected all the questionnaires once they had obtained their desired number of responses. Moreover, survey questions were given to the classroom advisers to distribute to the parents of the learners in order to profile the students.

Post Data Gathering Stage. All the questionnaires were collected by the researchers, who then tallied the information, entered it into MS Excel, and forwarded it to a statistician for statistical treatment.

2.5 Statistical Treatment

After the data collection, the data gathered underwent different statistical treatments using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software with the aid of the statistical tools.

Frequency and Percentage were used to treat data about the respondent's profile based on their age and gender, the number of siblings, the highest degree their parents have earned, and the monthly income earned by the entire family. Also, weighted mean was used to treat data about factors influencing the respondents' reading comprehension will thus be answered. Lastly, Chi-Square was used to test the significant relationship between the identified factors and the reading comprehension skills of the learners.

3 Results

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the age and gender of the respondents.

Table 1.Age and Gender of the Learners

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
11 and up	3	2.03	7	4.73	10	6.76
10	13	8.78	19	12.84	32	21.62
9	52	35.14	44	29.73	96	64.86
8	8	5.41	2	1.35	10	6.76
Total	**76**	**51.35**	**72**	**48.65**	**148**	**100.00**

Table 1 shows that there were 76 out of 148 female respondents, which comprised 51.35 percent of the respondents, while there were 72 or 48.65 percent of them who were male learners. Fifty-two, or 35.14 percent, of the female learners were 9 years old, followed by 13 or 8.78 percent of them being 10 years old. Moreover, there were 8 of them, or 5.41 percent, whose age was 8 years old, and 3 of them, or 2.03 percent, were 11 years old and up. There were 44, or 29.73 percent, of the male respondents who were 9 years old, followed by 19 or 12.84 percent of them who were 10 years old. Furthermore, 7 or 4.73 percent of them were 11 years old or older, with the majority of the respondents being 9 years old and female two or 1.35 percent being 8 years old.

Number of Siblings

Table 2 shows the number of siblings the learners from Lawaan III Elementary School and Lagtang Elementary School have.

Table 2.Number of Siblings of the Learners

Number of Siblings	f	%
5 and above	52	35.14
3-4	53	35.81
0-2	43	29.05
Total	**148**	**100.00**

As shown in Table 2, there were 148 respondents. There were 53 or 35. 81 percent have three or more siblings, followed by 52 or 35. 14 percent have 5 or more siblings, and 43 or 29.05 have 0-2 siblings. Therefore, the majority of the learners have three to four siblings.

Parents' Highest Educational Attainment

Table 3 presents the combination of the highest educational attainment of the parents of the learners.

Table 3.Parents' Highest Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Mother		Father	
	f	%	f	%
With Master's Units	1	0.68	1	0.68
College Graduate	10	6.76	1	0.68
College Level	11	7.43	21	14.19
High School Graduate	66	44.59	48	32.43
High School Level	31	20.95	32	21.62
Elementary Graduate	9	6.08	13	8.78
Elementary Level	19	12.84	26	17.57
No Formal Schooling	1	0.68	1	0.68
No Response	0	0.00	5	3.38
Total	**148**	**100.00**	**148**	**100.00**

As presented in Table 3, out of 148 respondents on the mother's side, 66, or 44, were high school graduates, followed by 31 or 20 percent. 95 percent of them were high school level. Moreover, there were 19 or 12, and 84 percent of them were at the elementary level. There were 11 or 7.43 percent at the college level, and there were 10 or 6.76 percent of them who were college graduates. There were 9 or 6.08 percent who were elementary graduates, and 1 or 0.68 percent of them had masters units but no formal schooling. Zero percent means no response. On Father's 'side, there were 48 or 32. 43 percent were high school graduates, followed by 32 or 21 percent. 62 of them were at the high school level. Moreover, there were 26 or 17. 57 percent were at the elementary level, and 21 or 14.19 percent of them were at the college level. There were 13 or 8.78 percent who were elementary school graduates, and 5 or 3.38 percent of them had no response. One, or 0.68 percent, were college graduates with no formal schooling. Therefore, the majority of the learners' parents are high school graduates.

Combined Family Monthly Income

Table 4 is all about the combined family monthly income of the learners from both identified schools. The table contains the frequency and percentages of the monthly income in pesos as categorized.

Table 4. Combined Family Monthly Income

Monthly Income (in pesos)	f	%
Above 30,000	2	1.35
25,001-30,000	2	1.35
20,001-25,000	5	3.38
15,001-20,000	7	4.73
10,001-15,000	21	14.19
10,000 and below	111	75.00
Total	**148**	**100.00**

As presented in Table 4, 111 (or 75.00 percent) of the 148 respondents earned 10,000 or less, followed by 21 (or 14.19 percent) who earned 10,000–15,000. There were seven or four of them; 73 percent of them earned 15,001–20,000, and five, or 3.38 percent, earned 20,001–25,000. Lastly, there were 2 or 1.35 percent of them earning from 25,001 and above 30,000. Therefore, the majority of the respondents have a combined family monthly income of 10,000 pesos or less.

3.2 The Extent to Which the Factors Affect the Reading Comprehension of the Learners

The tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 show the extent to which the factors affecting the reading comprehension of the learners in terms of interest and motivation, prior knowledge and vocabulary knowledge. The table contains the indicator, weighted mean and verbal description of each classification.

Interest and Motivation

Increasing reading interest improves the ability to understand the content. Motivation is the state that can maintain learners' attention as to provide with more energy to needed to lead task to completion. The result shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Extent to Which the Factors Affect the Reading Comprehension of the Learners as to Interest and Motivation

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Reading is my hobby.	3.16	Affected
2	I read daily.	2.91	Affected
3	I have been interested in reading since I was young.	3.13	Affected
4	My interest motivates me to read more books.	3.1	Affected
5	I read for least two hours daily.	2.82	Affected
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.02**	**Affected**

Legend: 3.25 - 4.00 - Highly Affected; 2.50-3.24- Affected;

1.75-2.49 Less Affected; 1.00-1.74 - Not Affected

As shown in Table 5, the reading comprehension is affected by indicator 1 with a weighted mean of 3.16, followed by indicator 3 with a weighted mean of 3.13. It is also affected by indicator 4 with the weighted mean of 3.10, indicator 2 with the weighted mean of 2.91, and lastly indicator 5 with the weighted mean of 2.82.

Prior Knowledge

Readers use their schema or background knowledge to understand what they are reading. To make connections of prior knowledge and apply it into the new material.

The results shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Extent to Which the Factors Affect the Reading Comprehension of the Learners as to Prior Knowledge

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	I connect previous knowledge from different sources to the passage.	2.98	Affected
2	I relate new information to the background knowledge to assist understanding the text.	3.18	Affected
3	I imagine some scenes described in the passage to facilitate reading comprehension.	3.14	Affected
4	I can anticipate the passage's major concept using my prior knowledge and common sense.	3.14	Affected
5	I combine new information with what I have been read to understand better.	3.09	Affected
6	I apply what have been learned and read to facilitate reading comprehension.	3.17	Affected
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.12**	**Affected**

Table 6 shows that reading comprehension is affected by an indicator 2 with a weighted mean of 3.18, followed by an indicator 6 with a weighted mean of 3.17. It is also affected by indicators 3 and 4 with a weighted mean of 3.14 and indicator 5 with a weighted mean of 3.09. Finally, a weighted mean of 2.98 was reported for indicator 1.

Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary refers to all of the words of our language. One must know words to communicate effectively. Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean. The result shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Extent to Which the Factors Affect the Reading Comprehension of the Learners as to Vocabulary

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	I have a dictionary.	2.52	Affected
2	I often use my dictionary.	2.41	Less Affected
3	I know how to use a dictionary to search for the meaning of words.	2.55	Affected
4	The dictionary helps me a lot as a source of reference to learn and understand unfamiliar words.	2.93	Affected
5	The dictionary is a helpful tool in the learning process.	3.12	Affected
Aggregate Weighted Mean		**2.71**	**Affected**

Table 7 shows that reading comprehension is affected as to vocabulary knowledge by an indicator 5 with a weighted mean of 3.12, followed by an indicator 4 with a weighted mean of 2.93. It is also affected by indicator 3 with a weighted mean of 2.55 and indicator 1 with a weighted mean of 2.52. Lastly, indicator 2 has a weighted mean of 2.41, respectively.

Summary

This section presents a summary of the extent to which factors affect reading comprehension. The summary is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Summary of the Extent to Which the Factors Affect the Reading Comprehension of the Learners

Components	WM	Verbal Description
Interest and Motivation	3.02	Affected
Prior Knowledge	3.12	Affected
Vocabulary Knowledge	2.71	Affected
Grand Mean	**2.95**	**Affected**

As presented in Table 8, reading comprehension is affected by prior knowledge with a weighted mean of 3.12, followed by interest and motivation with a weighted mean of 3.02, and finally vocabulary knowledge with a weighted mean of 2.71. Therefore, prior knowledge is the most influential factor that affects reading comprehension.

3.3 Level of Reading Comprehension Skills of the Learners

The table below is all about the level of reading comprehension of the learners. The table includes the skills, frequency, and percentage.

Table 9. Level of Reading Comprehension of the Learners

Reading Comprehension Skills	f	%
Independent	55	37.16
Instructional	74	50.00
Frustration	19	12.84
Total	**148**	**100.00**

Table 9 shows that 74, or 50.00 percent, were instructional, followed by 55, or 37.16 percent, that were independent, and lastly, there were 19, or 12.84 percent, that were frustration readers. Therefore, the majority of the respondents were instructional readers.

3.4 Test of Significant Relationship

The table below is all about the significant relationship between the identified factors and the reading comprehension skills of the learners from both identified schools. The table contains the variables df, p-value, decision, and result.

Table 10. Test of the significant relationship between the identified factors and the reading comprehension skills of the learners

Variables	χ^2-value	df	p-value	Decision	Result
Interest and motivation, and reading comprehension skills	4.430	4	0.351	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Prior Knowledge and Reading Comprehension Skills	0.630	4	0.960	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Comprehension Skills	7.156	4	0.128	Do not reject Ho	**Not Significant**

*significant at p<0.05 (two-tailed)

Table 10 presents the statistically significant relationship between the identified factors and the reading comprehension of the learners using the Chi-square test at the 0.05 level of significance using 4 degrees of freedom. The test between interest and motivation and the reading comprehension skills has a computed chi-square value of 4.430 with a p-value of 0.351, which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The results suggest that there is no significant relationship between interest and motivation and the reading comprehension skills of the learners.

4. Discussion

The research findings showed that the majority of the respondents were 9 years old, female, had 3-4 siblings, the highest educational attainment of parents was a high school graduate, and had a combined monthly income of 10,000 and below.

The data indicated that the respondents' ages are suitable for their year levels. It can be noted that the respondent's reading comprehension is significantly impacted by their age relative to their grade level. Thus, younger pupils typically have less reading comprehension than students whose ages are appropriate for their school level. Moreover, the students' reading comprehension is significantly influenced by their gender. Leen (2019) asserts that women have a greater level of reading comprehension than men do. As a result, the teacher needs to pay more attention to the male students. On the other hand, the number of siblings a student has will affect their academic achievement. According to Blake (2018), having more siblings will result in fewer resources being used for each child's schooling, which will impair educational output, because having a new child will limit the parents' ability to invest resources in any one child. In order to prevent their learners from going through academic anxiety, parents must consider whether they can spend the most in them before having another child. In addition, the involvement of parents with their learners is one of the most influential factors that improve the students' reading comprehension. This means that if the learners have parents who have a high level of educational background, there is a high tendency that the learners will also have a high level of reading comprehension (Gabriela et al., 2022). Apparently, based on the results, learning is strongly impacted by family income each month. This notion is supported with the findings of Le et al. (2019) who claimed that a learners' academic performance, particularly in terms of reading comprehension, is greatly influenced by their parent's income. So, compared to poorer families, affluent families have more opportunity to enhance reading comprehension.

In addition, the extent of the identified factor such as the interest and motivation, prior knowledge and vocabulary knowledge affected the learners reading comprehension. This means that learners' comprehension will increase as a result of reading regularly. Regular or frequent reading boosts vocabulary and understanding (Greenleaf et al., 2023). The reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general knowledge of students who read independently are higher than those who do not. In comparison to their non-reading peers, they improve as readers, perform better on achievement exams across the board, and possess more in-depth subject knowledge. Hence, kids should develop the habit of reading.

According to (Middleton, 2020),a student's past knowledge has a significant impact on how well they are able to understand what they are reading. This one characteristic is frequently determines a child's capacity to understand what they are reading. Understanding is the main goal of reading. Creating connections between texts helps readers to share text-to-text, text-to-world, and text-to-self connections. It is an important reading method. Making connections in speech, writing, or through visual aids is a skill that demonstrates a student's prior knowledge. Background information can be very helpful in understanding nonfiction writing, which frequently proves to be a difficult genre for learners to fully understand.

The data also suggest that in order for learners to increase their reading comprehension, they must possess a high level of prior knowledge. Background information is widely acknowledged to be necessary for reading comprehension, claims Sigh (2018). Simply put, it is simpler to read, comprehend, and recall information from a text the more you are familiar with the subject. Vocabulary is also essential for reading comprehension. Without knowing what most of the words signify, readers cannot comprehend what they are reading. Children who are learning to read more complex texts must acquire the definitions of new terms that are not already a part of their speech vocabulary. Last but not least, even I learners have all the information, the key to enhancing their reading comprehension is to be interested in reading and learning.

Moreover, the level of reading comprehension skills of learners was independent readers. It can be inferred from this that the students are able to comprehend and analyze the reading choices. If students are already independent and instructional readers, then they are able to comprehend and analyze the text they are reading (Shaughn, 2019). Also, he stated that having a wide knowledge in vocabulary or understanding the definitions of more terms is a crucial component of comprehension. Strong readers may infer information from their reading, such as what is significant, what is true, what led to an incident, and which characters are humorous. Hence, understanding requires integrating reading with logic and thought.

Consequently, the test of significant relationship showed that there is no significant relationship between the identified factors and the reading comprehension skills of the learners. The test of the relationship between the prior knowledge and reading comprehension skills of the learners has a computed chi-square value of 0.630 with a p-value of 0.960, which is greater than 0.05 level of significance, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significance resulting from the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significant relationship between prior knowledge and the reading comprehension skills of the learners.

Lastly, the test for the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension skills of the learners has a computed chi-square value of 7.156 with a p-value of 0.128, which is greater than 0.05 level of significance, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. These suggest that there is no significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and the reading comprehension skills of the learners. The results indicate that even though there is no significant relationship, the three factors still affect the learners' reading comprehension. According Cui et al.(2019), there are a number of components that must come together for reading comprehension to occur, including background knowledge, vocabulary, fluency, active reading skills, and critical thinking. Students need strong background knowledge, a high level of vocabulary and influence, and active reading skills in order to have a high degree of reading comprehension. The elements should therefore be adjusted in order to enhance students' reading comprehension abilities.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the results and findings of the study, it can be concluded that the identified factors such as interest and motivation, prior knowledge, and vocabulary knowledge have affected the reading comprehension skills of the learners. Considering that the vast majority of respondents are instructional readers, it is essential that teachers place a strong emphasis on these traits in order to improve their learners' reading comprehension. Students can successfully improve their reading comprehension skills by taking notes, setting goals, summarizing what they have read, and using other techniques. Also, teachers should provide background knowledge and engage students in a variety of vocabulary activities. They can encourage their learners to read by giving them interesting reading assignments. Addressing these issues will thereby significantly increase the learner's reading comprehension.

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