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From Design to Validation: A Contextualized Reading Intervention Manual for Struggling Junior High School Readers in Region I, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Reading proficiency remains a critical challenge among Junior High School learners in the Philippines, particularly in Region I, where many students perform below grade-level expectations. Previous assessments using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) revealed that a significant proportion of learners in Grades 7 to 10 remain at frustration and instructional reading levels, indicating a gap of approximately three years in expected literacy skills. This study addressed this gap by developing contextualized, task-based reading intervention manuals that meet the specific needs of struggling readers and were validated by educational experts.

Using a developmental research design, the study combined descriptive assessment of learners' reading performance with the evaluative development and validation of instructional materials. Data were sourced from 319,310 Junior High School learners' PHIL-IRI results and expert validators, including Regional Education Program Supervisors, Division Education Program Supervisors, and Focal Persons in reading programs. The instruments used were the PHIL-IRI for baseline reading assessment and a Content Validity Evaluation Checklist for assessing the manuals across four dimensions: clarity and relevance of objectives, appropriateness of reading strategies and passages, quality and alignment of comprehension questions, and organization and presentation.

Findings revealed that learners predominantly performed at frustration and instructional levels. In response, four intervention manuals were developed for Grades 4–7, 5–8, 6–9, and 7–10, integrating K–12 reading competencies, scaffolded lessons, contextualized literary selections from the four major provinces of Region I, comprehension exercises, and cross-curricular integration. Content validity assessment demonstrated that all manuals were rated Excellent/Highly Appropriate across all dimensions (overall mean = 4.67). These manuals are designed to guide learners progressively from frustration to instructional and independent reading levels while addressing the cognitive and affective aspects of reading.

The study concludes that the developed manuals are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and pedagogically sound, offering practical tools for improving the reading performance of struggling Junior High School learners. The researcher recommends implementing these manuals in schools, conducting continuous monitoring of learners' progress, and conducting further studies to examine their effectiveness in other regions or grade levels.

Keywords: - struggling readers, reading levels, reading intervention manual, PHIL-IRI

INTRODUCTION

Reading is universally acknowledged as a cornerstone of education and a vital prerequisite for lifelong learning. It serves as the gateway to acquiring knowledge, developing critical thinking, and achieving academic success across disciplines. In the Philippine educational system, the Department of Education (DepEd) employs the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) to assess learners' oral reading, silent reading, and listening comprehension. This tool categorizes learners into independent, instructional, and frustration levels, providing teachers with diagnostic data to guide appropriate instructional support (Department of Education, 2018). While this mechanism reflects the government's recognition of reading as a foundational skill, persistent literacy challenges among Filipino students remain evident.

The situation in Region I (Ilocos Region) mirrors these national and international trends. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2025), while 93.1% of Filipinos aged 10 to 64 demonstrated basic literacy, only 70.8% achieved functional literacy, which encompasses comprehension and reasoning. These statistics suggest that while learners can recognize and decode words, their ability to understand, interpret, and apply ideas from written texts remains insufficient. Bernardo (2019) further explained that many Filipino students possess decoding skills but fail to demonstrate higher-order comprehension, a gap that severely impacts their academic growth and ability to cope with subject-area demands in Junior High School. Likewise, Macaraeg and Fajardo (2021) noted that secondary learners in Region I often "read to pronounce" rather than "read to understand," revealing a critical disjunction between fluency and comprehension. These struggles persist despite teachers' efforts to implement remedial reading programs, pointing to a need for more structured and research-informed interventions

Complementing contextualization and differentiation, researchers have advocated task-based approaches to reading instruction. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as explained by Nunan (2004) and Ellis (2017), emphasizes learning through meaningful tasks that mirror real-life communication rather than mechanical drills. This approach not only strengthens comprehension but also fosters motivation and critical thinking. In Philippine contexts, Baltazar (2022) demonstrated that task-based interventions improved learners' engagement and comprehension when activities were relevant to their everyday lives. Estrada and Villanueva (2020) similarly found that contextualized task-based lessons sustained motivation and comprehension by allowing students to process texts through active participation. These studies affirm that when reading tasks are both relevant and purposeful, learners develop deeper comprehension and are better able to transfer skills to new contexts.

Given these realities, this study seeks to address the pressing need for localized, task-based, and validated instructional resources for struggling Junior High School readers in Region I. It assessed the reading performance of Grades 7 to 10 learners using the Phil-IRI, developed contextualized, task-based reading intervention lessons tailored to their needs, and subjected these manuals to expert validation for clarity, objectives, strategies, passages, comprehension tasks, and organization. By doing so, the study aims to produce structured, culturally relevant, and research-based materials that go beyond word recognition and decoding, enabling struggling readers to achieve meaningful comprehension and application

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of texts. Ultimately, this endeavor seeks to support literacy development as a foundation for academic success and lifelong learning among Filipino learners.

Statement of the Problem

This research study aims to examine the impact of integrating gamification in K-12 math classes on student engagement and learning outcomes.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of reading performance of the following learners in the PHIL IRI:
 - a. Grade 7 students;
 - b. Grade 8 students;
 - c. Grade 9 students; and
 - d. Grade 10 students?
2. What task-based reading intervention lessons/activities may be developed to improve the reading performance of the students?
3. What is the level of content validity of the reading intervention manuals as assessed by the Regional Education Program Supervisor, Division Education Program Supervisors and Focal Persons in the following dimensions:
 - a. clarity and relevance of objectives,
 - b. appropriateness of reading strategies and reading passages,
 - c. quality and alignment of comprehension questions, and
 - d. organization and presentation?

Scope and Delimitations

This study focuses on the development and validation of a contextualized reading intervention manual designed specifically for struggling readers in Junior High School in Region I. The intervention manuals were crafted to address reading difficulties among learners in Grades 7, 8, 9, and 10, as identified by results from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). The scope of the study covers the design of task-based reading lessons and activities, the integration of contextualized reading passages reflective of the learners' sociocultural environment, and the validation of the manual's objectives, strategies, comprehension questions, organization, and presentation.

The materials developed were contextualized to the Region I setting, incorporating cultural, environmental, and linguistic elements familiar to learners in the area. As such, the applicability of the intervention manual is limited outside the Ilocos Region, where learners' backgrounds, contexts, and experiences may differ. In addition, the content validity will rely on the judgment of selected validators, whose perspectives—while expert—may not fully capture the long-term effectiveness of the materials in varied classroom contexts.

In summary, the study is bounded by its focus on Grades 7 to 10 struggling readers in Region I, the use of Phil-IRI results as a diagnostic basis, and the evaluation of the manual's validity by educational experts. These delimitations ensure that the research remains feasible

and focused, while also acknowledging the limitations of its generalizability and scope of application.

Review of Related Literatures

Reading Performance of Junior High School Learners

Reading proficiency remains a persistent challenge for Filipino learners across grade levels, and it continues to draw attention from both national and international assessments. In the Philippines, the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) remains the primary diagnostic tool for evaluating learners' oral and silent reading and comprehension levels. Results of the Phil-IRI consistently reveal that a large proportion of students perform at the frustration level, indicating that they are unable to meet grade-level expectations in fluency, comprehension, or both (Department of Education [DepEd], 2018). This classification is particularly alarming because students at this level struggle to independently decode words, process meaning, and respond to comprehension tasks, making them highly vulnerable to academic failure. Gatcho (2025) further explains that many secondary learners lack foundational skills such as vocabulary acquisition and inferential comprehension, which are essential for engaging with increasingly complex texts required in the secondary curriculum. Without mastery of these skills, learners' academic trajectories in other subject areas are severely compromised.

The issue becomes even clearer when benchmarked against international standards. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) demonstrate the depth of the crisis. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023), 76% of Filipino students who took the 2022 assessment scored below the minimum proficiency level in reading. This means that only a small fraction of learners were able to reach Level 2 proficiency, the baseline at which students can extract meaning from texts and make simple interpretations. Those who scored below this threshold struggled with higher-order reading tasks such as integrating information, evaluating evidence, and interpreting nuance. This aligns with findings from Abulencia (2020), who reported that many Grade 7 students in Bulacan demonstrated an ability to decode words but failed to comprehend, interpret, or apply ideas from texts. These findings underscore a recurring theme in literacy studies: that decoding alone is not enough, and that comprehension remains the core skill in academic reading.

Regional studies mirror these concerns, further contextualizing the problem. In Region I, Baltazar (2022) observed that Junior High School learners were often able to read passages aloud with relative fluency, yet struggled to grasp meaning and make inferences. Teachers frequently report that this gap between surface-level reading and actual comprehension has a direct negative effect on learners' performance in other subjects, such as Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics, which rely heavily on reading to understand technical content. The problem becomes compounded in Grades 7 to 10, where students are expected to transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." As Paris (2005) argued, this transition is critical because it determines whether students can access higher-order thinking tasks that are central to secondary and tertiary education. When comprehension skills remain underdeveloped,

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learners are left unprepared for the demands of higher education, employment, and participation in an increasingly knowledge-driven society.

Taken together, these findings highlight the urgency of addressing reading performance among Junior High School learners. National data through the Phil-IRI, international benchmarks such as PISA, and local classroom observations all point to a consistent literacy gap that goes beyond word recognition and fluency. The evidence demonstrates a pressing need for interventions that not only build decoding skills but also strengthen comprehension, interpretation, and application of texts. Addressing this gap during the secondary years is especially critical, as these stages form the foundation for success in higher education and beyond. Thus, improving the reading performance of learners in Grades 7 to 10 is not merely an academic goal but a vital educational imperative.

Task-Based Reading Intervention Lessons and Activities

Task-based learning (TBL) has gained recognition as an effective approach to language and literacy development, offering learners meaningful opportunities to use language through purposeful, authentic tasks. Unlike traditional drill-based exercises, TBL emphasizes the use of language in context, thereby fostering both accuracy and fluency. Ellis (2020) explains that task-based instruction encourages learners to focus on meaning as they engage with real-world tasks, promoting deeper comprehension and the practical application of language skills. Applied to reading, this approach translates into activities such as summarizing news articles, analyzing short stories, synthesizing information from expository texts, or interpreting diagrams and charts. These activities mirror real-life uses of reading and help learners move beyond surface-level decoding toward critical engagement with texts.

Several empirical studies confirm the potential of TBL in addressing reading comprehension difficulties. Fernandez (2018), in a study among Filipino secondary learners, found that task-based activities such as role-playing, inferencing, and group summarization significantly improved reading comprehension scores. The interactive nature of these tasks allowed students to negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and co-construct knowledge with peers. Similarly, Culaste-Quimbo (2021) emphasized that task-based reading interventions foster collaboration and critical thinking. Unlike teacher-dominated reading instruction, task-based approaches encourage learners to take active roles, transforming reading from a passive, solitary activity into a dynamic, social process. This shift not only enhanced comprehension but also cultivated 21st-century skills such as teamwork and communication.

Incorporating localized and contextualized materials within task-based instruction has been shown to further strengthen its impact. Panlaqui and Tayag (2023) demonstrated that students were more engaged and motivated when reading passages that reflected their cultural backgrounds, familiar environments, and lived experiences. When learners encounter texts that mirror their realities—such as local stories, community issues, or region-specific content—they are more likely to participate actively in discussions and demonstrate improved comprehension. This finding aligns with Schema Theory, which posits that readers make sense of new information more effectively when it connects to prior knowledge and cultural experiences (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). In this sense, task-based instruction enriched with

contextualization not only addresses comprehension gaps but also validates learners' identities and cultural heritage.

The effectiveness of TBL is further supported by broader international perspectives. Nunan (2004) highlighted that TBL encourages learner autonomy by requiring students to strategize, solve problems, and negotiate meaning, which are central to advanced literacy development. Carless (2021) likewise found that Asian learners exposed to task-based strategies demonstrated significant gains in reading comprehension and motivation, even in contexts where reading is traditionally taught through rote learning. These findings reinforce that TBL is adaptable and effective across cultural contexts, provided that the tasks are meaningful and relevant to learners' needs.

For Junior High School learners at a developmental stage when disengagement from generic, decontextualized materials is common, task-based approaches offer a valuable pathway to rekindle interest in reading. By embedding comprehension within purposeful and culturally resonant tasks, intervention lessons can transform reading from a mechanical exercise into an engaging, interactive, and empowering activity. Thus, the integration of task-based activities into the design of intervention manuals is strongly supported by both theory and empirical evidence, making it a promising approach for addressing the persistent literacy challenges faced by struggling readers in Region I.

Content Validity of Reading Intervention Manuals

The quality and effectiveness of instructional materials are most reliably determined through systematic validation processes. Validation serves as a safeguard to ensure that developed resources are pedagogically sound, aligned with learning objectives, and suited to learners' developmental and cultural needs. Atondo (2022) stresses that, in particular, contextualized instructional materials must undergo expert evaluation to ensure not only technical accuracy but also their relevance and usability in the classroom. Through validation, educators and curriculum developers are assured that materials are coherent in structure, appropriate in strategies, and capable of engaging students meaningfully.

Several recent studies have demonstrated the value of content validation in instructional material development. Baleguian and Liquido (2025) conducted a study on the creation and validation of digitalized, contextualized reading materials for Grade 3 learners. Their findings revealed that subject-matter experts rated the materials highly for objectives, strategies, and organization. The positive evaluation confirmed that systematic validation helped ensure the resources' alignment with intended learning outcomes. Similarly, Gatcho (2025) underscored the need for validation processes to consider multiple dimensions, such as the appropriateness of reading passages, the logical sequencing of lessons, and the alignment of comprehension questions with learners' abilities. Without these checks, instructional materials risk being ineffective or mismatched to student needs, thereby limiting their educational value.

International literature also reinforces these insights. Messick (1995) highlighted the importance of construct validity, explaining that instructional materials must clearly reflect the competencies they intend to develop. Polit and Beck (2006) added that expert judgment and inter-rater consistency are critical in determining the reliability of educational resources. More

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recent studies, such as those by Cahyono and Widiati (2020), emphasize that validation processes should also address the cultural and contextual appropriateness of texts to ensure that learners can relate to them. These findings align with the broader movement in education toward localized, learner-centered instruction, in which materials are not only accurate but also reflective of students' lived realities.

In the Philippine context, Santos and Dizon (2020) validated supplementary reading modules for Junior High School students and found that systematic evaluation strengthened the modules' clarity, usability, and instructional soundness. Tinapay, Seno, Fernandez, Samillano, and Tirol (2021) likewise demonstrated that collaborative validation involving multiple evaluators—such as teachers, head teachers, and supervisors—enhanced the overall quality of instructional materials. These studies suggest that validation is most effective when it involves diverse stakeholders who can provide complementary insights on pedagogy, content, and learner engagement.

Taken together, these findings imply that for an intervention manual to be effective, it must undergo a rigorous and multi-dimensional validation process. Validation should not be confined to content accuracy alone but must also assess instructional design, sequencing, strategies, and cultural relevance. By ensuring that intervention manuals meet these standards, learners receive resources that are not only technically correct but also engaging, meaningful, and contextually appropriate. Such a process strengthens the credibility of the materials and maximizes their potential to improve reading performance among struggling Junior High School learners.

The validation of instructional materials is a process that cannot be confined to a single perspective. Instead, it requires the collaborative participation of multiple stakeholders, each bringing unique expertise and insights to ensure that developed resources are pedagogically sound, contextually appropriate, and practically effective. In the Philippine educational system, Regional and Division Education Program Supervisors (EPS), as well as Head Teachers and Master Teachers, play particularly important roles in shaping instructional practices and evaluating educational innovations. Their collective perspectives provide a multi-layered validation process that balances curriculum alignment with classroom realities.

Regional and Division EPS contribute macro-level insights that focus on curriculum standards, policy integration, and systemic alignment. Their role is crucial in ensuring that instructional materials do not only respond to local learner needs but also conform to DepEd's broader educational goals and policy directions. Meanwhile, Head Teachers and Master Teachers serve as the bridge between policy and practice, providing grounded feedback based on daily teaching realities. They are well-positioned to evaluate the usability of materials, their alignment with instructional strategies, and their potential to improve learner outcomes. This dual involvement of administrators and classroom practitioners ensures that validation processes capture both theoretical soundness and practical applicability.

Research supports the importance of involving diverse evaluators in validation. According to Tinapay, Seno, Fernandez, Samillano, and Tirol (2021), the inclusion of multiple stakeholders enhances the credibility of validation results and improves the overall quality of

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instructional materials. Teachers, in particular, provide crucial feedback on the feasibility of implementing reading activities, the clarity of instructions, and the appropriateness of passages relative to learners' comprehension levels. On the other hand, supervisors ensure that the materials align with curricular expectations and contribute to long-term literacy development. This kind of multi-level validation creates materials that are not only contextually rich but also institutionally supported.

The importance of collaborative validation is further reinforced by Cruz and Puzon (2020), who studied instructional materials development in a reading program. Their findings indicated that when teachers, supervisors, and experts collaborated to evaluate resources, the resulting materials were more responsive to student needs and received greater institutional acceptance. This collaboration also fostered ownership among teachers, who became more invested in implementing the validated materials in their classrooms. Similarly, Baleguian and Liquido (2025) found that materials validated by subject experts and school leaders were rated highly not only for content accuracy but also for organization and relevance, underscoring the effectiveness of a multi-stakeholder approach.

International perspectives also highlight the importance of stakeholder participation in validating instructional materials. For example, Goodwin (2018) stressed that stakeholder diversity in material evaluation strengthens accountability and ensures that interventions meet both pedagogical and cultural standards. Likewise, Cahyono and Widiati (2020) emphasized that stakeholder feedback is pivotal in contextualizing instructional content to suit learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, thereby enhancing the materials' effectiveness. These studies demonstrate that validation is most successful when it incorporates both top-down policy perspectives and bottom-up classroom insights.

In the context of Junior High School reading interventions, stakeholder collaboration is particularly critical. Struggling readers face diverse challenges that cannot be addressed by a single instructional approach or perspective. By involving EPS, Head Teachers, and Master Teachers in the validation of contextualized reading manuals, this study ensures that the materials are not only theoretically grounded but also practically useful and institutionally sustainable. Such a participatory validation process guarantees that the intervention manuals are robust, responsive, and ready for implementation in Region I schools.

Benefits of Contextualized, Task-Based Manuals for Stakeholders

Contextualized, task-based reading intervention manuals present significant advantages not only for learners but also for teachers, school leaders, and the educational system as a whole. At the core of their value is the combination of contextualization and task-based learning (TBL), two approaches that research has consistently shown to improve literacy outcomes. Ellis (2003 & 2017) emphasizes that task-based learning situates language and literacy instruction in authentic, real-world tasks, enabling learners to use language meaningfully rather than mechanically. When applied to reading instruction, this approach fosters comprehension by engaging students in purposeful activities such as summarizing texts, analyzing informational passages, or interpreting narratives in ways that mirror everyday communication.

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In the Philippine context, Panlaqui and Tayag (2023) found that contextualization further enhances the impact of task-based strategies by connecting reading activities to learners' cultural backgrounds, environments, and daily realities. Such connections sustain learner interest and motivation, which are often weak when materials are generic or decontextualized. Schema theory also explains this benefit: when learners engage with texts that align with their prior knowledge and experiences, they are more likely to comprehend, retain, and apply what they read (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Thus, contextualized, task-based manuals respond directly to the comprehension difficulties of struggling Junior High School readers, allowing them to experience reading as both relevant and meaningful.

Teachers also stand to benefit considerably from the use of validated reading intervention manuals. Many Junior High School teachers, particularly those teaching content subjects, have limited specialized training in reading intervention. As Gatcho (2025) noted, this lack of training often leaves teachers uncertain about how to design effective remedial lessons that address specific reading difficulties. Structured manuals provide ready-to-use, research-based activities that lessen the burden of planning interventions from scratch. They also serve as professional development tools, modeling effective strategies and scaffolds that teachers can adapt in their instruction. In this way, manuals empower educators by equipping them with practical, validated resources that align with curriculum standards and address the diverse needs of learners.

At the systemic level, contextualized, task-based manuals offer broader benefits by promoting consistency and equity in reading instruction across schools. When materials undergo rigorous validation by supervisors, head teachers, and master teachers, they achieve a level of standardization that ensures all learners—regardless of school or teacher—have access to high-quality reading interventions. This reduces disparities in instructional quality and creates a fairer learning environment. Cruz and Puzon (2020) found that instructional programs validated collaboratively by teachers and supervisors gained stronger institutional support and demonstrated greater sustainability, as stakeholders were invested in their implementation. Likewise, Tinapay et al. (2021) emphasized that validated materials enhance accountability within schools, as their use reflects both expert approval and contextual responsiveness.

Most importantly, contextualized manuals provide struggling readers with opportunities to experience success in reading. Instead of perceiving reading as a frustrating academic hurdle, learners are engaged in activities that reflect their realities and strengths, allowing them to gradually build comprehension and confidence. By linking diagnostic assessments such as the Phil-IRI to targeted, task-based lessons, these manuals transform assessment results into actionable interventions. This strategic alignment ensures that reading challenges are not only identified but also systematically addressed. Ultimately, such manuals empower learners to transition from mere word recognition to deeper comprehension and application of texts, laying the foundation for academic achievement and lifelong literacy.

The reviewed literature affirms that reading proficiency remains a pressing issue among Filipino learners, particularly at the secondary level. Research underscores the need for interventions that are both task-based and contextualized, as these approaches enhance motivation, comprehension, and cultural engagement. Validation studies also highlight the

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importance of ensuring that instructional materials undergo systematic expert evaluation to guarantee effectiveness and relevance.

However, there is limited research that combines all these components in the context of Junior High School learners in Region I. Most available studies focus on early grades or different regions, leaving a gap in tailored interventions for secondary students. Moreover, while various remedial materials exist, few have been systematically validated with input from multiple stakeholders such as EPS, Head Teachers, and Master Teachers.

This gap underscores the significance of the present study, which seeks to assess the reading performance of Grades 7–10 learners; develop task-based, contextualized intervention lessons; and validate the resulting manuals across multiple dimensions and stakeholder perspectives. In doing so, the study aims to contribute both to the academic literature and to practical solutions for addressing the persistent reading challenges among Junior High School learners in Region I.

RELATED STUDIES

This section presents related empirical studies that directly inform the present inquiry: diagnostic assessment of reading performance, task-based reading interventions, contextualized instructional materials, innovative remediation strategies, and validation of instructional tools.

Reading proficiency is widely recognized as the foundation of academic success, as it enables learners to access, process, and apply knowledge across subject areas. In the Philippines, the development of reading skills has been a long-standing concern, particularly at the Junior High School level, where learners are expected to transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Despite curricular reforms and government-led initiatives, reading remains a challenge for many Filipino students, with national and international assessments reflecting gaps in comprehension and critical thinking. These concerns have prompted numerous studies on the reading performance of learners and the effectiveness of various interventions in improving literacy outcomes.

Several studies underscore the persistent reading difficulties among Filipino learners across grade levels. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) remains the benchmark for diagnosing reading proficiency, yet data consistently highlight significant challenges. Bernardo, Limjap, Prudente, and Roleda (2020) revealed that many Filipino high school students struggle with higher-order comprehension tasks, particularly inferential and evaluative comprehension. Similarly, the OECD (2023) PISA results for the Philippines indicated that Filipino students ranked among the lowest globally in reading literacy, emphasizing a systemic gap that extends to Junior High School levels. These findings affirm the need to assess reading performance across Grades 7 to 10, as these learners are expected to have mastered fundamental literacy skills by the time they enter secondary school.

In the regional context, Macaraeg and Fajardo (2021) investigated reading performance in Region I and found that while learners could decode text, comprehension levels remained low, particularly in narrative and expository texts. Their study highlighted the gap between decoding

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and comprehension, showing that many Junior High School students fall within the frustration level of the Phil-IRI. This underscores the urgency of designing targeted interventions that directly address comprehension difficulties, not just decoding difficulties.

The consistent evidence of low reading performance among Filipino learners lays the foundation for exploring intervention strategies. Since learners continue to struggle with comprehension despite exposure to traditional reading instruction, innovative approaches, such as task-based reading instruction, have emerged as promising alternatives.

Recent literature supports the integration of task-based language teaching (TBLT) principles in reading instruction. Samillano and Tirol (2021) demonstrated that task-based interventions significantly improved reading comprehension among Grade 8 learners by fostering authentic engagement and critical thinking. Tasks such as problem-solving, information-gap activities, and collaborative reading exercises provided learners with meaningful contexts to process information.

Meanwhile, Estrada and Villanueva (2020) emphasized the effectiveness of contextualized task-based reading lessons in improving comprehension and motivation. Their research in Batangas showed that when reading materials were designed around learners' cultural backgrounds and everyday experiences, performance improved markedly compared with that of learners who received generic reading texts. This highlights the importance of contextualization, particularly in Region I, where cultural identity and local language strongly shape learning experiences.

According to Ellis (2020), task-based language teaching enhances language retention by embedding linguistic input within authentic and purposeful tasks, making it particularly effective for struggling readers. Carless (2021) similarly argued that tasks create a naturalistic environment in which learners can apply reading strategies, thereby strengthening comprehension and learner autonomy.

These studies demonstrate that task-based interventions are not only theoretically sound but also practical in addressing comprehension difficulties. However, the success of such interventions relies heavily on the quality and appropriateness of the instructional materials used, highlighting the critical role of validation in developing effective reading programs.

A crucial aspect of instructional material development is its validation. Atondo (2022) conducted a study on contextualized instructional materials for teaching reading and writing skills and found that expert validation across dimensions such as objectives, strategies, and presentation ensured alignment with curriculum standards and improved effectiveness. In another study, Baleguian and Liquido (2025) developed and validated digitalized reading materials for Grade 3 learners, focusing on homonyms and hyponyms. Their findings confirmed that expert validation—specifically through content specialists—was instrumental in enhancing the quality and usability of the materials.

In the Philippine context, Santos and Dizon (2020) investigated the validation of supplementary reading modules for Junior High School students and concluded that validation processes significantly contributed to the clarity, coherence, and effectiveness of the materials.

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These findings affirm the importance of systematic validation by stakeholders such as supervisors, head teachers, and master teachers, who are directly involved in curriculum implementation.

While validation ensures quality and alignment, the process is rarely undertaken by a single individual. Instead, it requires the perspectives of various stakeholders to guarantee that materials are not only pedagogically sound but also contextually relevant. This highlights the growing body of research emphasizing multi-stakeholder involvement in reading programs.

Educational research emphasizes the importance of involving multiple stakeholders in the validation and implementation of instructional materials. Tinapay, Seno, Fernandez, Samillano, and Tirol (2021) highlighted that parental involvement and teacher collaboration played vital roles in reinforcing reading comprehension strategies outside the classroom. Similarly, Bautista and Bernardo (2022) stressed that validation by teachers, curriculum experts, and supervisors is necessary to ensure that reading interventions are pedagogically sound and responsive to learner needs.

From a broader perspective, Dörnyei and Ryan (2021) explained that involving multiple evaluators in instructional design leads to more balanced and effective outcomes, as feedback is grounded in different lenses of expertise. This validates the approach of incorporating assessments from Education Program Supervisors, Head Teachers, and Master Teachers in refining intervention manuals.

With evidence showing that validation and collaboration improve instructional materials, the next step is to examine how expert assessments interact with specific validity dimensions—such as objectives, strategies, and presentation—to identify which aspects of materials most strongly influence their effectiveness.

Several studies examined the relationship between the different dimensions of validity and educational experts' evaluations. De Guzman and Abad (2020) examined the relationship between content validity and instructional effectiveness, finding that objectives, organization, and presentation strongly correlated with learner performance. Likewise, Cahyono and Widiati (2020) highlighted that reading strategies and question design were critical components influencing the validity and instructional effectiveness of reading materials.

This line of research suggests that examining the relationships among dimensions of validity (objectives, strategies, questions, presentation) and stakeholder assessments can provide valuable insights into how intervention manuals are perceived and refined for classroom use.

Taken together, the reviewed studies highlight a clear research gap: although there is strong evidence for the importance of interventions, validation, and multi-stakeholder involvement, few studies have specifically combined these strands to develop and validate task-based, contextualized reading intervention manuals for Junior High School learners in Region I.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in established theories of reading and learning that explain how struggling readers acquire literacy skills, how instruction can be contextualized to be effective, and how educational materials can be validated for quality. At its core, Anderson and Pearson's (1984) Schema Theory emphasizes that comprehension is enhanced when learners connect new information to their prior knowledge and experiences. In this study, the contextualized reading intervention manual incorporates culturally and linguistically familiar themes to activate students' background knowledge, thereby making reading tasks more meaningful and accessible.

Complementing this perspective is Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the importance of interaction, culture, and scaffolding in learning. Through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), learners are supported by teachers or peers as they gradually progress toward independent reading proficiency. The task-based reading activities embedded in the manual are designed to provide such scaffolding, ensuring that students receive guided practice before moving toward autonomy.

The development of the manual is further guided by Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as advanced by Ellis (2003) and Nunan (2004), who argue that authentic, goal-directed tasks create more meaningful language learning experiences. In the manual, reading activities are structured around real-life tasks—such as problem-solving, information gathering, and critical discussion—rather than repetitive drills, thus fostering both engagement and comprehension. This orientation directly addresses the study's aim of designing effective task-based lessons for struggling readers.

Equally relevant is Tomlinson's (2001) theory of Differentiated Instruction and intervention models such as those proposed by Vaughn and Denton (2008), which stress the need for instructional materials tailored to the varied needs and proficiency levels of learners. Since the Phil-IRI results indicate diverse reading performance among Junior High School students, the intervention manual is grade-specific (Grades 7–10) and provides adapted texts and strategies that match learners' readiness levels. This theoretical lens supports the study's focus on assessing students' reading performance and aligning interventions with their specific challenges.

Finally, the validation of the manual is grounded in Messick's (1995) framework of construct validity, which emphasizes that instructional materials must be assessed not only for content relevance but also for coherence, clarity, and alignment with educational outcomes. The participation of Regional and Division Education Program Supervisors, Head Teachers, and Master Teachers as validators ensures that the manual is evaluated from multiple expert perspectives, thereby strengthening its credibility and pedagogical soundness.

Taken together, these theories provide a strong foundation for the present study. Schema Theory and Sociocultural Theory justify the contextualization of reading materials, while TBLT ensures that activities are purposeful and engaging. Differentiated Instruction highlights the importance of tailoring lessons to students' needs, and Messick's framework underscores the necessity of systematic validation. Collectively, these perspectives inform the

development and validation of a contextualized reading intervention manual designed to improve the reading performance of struggling Junior High School learners in Region I.

Conceptual Framework

The study is anchored on several key concepts that guide the development and validation of a contextualized reading intervention manual for Junior High School struggling readers in Region I. Central to this framework is the principle of diagnostic assessment, which emphasizes the importance of identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses in reading as a foundation for designing effective instructional programs. Assessment tools such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) provide essential baseline data that inform educators of learners' actual reading performance and enable them to plan targeted interventions (Paris, 2005).

Building on diagnostic results, the concept of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) highlights that learners acquire reading skills more effectively when they engage in meaningful, purposeful tasks rather than in repetitive drills. By situating reading within authentic and functional contexts, learners are given opportunities to construct meaning, interact with texts, and develop higher-order comprehension skills (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). Relatedly, the concept of contextualization emphasizes aligning instructional materials with learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, making texts and activities more relatable and meaningful (Bernardo, 2010).

Another guiding concept is construct validity, which underscores the importance of ensuring that instructional materials are aligned with their intended learning outcomes. Validation processes must confirm that objectives, reading strategies, comprehension questions, and organization are pedagogically sound, coherent, and relevant (Messick, 1995). In line with this, expert judgment and multi-perspective validation are critical, as supervisors, head teachers, and master teachers offer complementary insights that strengthen the credibility and usability of the materials across educational contexts (Polit&Beck, 2006).

Lastly, the concept of inter-rater consistency highlights the importance of examining agreement among different evaluators to ensure the reliability of validation results. When judgments are consistent across various validators, confidence in the instructional material's quality and effectiveness is reinforced (Stemler, 2004).

Taken together, these concepts provide the foundation of the study. Diagnostic assessment identifies the learners' reading needs, task-based and contextualized instruction provides the framework for designing interventions, and systematic validation supported by principles of construct validity and inter-rater consistency ensures that the developed manuals are both relevant and reliable. Collectively, these concepts converge to support the overarching goal of improving reading proficiency among struggling learners in Junior High School in Region I.

The integration of these concepts demonstrates the logical flow of the study—from identifying learners' reading difficulties to designing contextualized and task-based

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interventions to ensuring the validity and reliability of the developed manuals. To clearly present this process, the study is organized through an Input-Process-Output (IPO) model. The inputs capture learners' reading performance data and the theoretical bases of reading instruction; the processes detail the development, contextualization, and validation of the intervention manuals; and the outputs represent the validated, contextualized reading intervention manuals for struggling readers in Junior High School in Region I. This model provides a structured framework that links the study's objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes in a coherent manner.

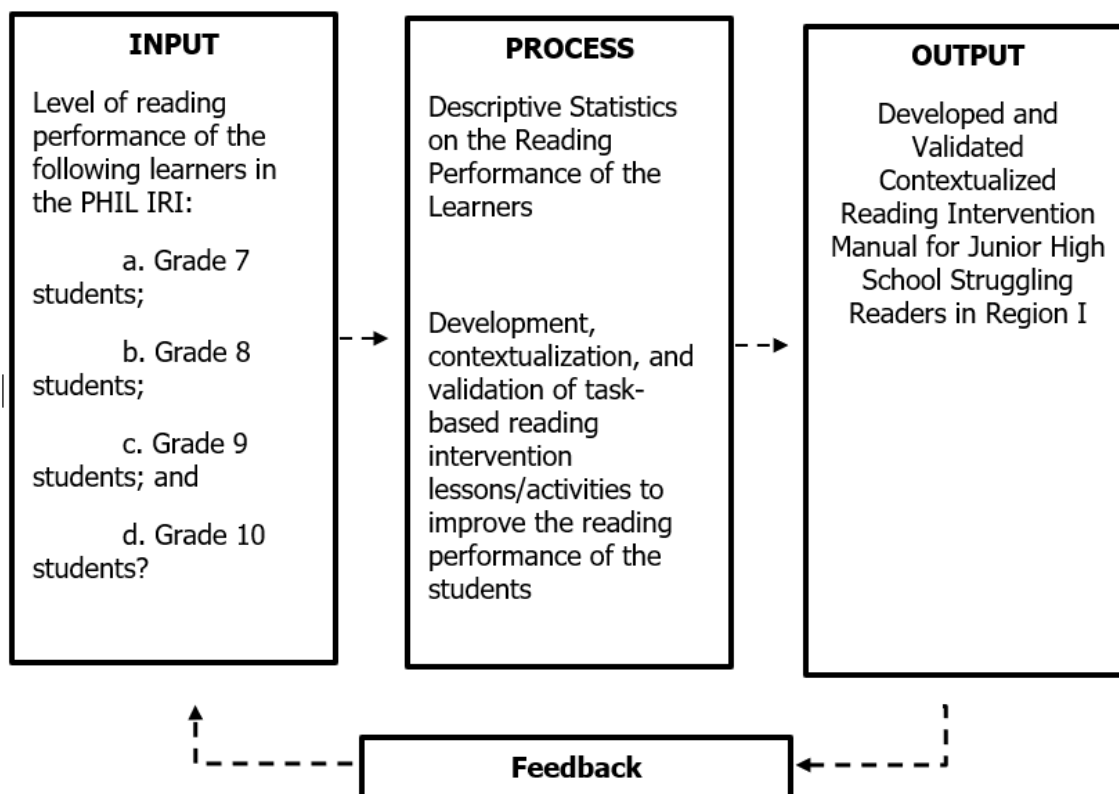


Figure 1. Research Paradigm of the Study

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study examined the impact of gamification on student engagement and learning outcomes in mathematics courses in various educational contexts in the Philippines.

Research Design

This study used a developmental research design, following the Research and Development (R&D) model proposed by Borg and Gall (1989). This design is most appropriate because the central objective of the study is to design, develop, and validate a contextualized

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reading intervention manual for struggling readers in Junior High School. Developmental research allows for both the description of current realities and the evaluation of newly created interventions. In this study, the descriptive aspect will be reflected in the assessment of learners' reading performance using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), while the evaluative component will be evident in the process of validating the developed manuals through expert assessment and statistical analysis. By combining these approaches, the study ensures that the interventions developed are grounded in the learners' actual needs and are systematically evaluated for effectiveness and relevance.

Research Steps

The study followed a systematic five-phase procedure. During the preparation phase, the researcher secured the necessary permissions from the Department of Education Regional Office, Division Offices, and school principals. In the assessment phase, the Phil-IRI results of selected Junior High School learners were collected to determine their reading levels across the four grade levels. This established the baseline data that informed the development of the intervention lessons.

The development phase involved creating task-based, contextualized reading lessons for each grade level, designed to address the specific needs identified in the assessment phase.

Once the manuals were developed, the validation phase took place, where expert validators, including Regional Education Program Supervisors, Division Education Program Supervisors, and Focal Persons in reading programs, assessed the manuals using the content validity checklist.

Finally, in the data analysis phase, the responses from validators were processed statistically to determine the validity and reliability of the developed materials.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

There are two major data sources for this study. The first came from the Phil-IRI results and was utilized to establish baseline data on their reading performance. This is central to the study since their performance directly informs the development of the contextualized intervention lessons. The second group of respondents consisted of the validators of the developed manuals, namely, Regional Education Program Supervisors, Division Education Program Supervisors, and Focal Persons in reading programs. These individuals were chosen because of their expertise in curriculum implementation, reading instruction, and program evaluation. Their assessments served as the primary basis for determining the content validity of the developed manuals.

Two major groups of respondents will provide the data for this study. The first group will be composed of Junior High School learners from Grades 7 to 10, whose Phil-IRI results will be utilized to establish baseline data on their reading performance. This group is central to the study since their performance directly informs the development of the contextualized

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intervention lessons. The second group of respondents will consist of the validators of the developed manuals:

Region 1 Education Program Supervisor	1
Division Education Program Supervisor (Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Pangasinan I, and Pangasinan II)	5
School Focal Persons (3 - Head Teachers/ Master Teachers and Key Reading Teachers / School Focal Persons per Division)	15
TOTAL	21

For the school's focal persons, the number of respondents is based on purposive sampling through the Delphi technique.

These individuals were chosen because of their expertise in curriculum implementation, reading instruction, and program evaluation. Their assessments will serve as the primary basis for determining the content validity of the developed manuals.

Data Analysis Methods

The data collected were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to address the research questions. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to describe the reading performance levels of learners across grade levels as indicated in the Phil-IRI.

The mean and frequency distributions were used to assess the extent to which validators agree on the manuals' validity across the four dimensions.

Research Validation

The validation of instructional materials is a process that cannot be confined to a single perspective. Instead, it requires the collaborative participation of multiple stakeholders, each bringing unique expertise and insights to ensure that developed resources are pedagogically sound, contextually appropriate, and practically effective. In the Philippine educational system, Regional and Division Education Program Supervisors (EPS), as well as Head Teachers and Master Teachers, play particularly important roles in shaping instructional practices and evaluating educational innovations. Their collective perspectives provide a multi-layered validation process that balances curriculum alignment with classroom realities.

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Regional and Division EPS contribute macro-level insights that focus on curriculum standards, policy integration, and systemic alignment. Their role is crucial in ensuring that instructional materials not only respond to local learner needs but also conform to DepEd's broader educational goals and policy directions. Meanwhile, Head Teachers and Master Teachers serve as bridges between policy and practice, providing grounded feedback grounded in daily teaching realities. They are well-positioned to evaluate the usability of materials, their alignment with instructional strategies, and their potential to improve learner outcomes. This dual involvement of administrators and classroom practitioners ensures that validation processes capture both theoretical soundness and practical applicability.

Research supports the importance of involving diverse evaluators in validation. According to Tinapay, Seno, Fernandez, Samillano, and Tirol (2021), the inclusion of multiple stakeholders enhances the credibility of validation results and improves the overall quality of instructional materials. Teachers, in particular, provide crucial feedback on the feasibility of implementing reading activities, the clarity of instructions, and the appropriateness of passages relative to learners' comprehension levels. On the other hand, supervisors ensure that the materials align with curricular expectations and contribute to long-term literacy development. This kind of multi-level validation creates materials that are not only contextually rich but also institutionally supported.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study focuses on the development and validation of a contextualized reading intervention manual designed specifically for struggling readers in Junior High School in Region I. The intervention manuals were crafted to address reading difficulties among learners in Grades 7, 8, 9, and 10, as identified by results from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). The scope of the study covers the design of task-based reading lessons and activities, the integration of contextualized reading passages reflective of the learners' sociocultural environment, and the validation of the manual's objectives, strategies, comprehension questions, organization, and presentation.

The study involved two major phases: (1) the development phase, where task-based and contextualized reading activities are created based on the identified needs of struggling readers, and (2) the validation phase, where the intervention manuals are evaluated by selected experts, including Regional Education Program Supervisors, Division Education Program Supervisors, Head Teachers, and Master Teachers in English. Their assessments focused on the level of content validity across the dimensions of objectives, strategies/passages, comprehension questions, and organization/presentation.

While the study aims to address the reading challenges of Junior High School learners, it is limited to public secondary schools in Region I. The manual does not cover the needs of learners from private schools, Senior High School, or elementary levels, as these groups have different literacy demands and curricular structures.

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The materials developed were contextualized to the Region I setting, incorporating cultural, environmental, and linguistic elements familiar to learners in the area. As such, the applicability of the intervention manual is limited outside the Ilocos Region, where learners' backgrounds, contexts, and experiences may differ. In addition, the content validity will rely on the judgment of selected validators, whose perspectives—while expert—may not fully capture the long-term effectiveness of the materials in varied classroom contexts.

In summary, the study is bounded by its focus on Grades 7 to 10 struggling readers in Region I, the use of Phil-IRI results as a diagnostic basis, and the evaluation of the manual's validity by educational experts. These delimitations ensure that the research remains feasible and focused, while also acknowledging the limitations of its generalizability and scope of application.

This research strictly adhered to established ethical standards in educational research. Informed consent was secured from all participating schools, learners, and teachers, and participation was entirely voluntary. The identities of all learners remain strictly confidential, with only aggregate results being reported. Similarly, the anonymity of validators was respected, and their responses were not attributed to their names in any publication or report. The researcher ensured honesty, transparency, and respect in handling all aspects of the study. In addition, all developed materials and results were used solely for academic and educational purposes. By adhering to these ethical safeguards, the study ensures that the rights, dignity, and welfare of participants are fully protected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. What is the level of reading performance of the following learners in the PHIL IRI:

- a. Grade 7 students;*
- b. Grade 8 students;*
- c. Grade 9 students; and*
- d. Grade 10 students?*

. The reading performance of learners across Grades 7 to 10 ($n = 319,310$) indicated that a substantial proportion of students are performing below grade-level expectations. In Grade 7 ($n = 92,352$), learners were mostly in Frustration 3 Level (22.17%), Instructional 3 Level (17.42%), and Independent 2 Level (13.65%), with only 13.69% at Grade Ready. Similarly, Grade 8 learners ($n = 85,010$) showed high percentages in Frustration 3 Level (20.69%) and Instructional 3 Level (19.33%), with 15.27% at Grade Ready. Grade 9 ($n = 67,231$) and Grade 10 ($n = 74,717$) exhibited the same trend, with the highest percentages in Frustration 3 Level (18.89% and 19.36%, respectively) and relatively low percentages in Independent 3 Level (7.80% and 8.64%, respectively). The overall data indicate that learners are performing approximately three grade levels behind (overall Frustration 3 Level = 20.43%; Instructional 3 Level = 16.70%), and only 15.92% are at Grade Ready.

The results show that many learners in Region I struggle with reading comprehension and fluency, demonstrating gaps in foundational literacy skills that hinder progression to independent reading. Frustration-level performance highlights the need for targeted scaffolding and remediation.

SOP 2. What task-based reading intervention lessons/activities may be developed to improve the reading performance of the students?

Based on the reading assessment, four intervention manuals were developed: Grades 4–7, 5–8, 6–9, and 7–10. The manuals start at Grade 4, responding to the finding that learners are three years behind expected reading levels. Lessons integrate K–12 reading competencies at each grade level, including literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension, use of context clues, cause-and-effect analysis, determination of values and themes, and reflection. Each lesson includes contextualized literary selections from the four provinces of Region I (Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, and Pangasinan), comprehension activities, a teacher’s guide with pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading strategies, cross-curricular integration, and assessment notes.

The manuals were designed to systematically address struggling readers’ needs by providing scaffolded, contextually relevant lessons that align with learners’ cognitive levels and the K–12 curriculum. The design ensures a gradual progression from frustration to independent reading while targeting both comprehension skills and the integration of values.

The intervention manuals provide educators with structured, developmentally appropriate tools for improving reading performance. Their contextualization ensures learner engagement, cultural relevance, and alignment with curriculum standards, promoting both literacy acquisition and holistic learner development.

SOP 3. What is the level of content validity of the reading intervention manuals as assessed by the Regional Education Program Supervisor, Division Education Program Supervisors and Focal Persons in the following dimensions?

- a. clarity and relevance of objectives,***
- b. appropriateness of reading strategies and reading passages,***
- c. quality and alignment of comprehension questions, and***
- d. organization and presentation?***

Expert validation across four domains—clarity and relevance of objectives, appropriateness of reading strategies and passages, quality and alignment of comprehension questions, and organization and presentation—showed consistently high content validity. Clarity and relevance of objectives and quality and alignment of comprehension questions received a mean of 4.74, appropriateness of reading strategies and passages 4.66, and organization and presentation 4.54. The overall mean was 4.67, interpreted as Excellent/Highly

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Appropriate. The majority of items (over 70%) were rated Excellent, and no items received Weak or Poor ratings.

The findings indicate that the manuals are clear, developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and pedagogically sound. High content validity confirms that the manuals are coherent, aligned with the K–12 curriculum, and suitable for scaffolding struggling readers' literacy skills.

The strong validation results ensure that the manuals can be implemented reliably in classrooms, providing teachers with effective, evidence-based resources to improve reading performance. This enhances the manuals' credibility and supports their use as intervention tools to help learners progress from frustration to independent reading levels.

SUMMARY

The findings reveal that most learners in Grades 7 to 10 in Region I are performing below the expected reading level, with many classified under frustration and instructional levels, and only a few reaching independent or grade-ready proficiency. On average, learners are about three grade levels behind, indicating substantial gaps in reading comprehension and fluency. This situation underscores the urgent need for structured and targeted reading interventions to help learners bridge these gaps and meet grade-level expectations.

To address this concern, four intervention manuals covering Grades 4 to 10 were developed, beginning at a lower grade level to accommodate the identified reading performance delay. These manuals are carefully designed to align with the K–12 curriculum and the Phil-IRI framework, incorporating contextualized texts, scaffolded comprehension activities, and guided teaching strategies. They aim to gradually support learners in progressing from frustration to independent reading levels while also addressing both their cognitive skills and emotional engagement in reading.

The evaluation of these manuals showed excellent content validity, with high ratings across all key areas, including objectives, reading materials, comprehension questions, and overall organization. With an overall mean score of 4.67, the manuals are considered clear, developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and instructionally effective. This confirms their reliability as valuable tools in improving the reading abilities of struggling learners.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that a significant number of learners in Grades 7 to 10 in Region I are not meeting expected reading proficiency levels, with most performing at frustration and instructional levels and only a small percentage achieving grade-ready or independent status. This indicates that learners are generally three grade levels behind, revealing serious gaps in reading comprehension and fluency. Such findings underscore the urgent need for systematic, targeted interventions to support learners in developing essential literacy skills.

In response to this need, structured and scaffolded reading intervention manuals were developed, anchored on the K–12 curriculum and Phil-IRI framework. These manuals provide

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contextualized, developmentally appropriate, and culturally relevant learning experiences that guide learners progressively from frustration to independent reading levels. Through integrated strategies, comprehension activities, and teacher-guided instruction, the materials aim not only to improve reading skills but also to enhance learner engagement and holistic development.

Furthermore, the intervention manuals demonstrated excellent content validity, confirming their clarity, alignment, and pedagogical soundness. With strong validation results from educational experts, the materials are deemed reliable and effective tools for classroom implementation. Overall, the study affirms that well-designed, evidence-based interventions can significantly improve reading performance and address learning gaps among struggling readers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools are encouraged to implement targeted reading interventions to address the significant gaps in learners' reading performance, particularly among those at the frustration and instructional levels. Early intervention, beginning at lower grade levels, may help address reading development delays. Teachers are advised to regularly assess learners' reading abilities and provide scaffolded support tailored to their needs. The use of contextualized and culturally relevant reading materials is also recommended to enhance learner engagement, motivation, and overall comprehension and fluency.

The developed intervention manuals may be utilized across appropriate grade levels to systematically guide learners from frustration to independent reading. Educators are encouraged to follow the structured lessons, aligned competencies, and integrated approaches within the manuals to maximize learning outcomes. To support effective implementation, schools and education offices may provide training and continuous support for teachers. Furthermore, the manuals are recommended for integration into school reading programs as validated instructional resources, with ongoing review and future research suggested to ensure their effectiveness and adaptability across different contexts.

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