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Reading Proficiency and Challenges of Grade V Learners: Towards a Structured Reading Program

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Abstract: ***This study determined the reading proficiency of Grade V learners in Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, Schools Division of Camarines Sur, as the basis for a structured reading program for School Year 2025 to 2026. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed involving 49 Grade V learners. Reading proficiency was determined using Phil-IRI pre-test results, while a validated researcher-made questionnaire measured physiological, environmental, and technological challenges. Data were analyzed using weighted mean, ranking, and Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient. Results revealed that most learners performed below grade level. Technological challenges obtained the highest mean, followed by environmental and physiological challenges. Significant inverse relationships were found between reading proficiency and all identified challenges ($p < 0.001$). Based on the findings, Project BUHI was developed to strengthen learners' reading proficiency through structured intervention. The study concludes that reducing identified barriers and implementing targeted reading interventions can improve learners' reading performance and independent reading habits. Findings revealed that only 22 learners achieved grade-level reading proficiency, while the majority were below expected levels, indicating widespread difficulties in fluency and comprehension. The overall extent of challenges was rated as To a large extent (3.858), with technological factors identified as the most significant, followed by environmental and physiological factors. Results further showed a strong and significant inverse relationship between reading proficiency and the identified challenges ($p < 0.001$), with technological challenges exhibiting the strongest association. Based on these findings, Project BUHI (Building Understanding and Habits in Independent Reading) was developed as a structured intervention program to address identified gaps. The study concludes that most learners experience significant reading difficulties influenced largely by technological and environmental factors, and that reducing these barriers is essential in improving reading proficiency and fostering independent reading skills.***

Keywords: Reading Proficiency; Grade V Learners; Phil-IRI; Reading Intervention; Structured Reading Program; Literacy Development

1. Introduction

Reading is widely recognized as a cornerstone of education, providing learners with the foundational skills necessary for academic achievement and lifelong learning. The ability to read effectively enables students to access, comprehend, and analyze information, which is essential not only for mastering language arts but also for succeeding in other subjects, such as science, mathematics, and social studies. Reading is both a cognitive and social process that allows individuals to construct meaning from text, connect new knowledge with prior experiences, and engage critically with information.

For Grade V learners, reading serves as a gateway to more advanced academic concepts, higher-order thinking, and independent learning. At this stage, learners are expected to not only decode words accurately but also comprehend complex texts, expand their vocabulary, and develop critical thinking skills through reading. Unfortunately, many learners encounter challenges that hinder their ability to read fluently and comprehend meaning effectively.

Struggling readers often face difficulties in decoding, word recognition, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension. These challenges can negatively affect academic performance, self-confidence, and overall motivation to learn.

Research indicates that reading difficulties among elementary learners are influenced by a combination of cognitive, socio-economic, environmental, and instructional factors. Learners with limited access to reading materials at home or in school, insufficient support from parents or teachers, or gaps in foundational literacy skills are more likely to experience challenges in reading comprehension and fluency. In addition, lack of motivation, engagement, and exposure to culturally and contextually relevant texts can further impede learners' reading development. These factors collectively highlight the complex nature of reading acquisition and underscore the need for targeted interventions.

In response to the challenges faced by learners, the Philippine government has enacted policies and programs to strengthen literacy education. One of the primary legal bases for this study is Republic Act No. 10533, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which institutionalizes the K-12 Curriculum and mandates the development of literacy and numeracy skills among learners. The law emphasizes that the Department of Education (DepEd) and schools must ensure learners acquire essential competencies, including reading proficiency, to prepare them for higher education, employment, and active citizenship. Another important legal reference is DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2012, which provides guidelines on the assessment of learners' performance and the use of assessment results to inform instruction. This order highlights the critical role of continuous assessment in identifying learning gaps, planning interventions, and monitoring learners' progress.

Despite these policy mandates, research and school observations suggest that Grade V learners in Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, Schools Division of Camarines Sur, continue to encounter challenges in reading. Preliminary assessments indicate variations in reading

proficiency, with some learners struggling to decode words, read fluently, or comprehend texts at their grade level. Factors such as limited vocabulary, lack of reading materials, insufficient motivation, and diverse learning abilities contribute to these challenges.

In light of these needs, this study proposes Project BUHI (Building Understanding and Habits in Independent Reading), a reading program designed specifically for Grade V learners in Peñafrancia Elementary School. Project BUHI aims to determine the current reading proficiency of learners, identify the factors affecting their reading proficiency, and implement interventions based on assessment results.

Project BUHI addresses this need by providing a structured, assessment-driven, and motivational reading program tailored to the specific needs of learners. By integrating evidence-based principles, culturally relevant content, and targeted interventions, the program aims to enhance reading comprehension, fluency, and engagement, ultimately supporting learners in becoming independent, confident, and lifelong readers. This study, therefore, provides both a diagnostic evaluation of reading proficiency and a practical intervention framework that responds to the educational needs of Grade V learners in Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, Schools Division of Camarines Sur, for the school year 2025–2026.

1.2. Research Objectives

This study aims to determine the reading proficiency of Grade V learners in Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, Schools Division of Camarines Sur as basis for a strategic reading program for school year 2025-2026.

Specifically, this seeks answers to the following questions:

1) What is the reading proficiency of the Grade V learners based on the Phil-IRI result?
2) To what extent do the contributory factors affect the reading proficiency of the Grade V learners:
   a) Physiological
   b) Environmental
   c) Technological
3) Is there a significant relationship between the contributory challenges and the reading proficiency of the learners?
4) What reading intervention can be proposed based on the findings?

1.3. Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on determining the reading proficiency of Grade V learners in Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, Schools Division of Camarines Sur, as a basis for proposing a strategic reading program for the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it aims to assess the learners' reading proficiency, identify the contributing challenges affecting their reading performance, and develop an appropriate reading intervention program grounded on the results of the study.

The study is limited to Grade V learners officially enrolled in Peñafrancia Elementary School during the specified school year. The assessment of reading level will primarily utilize standardized tools such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and other relevant instruments deemed appropriate by the researcher.

The contributing challenges to be examined may include selected learner-related, home-related, and school-related variables; however, these will be confined only to those included in the research instrument. Furthermore, the study will focus only on reading proficiency in terms of word recognition, fluency, and comprehension, and will not cover other language macro skills such as writing, listening, and speaking. The strategic reading program will be based solely on the findings derived from the collected data and is intended for implementation within the same school context.

The results of this study may not be generalized to other grade levels, schools, or districts, as it is limited in scope to a specific group of learners and setting. Additionally, external factors beyond the control of the researcher, such as learners' personal circumstances and environmental influences, are not exhaustively explored but are considered within the limits of the study.

2. Related Literature

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is the Department of Education's prescribed assessment tool for determining learners' reading proficiency and planning appropriate interventions (Abril et al., 2022). However, effective implementation remains a challenge due to teachers' heavy workloads and inconsistent delivery of intervention programs. Casingal (2022) emphasized that accurate Phil-IRI administration and well-planned remedial classes are essential in addressing learners' reading difficulties, while Figuracion and Ormilla (2021) recommended integrating dedicated reading time into daily classroom instruction to enhance reading performance. Similarly, Hipolito-Casupanan (2024) reported significant improvements in learners' oral reading competence following the implementation of the Phil-IRI program, highlighting the effectiveness of systematic reading interventions.

Several studies underscore that reading proficiency depends on the development of essential reading components, including accuracy, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics, and language comprehension. Smith and Johnson (2023) emphasized that reading accuracy is fundamental to fluency and comprehension, while Smith (2023) identified fluency as a prerequisite for meaningful understanding of texts. Likewise, Smith and Lee (2023) stressed that vocabulary development strengthens comprehension, critical thinking, and overall literacy. Jiang and Wang (2023), together with Dela Cruz and Santos (2023), highlighted phonemic awareness as a strong predictor of reading success, whereas Rasinski and Hoffman (2020) emphasized that explicit phonics instruction is essential for accurate word recognition and reading fluency.

Research likewise demonstrates that language proficiency and background knowledge significantly influence reading comprehension. Snow (2010) and Gough and Tunmer (2018), through the Simple View of Reading, explained that reading comprehension results from the interaction between decoding skills and language comprehension. Supporting this view, Ghaffari and Ghaffari (2022) found that prior knowledge and language proficiency significantly improve learners' understanding of texts. Similarly, Zorilla (2023) reported that learning gaps resulting from prolonged modular learning limited learners' background knowledge and contributed to reading and writing difficulties among Filipino students. Idulog et al. (2023) likewise observed persistent challenges in reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and critical thinking among Filipino learners.

Several authors identified multiple factors influencing reading proficiency beyond classroom instruction. Maglunob and Tabernilla (2023) found that learners' health, mothers' educational attainment, and access to reading materials significantly affect reading achievement. Torres (2019) likewise identified home-related factors, learners' motivation, prior knowledge, and availability of reading materials as significant determinants of reading comprehension, while Garcia et al. (2019) emphasized the positive influence of parental involvement. Uduak et al. (2022) further highlighted the effects of socioeconomic status, parental education, and cultural background on learners' reading abilities.

Recent literature also recognizes the contributions of technology in improving literacy instruction. Schiavo et al. (2021) demonstrated that integrating read-aloud technology with eye-tracking significantly improved learners' reading comprehension, while Imperial and Ong (2021) showed that machine learning and lexical analysis enhanced the readability assessment of Filipino reading materials. However, Esteban, Calang, and Pagador (2024) noted the limited local research on digital technology integration in reading instruction, indicating the need for further investigation within the Philippine educational context.

Studies further reveal that intellectual, psychological, and environmental factors significantly shape learners' reading development. Keren et al. (2019) and Shalev et al. (2019) associated reading difficulties with lower executive functioning and emotional competence, whereas Undheim and Sund (2018) linked poor reading performance with anxiety, school stress, and depressive symptoms. De Guzman and De Guzman (2023) emphasized the role of metacognitive reading strategies in improving comprehension. Moreover, Çiğdemir and Akyol (2022) and Cruz (2021) concluded that supportive home and school environments, together with adequate educational resources, are essential for improving reading achievement.

Given the persistent decline in Filipino learners' literacy performance, the literature strongly supports the implementation of structured reading intervention programs. Misanes and Pascual (2023) reported that nearly all learners in their study fell within the frustration reading level following the pandemic, reflecting the serious impact of interrupted learning. Roque (2023) likewise emphasized that reading comprehension and fluency are indispensable life skills necessary for academic success and socioeconomic participation. Collectively, these studies provide strong empirical support for developing a structured reading intervention program that addresses the multifaceted factors affecting the reading proficiency of Grade V learners.

3. Significance of the Study

The ability to read with understanding is fundamental to learners' academic success and lifelong learning. In elementary education, Grade V serves as a crucial stage where learners are expected to transition from learning to read toward reading to learn. However, many learners still encounter difficulties in fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary, which may hinder their performance across different subject areas.

Grade V Learners. It may provide essential data on the current reading abilities of learners, identifying those who are at independent, instructional, and frustration levels. By assessing these proficiencies, the study may help teachers and school administrators better understand the specific reading difficulties and needs of Grade V learners. The results may serve as a basis for developing a strategic reading program that is responsive, targeted, and appropriate to the learners' needs. Furthermore, the program may support the improvement of learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary, and overall literacy skills, which are fundamental to academic success across all subject areas.

Grade V Teachers. It may serve as a valuable basis in understanding the actual reading proficiency and specific literacy needs of their learners. By identifying whether students are at the frustration, instructional, or independent reading level, teachers may design more appropriate and targeted reading interventions and classroom strategies. The strategic reading program may guide them in selecting suitable materials, activities, and approaches that address the reading difficulties of learners, thereby improving comprehension, fluency, and overall academic performance.

School Heads. They may gain a clear understanding of the current literacy status of the learners, including those who may require additional support or intervention. The results of the study may serve as a strong basis for developing and implementing a targeted reading program that addresses the specific needs of the learners. Moreover, the findings may help the school head in planning appropriate instructional strategies, allocating resources effectively, and strengthening school-based literacy initiatives to improve overall reading proficiency among pupils.

Public Schools District Supervisor. The findings may serve as an evidence-based guide in planning, monitoring, and strengthening district-level literacy interventions and support programs. By identifying learners' specific reading needs, the strategic reading program may be aligned with district goals and DepEd literacy initiatives, enabling the supervisor to make informed decisions on resource allocation, teacher support, and program implementation to improve learners' reading outcomes across schools in the district.

Parents. The study provides important information that may guide the development of a strategic reading program suited to the learners' needs. This may allow parents to work closely with teachers in encouraging reading habits, providing guidance, and creating a supportive home environment that strengthens their children's literacy skills.

Community. The study may provide valuable information that may guide the development of a strategic reading program in Peñafrancia Elementary School. Such a program encourages the active involvement of parents, local leaders, and other community stakeholders in promoting reading habits and providing learning support at home and in the community. Indeed, improving learners' reading skills contributes to the development of more literate, confident, and productive members of the community.

Stakeholders. The findings of this study may be beneficial to various stakeholders as it provides valuable information on the reading level of Grade V learners in Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, Schools Division Office of Camarines Sur. For school administrators and education leaders, the results may serve as a basis for planning and implementing an effective and strategic reading program that addresses learners' specific literacy needs. Teachers may gain insights into the reading abilities of their pupils, enabling them to design appropriate instructional strategies and interventions to improve reading comprehension and fluency. Parents may become more aware of their children's reading performance and may provide better support at home. For the learners, the strategic reading program may help strengthen their reading skills, boost their confidence, and enhance their overall academic performance. Lastly, the study may serve as a reference for future researchers who wish to conduct related studies on reading development and literacy programs in elementary schools.

Department of Education – Camarines Sur. It may provide a clear and data-driven understanding of the learners' current reading proficiency. By identifying the specific reading proficiency and challenges of the pupils, the school and the Department of Education (DepEd) Camarines Sur may design a targeted and strategic reading program that addresses the learners' needs. The findings of the study may serve as a basis for developing appropriate interventions, instructional strategies, and support mechanisms to improve reading comprehension and literacy skills.

DepEd Officials. The study offers an evidence-based foundation for planning and implementing a strategic reading program that addresses specific literacy gaps. The results may guide decision-makers in designing appropriate interventions, allocating resources, and strengthening school and district literacy initiatives. Ultimately, the strategic reading program may serve as a model for improving reading proficiency and supporting the Department of Education's goal of ensuring that all learners develop functional literacy skills essential for academic success.

Curriculum Writers. The study identifies specific strengths and gaps in literacy skills, which serve as a foundation for designing a targeted and effective reading program. This ensures that the proposed program aligns with the actual needs of the students, promotes improved reading comprehension, fosters lifelong literacy skills, and enhances overall academic performance.

Future Researchers. This study may establish a data-driven foundation for the design and implementation of a targeted reading program that addresses specific gaps and challenges. Future researchers may use the findings as a reference to develop, refine, or evaluate reading interventions, instructional strategies, and curriculum enhancements, ultimately contributing to improved literacy outcomes and fostering a culture of evidence-based education in similar school contexts.

Researcher Herself. The researcher may identify specific areas where students struggle, thereby informing the design of a targeted and effective reading program. This knowledge may not only enhance the researcher's skills in assessing literacy and developing instructional interventions but also serve as a foundation for creating strategies that may improve students' reading comprehension and overall academic performance, ensuring that the proposed program addresses their actual needs.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, wherein quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative inquiry to explain and enrich the numerical findings. This approach enabled the researcher to determine the reading proficiency levels and contributory challenges of Grade V learners through statistical analysis and subsequently gain deeper insights into the underlying causes of these challenges through interviews and discussions. The integration of both phases provided a comprehensive understanding of learners' reading difficulties and served as a sound basis for developing a structured reading intervention program.

The quantitative phase addressed the first three research problems by determining the learners' reading proficiency through the Phil-IRI assessment, measuring the extent of challenges affecting reading proficiency using descriptive statistics, and examining the relationship between these challenges and reading performance through correlation analysis. The qualitative phase complemented these findings by exploring learners' experiences, contextual factors, and perceived barriers to reading. The combined results informed the design of a structured reading program responsive to the learners' identified needs.

4.2. Participants

The study involved 49 Grade V learners enrolled at Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, Division of Camarines Sur, during the School Year 2025–2026. Using total population sampling, all Grade V learners participated in the quantitative phase of the study to ensure a comprehensive assessment of their reading proficiency and the challenges influencing their reading development.

4.3. Data Gathering Instruments

The primary quantitative data were obtained from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Pre-test results provided by the District Reading Coordinator. To assess the contributory challenges affecting reading proficiency, the researcher developed a structured checklist questionnaire based on relevant literature and previous studies. The instrument also included items related to the proposed reading intervention program. To enrich the quantitative findings, qualitative data were gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended questions involving learners, teachers, and selected parents. These methods provided deeper insights into factors such as home literacy environment, instructional practices, learner motivation, access to reading materials, and language-related barriers.

4.4. Questionnaire Development and Validation

The researcher developed the questionnaire based on the study's Statement of the Problem and a review of related literature. The instrument underwent expert validation by a Public Schools District Supervisor, a Master Teacher in English, and the school's Reading Coordinator to ensure its content validity. Following validation, a pilot test was conducted to evaluate the instrument's clarity, reliability, and appropriateness. Feedback from the validators and pilot participants was incorporated before securing approval from the thesis adviser and obtaining permission from the district supervisor and school head to conduct the actual data collection.

4.5. Data Collection Procedure

Following the necessary approvals, the researcher personally administered and retrieved the questionnaires through face-to-face distribution, ensuring a high retrieval rate and organized data collection. Interviews and focus group discussions were likewise conducted to gather qualitative evidence that complemented the quantitative findings. Additionally, extensive library research using books, journals, and related studies supported the conceptual and theoretical foundations of the investigation.

4.6. Statistical Treatment of Data

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Weighted Mean was employed to determine the extent of the challenges affecting learners' reading proficiency, while a five-point Likert scale was used to interpret the responses. Ranking was applied to identify the most significant contributory challenges experienced by the learners. To determine the relationship between reading proficiency and the identified challenges, correlation analysis was utilized. These statistical procedures ensured an objective interpretation of the findings and provided empirical evidence for the development of the proposed structured reading intervention program.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Reading Proficiency of Grade V Learners of Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, SDO Camarines Sur based on Phil IRI Pre-Test Results

The Department of Education created the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) as an evaluation instrument to gauge pupils' reading proficiency in public elementary schools. Its goal is to pinpoint students' reading strengths and weaknesses, with an emphasis on comprehension, oral reading, and silent reading. The Phil-IRI is crucial for developing young learners' reading ability, according to DepEd (2019). By identifying particular reading difficulties, instructors may carry out focused interventions meant to enhance learners' reading abilities, guaranteeing that each child reaches the anticipated literacy level for their grade. The Phil-IRI offers a fundamental framework for literacy initiatives in public elementary schools. It provides insightful information about kids' reading development and helps schools create programs and activities that overcome comprehension and fluency gaps. This is in line with the national goal of raising literacy rates and giving Filipino students a solid foundation in reading.

Reading Proficiency of Grade V Learners

Learners' reading levels are divided into four primary categories by the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI): Independent, Instructional, Frustration, and Non-Reader. These levels assist instructors in evaluating and comprehending students' reading skills, especially at the Grade V level, and in offering suitable interventions.

Reading proficiency is important for general cognitive development in addition to having an influence on academic success. In order to determine the factors that affect reading competence and investigate possible interventions to improve literacy abilities, this study will evaluate and analyze the reading levels of students in Grade V.

Table 1: Phil IRI Pre-Test Results Summary for Grade V Penafrancia Elementary School Buhi North District, SDO Camarines Sur

Grade Level	Total Assessed	At Grade Level (GST) Score between 14-20)	2-Level Down (Score between 8-13)				3-Level Down (Score between 0-7)			
			Ind	Inst	Frus	Total	Ind	Inst	Frus	Total
5	49	2	10	10	10	30	11	5	1	17

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) pre-test results for Grade V learners at Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, SDO Camarines Sur, are shown in Table 1. Only a tiny percentage of the 49 pupils who were evaluated showed grade-level reading proficiency: 2 individuals read independently, 10 had instructional help,

and 10 experienced frustrations, for a total of 22 students at grade level. In the meantime, 17 children scored three levels below grade level and 30 students scored two levels below, suggesting that a sizable portion of the pupils struggle with reading comprehension and fluency. These findings demonstrate the necessity of focused reading interventions to meet the class's disparate reading levels.

The Phil-IRI pre-test findings show a troubling reading disparity. Thirty pupils read two levels below grade level, and seventeen students read three levels below, while twenty-two out of forty-nine students performed at grade level. This shows that a sizable section of the class struggles with reading comprehension and fluency, highlighting the critical need for focused, organized reading interventions to help students achieve grade-level competency.

According to the Phil-IRI pre-test findings for pupils in Grade V, most of them have reading difficulties. Of the 49 kids, only 22 performed at grade level, and a sizable portion—30 students two levels below and 17 students three levels below—showed substantial difficulties with reading comprehension and fluency. This indicates that the majority of students need targeted and differentiated reading assistance, underscoring the critical need for organized reading initiatives like Project BUHI to enhance reading abilities and move students closer to grade-level competency.

The majority of kids struggle with reading, according to the pre-test findings of the Phil-IRI for Grade V learners. Of the 49 pupils, only 22 performed at grade level, and a sizable portion—30 students two levels below and 17 students three levels below—showed substantial challenges with reading comprehension and fluency. This indicates that the majority of students need targeted and tailored reading assistance, underscoring the critical need for interventions like Project BUHI to enhance reading abilities and move students closer to grade-level competency. Ligpitan, Pasilan, Tolentino, and Hipolito (2025) found that the TechPlay Fusion Strategy significantly improved Grade V learners' reading comprehension, raising post-test scores from satisfactory to very satisfactory after implementation, highlighting the value of structured reading programs.

The results of Ligpitan, Pasilan, Tolentino, and Hipolito (2025) directly affect the current investigation. They show how students' reading comprehension and general literacy performance may be greatly enhanced by organized, interesting, and contextually appropriate reading programs. This emphasizes how crucial it is for the current study to develop Project BUHI as a focused, differentiated reading program that fills in the unique gaps found in the Phil-IRI pre-test findings, especially for kids who are two and three levels below grade level. The objective of bringing most Grade V students closer to grade-level competency can be achieved by implementing relevant, scaffolded, and contextually meaningful activities that improve students' reading fluency, comprehension, and motivation.

5.2. Extent of Contributory Challenges to the Reading Proficiency of Grade V Learners

The extent to which different circumstances impact students' reading performance and growth is demonstrated by the magnitude of contributing difficulties to Grade V students' reading competence. Decoding difficulties, vocabulary restrictions, reading comprehension, motivation, the family environment, the availability of reading resources, and teaching methods can all have an impact on reading competency. The researcher can identify the elements that have the biggest influence on students' reading skills by evaluating the severity of these difficulties.

5.2.1. Physiological Challenges

These factors play a significant role in the reading difficulties experienced by Grade V learners. These factors may include visual and auditory processing issues, such as difficulties in tracking words on a page or distinguishing sounds, which are essential for decoding and comprehension. Additionally, conditions like dyslexia, attention deficits, or other neurological differences can affect the brain's ability to process written language efficiently.

The average weighted mean of 3.745 in Table 2 indicates that the physiological difficulties that contributed to the reading proficiency of Grade V students were typically encountered to a significant degree. With a weighted mean of 4.143, difficulty coordinating eye movements while reading ranked highest among the indicators. Nutritional deficiencies that affect cognitive development and reading ability came in second (4.122), followed by learning disabilities that impair reading comprehension and fluency (4.082). Fatigue or sleep deprivation lowering reading performance and comprehension (3.959), speech and language issues and poor memory retention (3.980), and poor physical health impairing focus and engagement in reading activities (4.020) were other issues that were widely perceived. With a weighted mean of 3.837, hearing impairments that interfere with comprehension of reading instructions and conversations and trouble concentrating during reading sessions were ranked lower; however, they were still thought to occur often. Notably, the lowest weighted mean of 1.204, which is translated as "not at all," was achieved for reading difficulties brought on by impaired vision or eyesight, suggesting that this difficulty was not frequently encountered by the students.

Table 2: Extent of Physiological Challenges Contributory to the Reading Proficiency of Grade V Learners

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Difficulty in reading due to poor eyesight or vision problems.	1.204	N	12
2. Hearing difficulties affecting understanding of reading instructions and discussions.	3.837	L	10
3. Frequent headaches or eye strain while reading texts.	3.857	L	9
4. Poor physical health affecting concentration and participation in reading activities.	4.02	L	4
5. Fatigue or lack of sleep reducing reading performance and comprehension.	3.959	L	7
6. Difficulty in focusing attention during reading sessions.	3.837	L	11
7. Speech and language difficulties affecting word recognition and pronunciation.	3.98	L	5.5

8. Learning disabilities that interfere with reading comprehension and fluency.	4.082	L	3
9. Poor memory retention affecting understanding of reading passages.	3.98	L	5.5
10. Slow processing of information while reading texts.	3.918	L	8
11. Difficulty in coordinating eye movements during reading.	4.143	L	1
12. Nutritional deficiencies affecting cognitive development and reading ability.	4.122	L	2
AWM	3.745	L	

The results show that a number of physiological parameters have a major impact on students' reading competence in Grade V. Learners' physical and cognitive conditions may impair their ability to concentrate, process information, understand texts, and actively participate in reading activities, according to the high ratings for poor physical health, speech and language difficulties, poor memory retention, exhaustion, hearing difficulties, and lack of attention. If these issues are not resolved, reading fluency and general academic achievement may suffer. However, as seen by its extremely low mean score, poor vision or vision issues were not thought to be a prevalent concern.

This suggests that other physiological aspects of health, cognition, and language development are more important in determining students' reading proficiency and should therefore receive more attention from educators, parents, and school administrators, even though visual impairment is not a major concern among the respondents.

The findings suggest that students' reading competence in Grade V is significantly influenced by physiological conditions. There are clear issues with physical health, language and speech development, memory retention, exhaustion, hearing, and attention that might hinder students' comprehension, processing, and interaction with reading materials. These results imply that enhancing students' general health and cognitive abilities may help them achieve higher reading results. On the other hand, visual issues seem to have little effect on the students' reading ability, suggesting that in order to improve reading performance, treatments should concentrate more on treating health-related, cognitive, and language-based issues.

Sutanto and Mangunsong's (2025) study, which discovered that working memory and cognitive skills are important determinants of reading comprehension among primary school students, supports the current study's findings. Their research showed that pupils who had greater memory and cognitive processing abilities also had better reading comprehension, underscoring the critical role that cognitive functioning plays in good reading performance.

The similarities between the current results and the research of Sutanto and Mangunsong (2025) indicate that learners' reading competency may be directly impacted by physiological aspects that affect cognitive functioning, such as diet, health, memory retention, and information processing. As a result, schools should improve their nutrition and health programs, do routine health exams, and offer treatments that promote memory improvement and cognitive growth. These actions can contribute to the development of favorable circumstances that enhance students' reading comprehension and general academic performance.

5.2.2. Environmental Challenges

These factors play a crucial role in the reading difficulties experienced by Grade V learners. These factors include limited access to reading materials at home, lack of parental support or involvement in literacy activities, and an unsupportive home or school environment.

Table 3 presents those environmental challenges contributed to the reading proficiency of Grade V learners to a large extent, as indicated by the average weighted mean of 3.845. Inadequate library facilities and restricted access to school reading materials (4.143), family obligations cutting into reading practice time (4.122), and high-class sizes restricting teacher attention and reading support (4.041) were the main obstacles. Peer pressure, a bad classroom atmosphere, a lack of reading programs, and a lack of family support were all recognized as significant contributing factors. In the meantime, the lowest means (3.224), which are defined as happening to a considerable amount, were acquired by frequent absence that affects participation in reading sessions and inadequate parental assistance and supervision in reading activities.

Table 3: Extent of Environmental Challenges Contributory to the Reading Proficiency of Grade V Learners

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Presence of noise and distractions at home during reading activities.	3.857	L	8.5
2. Lack of a quiet and comfortable place for reading and studying.	3.837	L	10
3. Limited availability of books and reading materials at home.	3.857	L	8.5
4. Insufficient parental support and supervision in reading activities.	3.224	M	11.5
5. Poor classroom environment that affects concentration during reading instruction.	3.959	L	6
6. Large class size limiting teacher attention and reading assistance.	4.041	L	3
7. Limited encouragement from family members to develop reading habits.	3.98	L	4.5
8. Frequent absenteeism affecting participation in reading lessons.	3.224	M	11.5
9. Peer influence that discourages interest in reading activities.	3.98	L	4.5
10. Lack of school-based reading programs and literacy activities.	3.918	L	7
11. Inadequate library facilities and limited access to school reading resources.	4.143	L	1
12. Household responsibilities reducing time for reading practice.	4.122	L	2
AWM	3.845	L	

The results show that environmental factors have a major impact on students' reading competence in Grade V. The high scores for poor library facilities, restricted access to reading materials, domestic duties, and big class sizes imply that obstacles to successful reading development might arise in both home and school settings. These elements may restrict students' access to the resources they need to develop their literacy abilities, as well as their opportunity to practice reading and get tailored help.

Furthermore, the high ratings for peer impact, school setting, family encouragement, and reading programs emphasize how crucial a supportive learning environment is for developing reading habits. Even though absenteeism and parental support were only somewhat perceived, they are still important variables that might have an impact on students' involvement and reading development.

The findings suggest that Grade V students' reading competence is significantly influenced by their surroundings. Overcrowded classrooms, busy family duties, and limited access to reading materials can all impede students' reading progress by limiting opportunities for practice and assistance. The results also indicate that encouraging reading engagement and enhancing literacy abilities require a supportive and resource-rich family and school setting. Even if absence and parental support had less of an impact, they nevertheless have an impact on students' overall reading performance and should not be disregarded. The research of Claes et al. (2024), which used PIRLS 2021 data to investigate the association between students' reading comprehension and the home literacy environment, supports the results of this study. According to the study, students' reading comprehension was positively correlated with both increased availability to books and an active reading environment at home. Additionally, the home literacy environment had a significant impact on children's reading success through their motivation, enjoyment, and regularity of reading.

The current results are consistent with those of Claes et al. (2024), indicating that higher reading outcomes may be achieved by enhancing learners' reading environments at home and in the classroom. Schools may develop literacy programs that promote family participation in reading activities, improve library services, and offer easily accessible reading resources.

5.3.3 Technological Challenges

These elements are becoming more and more important in comprehending the reading challenges that students in Grade V confront. Students' motivation, engagement, and reading learning results can all be greatly impacted by the availability and efficient use of instructional technology. On the other hand, the development of critical literacy abilities may be hampered by a lack of access to digital devices, a lack of exposure to interactive reading programs, and a lack of technological proficiency among students and teachers.

Table 4 shows that technological challenges contributed to the reading proficiency of Grade V learners to a large extent, as reflected by the average weighted mean of 3.983.

Table 4: Extent of Technological Challenges Contributory to the Reading Proficiency of Grade V Learners

Indicators	**WM**	**VI**	**Rank**
1. Limited access to gadgets such as computers, tablets, or smartphones for reading activities.	3.857	L	10.5
2. Unstable or lack of internet connection affecting access to digital reading materials.	3.837	L	12
3. Difficulty in using educational reading applications and online learning platforms.	3.857	L	10.5
4. Limited availability of digital reading resources and e-books at home or in school.	4.020	L	5
5. Excessive use of gadgets for entertainment rather than educational reading purposes.	3.959	L	8
6. Lack of technological skills needed to navigate online reading activities effectively.	4.041	L	4
7. Insufficient teacher guidance in integrating technology into reading instruction.	3.980	L	6.5
8. Frequent distractions from social media, games, and online videos during reading tasks.	4.082	L	3
9. Limited exposure to interactive and multimedia reading activities.	3.980	L	6.5
10. Inadequate school facilities such as computer laboratories and digital learning equipment.	3.918	L	9
11. Difficulty in understanding digital texts and online reading instructions.	4.143	L	1
12. Lack of technical support when encountering problems with digital devices and platforms.	4.122	L	2
AWM	3.983	L	

The highest-rated challenges were difficulty in understanding digital texts and online reading instructions (4.143), lack of technical support when encountering problems with digital devices and platforms (4.122), and frequent distractions from social media, games, and online videos during reading tasks (4.082). Other challenges perceived to a large extent included lack of technological skills, limited availability of digital reading resources, insufficient teacher guidance, limited exposure to interactive reading activities, and inadequate school facilities. Meanwhile, limited access to gadgets and difficulty in using educational reading applications (3.857) and unstable or lack of internet connection (3.837) received the lowest ratings, although they were still interpreted as occurring to a large extent.

The findings show that technological obstacles have a significant impact on the reading performance of Grade V students. The high ratings for difficulty understanding digital texts, a lack of technical help, and online diversions indicate that learners encounter major barriers to effectively using technology for reading and learning. Furthermore, low technology abilities, insufficient digital resources, and inadequate instructional assistance may impede the development of reading skills. Although access to devices and internet connectivity earned lower scores, they remain significant concerns.

The findings suggest that technology has a considerable impact on the reading competency of Grade V students. Learners may struggle to reap the full benefits of digital

learning due to challenges understanding digital texts, poor technological support, and diversions from online entertainment platforms. These difficulties might diminish reading engagement and comprehension, so impairing literacy development. The findings also indicate that enhancing learners' digital literacy abilities, boosting access to relevant digital resources, and giving enough guidance and assistance are critical in assisting learners to utilize technology more successfully for reading and academic objectives.

The findings are reinforced by Zhang and Liu's (2024) research into students' digital literacy, engagement, and reading comprehension in technology- enhanced learning settings. The study discovered that learners' digital reading comprehension is heavily impacted by their capacity to navigate digital texts, their level of digital literacy, and the availability of instructional support. It also noted that online platform distractions and poor instructor direction have a major impact on students' attention and reading performance. These findings are consistent with the current study's findings, which show that technical hurdles impede learners' reading progress when digital resources are not employed properly for educational objectives.

The closeness of the findings implies that developing learners' digital literacy and giving organized assistance in utilizing educational technology are critical for boosting reading competency. Schools should focus training programs on the safe and effective use of digital technologies, improve teacher facilitation of digital reading activities, and provide access to curated e-reading resources. Furthermore, using measures to reduce online distractions and increase focused reading engagement can assist maximize the educational benefits of technology in enhancing learners' reading abilities.

Table 5 summarizes the challenges impacting Grade V learners' reading competence, displaying an overall average weighted mean of 3.858, which may be taken as a considerable extent. Technological problems rated highest (3.983), followed by environmental issues (3.845), while physiological challenges came in last (3.745). The findings indicate that, while all three domains are thought to have a significant impact on learners' reading proficiency, technological factors appear to be the most significant contributor, followed closely by environmental conditions, indicating that modern learning demands and surrounding contexts play an important role in shaping students' reading performance.

Table 5: Summary of Extent of Challenges Affecting Reading Proficiency

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Physiological Challenges	3.745	L	3
2. Environmental Challenges	3.845	L	2
3. Technological Challenges	3.983	L	1
AWM	3.858	L	

Legend: 4.20-5:00- To a very large extent (VL); 3.40-4.19- To a large extent (L); 2.60-3.39-To a moderate extent (M); 1.80-2.59-To a small extent (S); Not at all (N)

The findings show that Grade V students' reading performance is impacted by a mix of physiological, environmental, and technological barriers, all of which they face to some extent. However, technical hurdles appear as the most important factor, implying that difficulty in accessing digital tools, online diversions, and a lack of digital literacy skills have the largest influence on students' reading progress. Environmental factors also play an important role, indicating how home and school environments affect learners' reading chances and participation. Physiological obstacles, while still significant, appear to have the least influence of the three areas.

The findings indicate that Grade V students have reading challenges that are mostly formed by a variety of interrelated circumstances, with technology- related concerns having the greatest impact. This means that digital literacy issues, exposure to internet diversions, and restricted access or support for adopting learning technology may all have a negative impact on reading development. Environmental factors also have a significant impact, demonstrating that family and school environments continue to play an important role in molding learners' reading experiences. Although physiological aspects have the least proportional influence of the three, they are nonetheless relevant considerations. The OECD (2023) research, which highlighted how students' digital literacy abilities, access to learning technology, and the caliber of their learning settings significantly influence their reading ability, supports the findings. The study emphasized that although technology can improve reading engagement, reading outcomes are adversely affected by excessive digital distractions and uneven access to digital resources. Additionally, it said that learner well-being and cognitive preparedness further influence reading performance, and that home and school environments- including family support and instructional quality- remain important determinants of reading accomplishment. These are consistent with the findings of this study, which indicate that learners' reading competence is influenced by a combination of technical, environmental, and physiological variables.

The consistency of the results indicates that increasing reading competence necessitates a well-rounded strategy that incorporates the development of digital literacy, fair access to educational resources, and robust support networks at home and at school. In order to reduce distractions, schools should promote organized digital literacy programs, restrict the use of technology for learning, and increase community and family engagement in reading activities. To guarantee that technology promotes rather than impedes the development of reading skills, policymakers may also think about funding infrastructure and teacher preparation.

5.4 Significant Relationship between the Contributory Challenges and the Reading Proficiency of the Grade V Learners

The students' reading success is the substantial correlation between contributing problems and Grade V students' reading competence. Reading competency is influenced by a variety of factors, including difficulties with phonemic awareness, vocabulary growth, comprehension abilities, the

learning environment, motivation, parental support, and teaching methods. Finding the connection between these contributing difficulties and students' reading ability aids in identifying the elements that have a significant impact on reading development.

Reading proficiency and all contributing factors have a substantial and statistically significant negative association, according to Table 6's Spearman's Rank Correlation analysis results. The null hypothesis is rejected since the p- values for the physiological (ρ = -0.875), environmental (ρ = -0.876), and technical (ρ = -0.888) challenges are all less than 0.001. This suggests that the reading competence of students in Grade V declines in proportion to the degree of difficulty in these areas. After environmental and physiological problems, technological challenges show the largest negative association among the elements, indicating that they have the most noticeable adverse influence on learners' reading ability.

Table 6: Relationship between Reading Proficiency and Extent Challenges

Contributory Factors	ρ	df	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
1. Physiological	-0.875	47	< 0.001	Reject H_0	Significant
2. Environmental	-0.876	47	< 0.001	Reject H_0	Significant
3. Technological	-0.888	47	< 0.001	Reject H_0	Significant

Higher levels of physiological, environmental, and technological challenges are linked to lower reading proficiency among Grade V students, according to the results, which show a strong and statistically significant inverse relationship between reading proficiency and the three contributory challenges. All three criteria appear to have a considerable impact on reading results, as indicated by the consistently high and significant correlation coefficients ($p < 0.001$). Technology-related problems are the most significant limitation, as evidenced by the largest correlation between them and reading proficiency, which is closely followed by environmental and physiological variables.

The findings suggest that the existence of physiological, environmental, and technological difficulties has a significant impact on the reading ability of students in Grade V. Learners' reading performance tends to deteriorate dramatically as these challenges rise, indicating that all three elements are crucial in determining reading results. The most urgent obstacles to reading development appear to be problems like poor digital skills, distractions, and restricted access to learning resources, as indicated by the particularly significant effect of technical hurdles. Though to a somewhat less degree, physiological and environmental variables also have a significant role.

The study by Sailer et al. (2024), which looked at the connection between students' digital abilities, learning settings, and academic achievement, supports the conclusions. The study discovered that while distractions and inadequate supervision in technology use had a detrimental impact on learning outcomes, students with superior digital literacy abilities and greater access to educational tools fared noticeably better in reading-related activities. In line with the current study's finding that physiological, environmental, and technological challenges are all significantly related to reading proficiency, with technology having the strongest influence, it also underlined that learner well-being and environmental support continue to be significant predictors of academic success.

The consistency of these results indicates that a significant emphasis on the development of digital literacy and appropriate use of educational technology is necessary to improve reading competency among students in Grade V. Schools should reduce distractions from non-educational digital activities, incorporate organized digital reading programs, and train instructors and students in appropriate technology usage. Reading outcomes can also be improved by fostering supportive family and school settings and attending to the physical and cognitive needs of students.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

This study attempted to determine the reading proficiency of Grade V learners in Peñafrancia Elementary School, Buhi North District, Schools Division of Camarines Sur as basis for a proposed structured reading program for school year 2025-2026. Specifically, this seeks answers to the following questions: 1. What is the reading proficiency of the Grade V learners? 2. What is the extent of the challenges affecting the reading proficiency of these learners? a. physiological b. environmental c. technological 3. Is there a significant relationship between the reading proficiency and the extent of the challenges affecting the reading proficiency? 4. What reading program can be proposed based on the findings of this study?

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was used in this study. This type of research involves gathering and analyzing quantitative data first, then using qualitative data to clarify or expand on the preliminary findings. This strategy is suitable as assessing reading levels necessitates objective measurement, and comprehending the causes of those levels necessitates a more thorough examination of learners' surroundings and experiences. The primary research instrument was a questionnaire created by the teacher. In this study, ranking and weighted mean were also used.

For the 2025–2026 academic year, forty-nine (49) Grade V students from Peñafrancia Elementary School in Buhi North District, Division of Camarines Sur, made up the participants. Based on the pre-test findings of the Phil IRI, this study assessed the reading competence of the Grade V students in the Buhi North District. Data on the degree of the difficulties influencing this reading proficiency were collected from randomly chosen Grade V students in the primary school.

The 5-point Likert scale and a teacher-made questionnaire were the data collection instruments employed in this study. The following statistical techniques were applied to the analysis and interpretation of the data collected in this study: descriptive statistics, weighted mean, ranking, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, and total population sampling on the selection of the student respondents.

6.2 Findings

From the statistical treatment of the data with corresponding analysis and interpretation thereto, the following findings have surfaced:

1) Out of 49 students assessed, only 22 reached grade-level reading proficiency (2 independent, 10 instructional, and 10 frustration), while a majority—30 learners two levels below and 17 three levels below—exhibited significant difficulties in reading fluency and comprehension.
2) The extent of challenges affecting the reading proficiency of Grade V learners. The overall weighted mean of 3.858, interpreted as To a large extent (L), indicates that the combined physiological, environmental, and technological factors significantly influence learners' reading proficiency, and among the indicators, technological challenges obtained the highest weighted mean (3.983), followed by environmental challenges (3.845), while physiological challenges ranked last (3.745).
3) Based on the non-normal distribution of data, Spearman's Rank Correlation revealed a strong and significant inverse relationship between reading proficiency and physiological, environmental, and technological challenges ($p < 0.001$), with technological factors showing the strongest association, followed by environmental and physiological factors, indicating that reducing these challenges is linked to improved reading proficiency among Grade V learners.
4) Project BUHI (Building Understanding and Habits in Independent Reading) was developed based on the findings of this study.

6.3 Conclusions

In light of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1) Most of the Grade V learners are below grade-level reading proficiency, indicating a widespread difficulty in reading fluency and comprehension.
2) Grade V learners experience a high level of challenges affecting their reading proficiency, with technological factors emerging as the most influential, followed by environmental and physiological factors. This suggests that addressing issues related to digital literacy, learning environments, and learner well-being is essential in improving reading outcomes.
3) There is a strong and statistically significant inverse relationship between reading proficiency and physiological, environmental, and technological challenges, which indicates that as these challenges increase, learners' reading proficiency decreases, with technological factors emerging as the most influential constraint.
4) The development of Project BUHI provides a strategic and responsive intervention designed to address the identified reading gaps and support learners in achieving independent reading proficiency

6.4 Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were formulated:

1) Peñafrancia Elementary School, through its administrative staff, should implement a structured and differentiated reading intervention program that provides intensive support for learners below grade level, including guided reading sessions, remedial classes, and regular progress monitoring to improve fluency and comprehension.
2) The school administration, through the cooperation of the teachers and parents, should strengthen the reading environment at school and home, promote guided and purposeful use of technology for literacy, and address learners' physiological needs (e.g., vision screening, health support) to minimize barriers to reading development.
3) The Peñafrancia Elementary School should implement targeted interventions focusing on reducing technological, environmental, and physiological barriers to reading to strengthen learners' digital literacy skills, improve access to appropriate reading technologies, and provide structured guidance in the use of educational tools as well as work with families to create supportive learning environments and address learners' basic health and cognitive needs to further enhance reading proficiency.
4) The school should adopt and institutionalize Project BUHI with proper training for teachers, active involvement of parents, and continuous evaluation to ensure its effectiveness in developing learners' independent reading habits and comprehension skills.

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