

# Factors Influencing Reading Difficulties Among Grade 6 Pupils At Pudtol Central School: Basis For Proposed Interventions

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** To uncover the specific factors contributing to reading difficulties among Grade 6 pupils at Pudtol Central School. By identifying these unique and context-specific challenges, the research seeks to support the development of more effective, targeted interventions that align with the evolving needs of the pupils, ultimately enhancing their reading performance and fostering a culture of academic success.

**Study design:** The study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically employing semi-structured individual interviews with pupils, parents, and teachers.

**Place and Duration of Study:** The study was conducted at Pudtol Central School, Poblacion, Pudtol, Apayao.

**Methodology:** The participants in this study were 38 selected Grade 6 pupils of Pudtol Central School together with their 20 selected parents or guardians and 9 selected teachers, a total of 67.

**Results:** There are eight key factors contributing to reading difficulties in Grade 6 pupils at Pudtol Central School: technological distractions, lack of home support, low motivation and interest, limited access to reading materials, learning disruptions during the pandemic, foundational skill deficiencies, health/cognitive barriers, and language transition issues. These difficulties are seen as a result of interconnected academic, environmental, and socio-emotional factors, not just individual limitations. Specifically, the study highlights how excessive gadget use and lack of regulation reduce reading time, minimal parental support hinders development, pandemic disruptions widened reading gaps, inadequate early instruction led to persistent deficits, health/cognitive issues affected fluency and comprehension, and language transition created vocabulary and comprehension challenges. Moreover, a proposed intervention plan is designed to translate thematic findings into actionable programs that will enhance reading proficiency and support holistic learner development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is the act of looking at a collection of written symbols and deriving meaning from them. It is influenced by the reader's knowledge and tactics as well as the context, goals for reading, and nature of the text. It is the process by which our eyes interpret written symbols such as letters, punctuations, and space into words, phrases, and paragraphs that make sense to us. One can read aloud or silently, inside their own heads (so that other people can hear).

The reading habits of pupils may have an effect on their cognitive development and academic success. It is an unquestionably important talent that has a huge impact on a student's academic path. Reading is

defined as, cognitive development in which the learner can comprehend text through understanding, interpreting and relating the meaning of the text [1].

In addition, by reading, pupils will learn new things and come across a variety of viewpoints and hone critical thinking abilities. Put simply, "Building a house is similar to developing strong reading, writing, and critical thinking skills: A solid foundation is important, but if the builder leaves before constructing the walls and roof, it's not a finished product" [2]. The basis of success is reading.

According to the PISA 2018 profile of the Philippines, socio-economic status accounts for 18% of the variance in reading performance in the country, compared to the OECD average of 12%. The country has the largest percentage of low performers in reading among socio-economically disadvantaged students. The profile noted that average class sizes of 15-year-olds in the Philippines are the largest, and the ratio of students to teaching staff in socio-economically disadvantaged schools is the highest. The Philippines also had the highest percentage of students reporting being bullied at least a few times a month [3].

In other hand, one of the challenges the Cordillera faces today, as listed in the 2023 DepEd-CAR Basic Education Regional Research Agenda, is the poor reading comprehension level of learners based on the Phil-IRI reading assessment tool results in all grade levels. Back in SY 2018-19, only about 35% of Grades 4-6 learners who took DepEd-CAR's reading assessment tool could read English texts independently or without help from teachers, while 56% could read Filipino texts independently. During the COVID pandemic, these results only worsened as self-learning modules could not cater to the needs of struggling readers. While DepEd-CAR and our teachers are hard at work in boosting learners' reading proficiency, pursuing regional autonomy can also aid these efforts on a macro level [4].

Covid-19 Pandemic has affected many pupils considering the present Grade 6 pupils. Wherein during the pandemic, they were in Grade 1 that causes them stress, disruptions and other learning challenges. Due to pandemic that started December 2019 face to face classes were suspended. It was shifted to Blended learning, Online learning and Distant learning. As a result of this, many pupils were not able to cope up with their lessons and some were not able to enhance their reading skills because of lack of guidance in teaching them. Despite of the crucial situation, the teachers and administrators were still aimed to promote quality education. And yes! In two years of pandemic, learning was still there but not just like before that teaching and learning process was in normal situation. Sad to say, there were some who left behind in their reading performances and this needs to be addressed.

In fact, assessing the impact of the crisis brought by the pandemic many children in elementary grades have not sharpened their reading skills. That is why the Department of Education used the PHI-IRI tool to measure the reading performances of the pupils from Grade 3 up to Grade 6. During the conducted Pretest in their Phil-IRI English of Grade 6, out of the 54 pupils, no nonreader, 19 under frustration, 4 under instructional and 14 under independent. While the rest 17 pupils have passed the Group Screening Test. In other hand, in Phil-IRI Filipino, no nonreader, 16 under frustration, 12 under instructional and 26 under independent, and no one have passed the Group Screening Test.

Despite the existence of numerous interventions aimed at improving the reading performances of pupils at Pudtol Central School, the need to unveil the factors affecting their reading performances persists for several reasons. Firstly, while previous studies may have provided valuable insights, the specific challenges faced by the pupils at Pudtol Central School may differ from those in other settings. Each school and student body are unique, requiring a tailored approach to understanding and addressing the factors impacting reading performance.

Moreover, the effectiveness of existing interventions may be limited if they do not directly target the underlying factors contributing to the reading difficulties at Pudtol Central School. By unveiling these factors, educators and policymakers can develop more targeted and impactful strategies to support the students.

Additionally, the dynamic nature of education and the evolving needs of pupils necessitate a continuous examination of the factors influencing reading performance. New challenges or issues may arise that were not previously identified, requiring a fresh assessment of the situation at Pudtol Central School.

Furthermore, by uncovering the specific factors affecting reading performances, the school can take proactive steps towards improvement and ensure that interventions are aligned with the unique needs of their pupils. This tailored approach is essential for addressing the root causes of poor reading performance and cultivating a culture of academic success at Pudtol Central School.

## **2. MATERIAL AND METHODS / EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS / METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically employing semi-structured individual interviews with pupils, parents, and teachers. This approach was chosen to explore their perspectives on the factors influencing the reading performance of Grade 6 pupils at Pudtol Central School.

The participants in this study were 38 selected Grade 6 pupils of Pudtol Central School together with their 20 selected parents or guardians and 9 selected teachers, a total of 67.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview format, with separate interview guides tailored for pupils, parents, and teachers to ensure relevance to each group. These guides featured open-ended questions aimed at eliciting detailed responses and follow-up prompts to delve deeper into specific areas of inquiry. To maintain objectivity, questions were formulated to be clear, concise, and devoid of leading language. In addition, consent forms created to inform participants about the study's purpose, their rights, confidentiality measures, and voluntary participation. They were clearly articulate how the data utilized, stored, and shared, and provided contact information for the researcher in case participants have any questions or concerns. Brief demographic questionnaires also designed to collect basic information about participants, such as name, age, gender, educational background, occupation, and years of teaching experience (for teachers). Moreover, regarding recording equipment, the researcher ensured the availability of reliable tools, such as audio recorders or smartphones with recording applications, accurately captured the interviews. Prior to data collection, through testing of the equipment was conducted to ensure proper functionality and clarity of recordings.

Before the research phase of the study, the researcher initiated several preparatory steps. Firstly, a formal letter seeking permission to conduct the study at Pudtol Central School was drafted and addressed to Irene S. Angway, PhD, CESO V, Schools Division Superintendent, Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, SDO-Apayao, as well as to the Elementary School Principal, Nerissa O. Padeway PhD. This letter outlined the purpose of the study and requested approval for data collection activities within the school premises.

Upon receipt of approval, the researcher proceeded in conducting interviews with the pupils, parents and teachers to gain insights into the factors influencing the reading difficulties of Grade 6 pupils. These interviews were coordinated through the Principal of Pudtol Central School, who facilitated communication with the relevant stakeholders.

During the conduct of the study, thematic analysis was employed to examine the qualitative data collected from pupils, parents, and teachers. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic

analysis framework, the study followed a structured approach: (1) data familiarization, (2) initial code generation, (3) theme searching, (4) theme review, (5) theme definition and naming, and (6) report production. This method allowed for systematic identification of recurring patterns and insights related to the factors influencing reading difficulties. Then, to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, several measures were implemented to ensure the reliability and validity of the thematic analysis. Triangulation was employed by gathering data from multiple sources—pupils, parents, and teachers—to provide a comprehensive and corroborated understanding of the factors influencing reading difficulties. This method helped to cross-verify emerging themes and mitigate potential biases. Moreover, to strengthen dependability, the research utilized a systematic coding process, which ensures consistency in theme identification and interpretation. Member checking was conducted, wherein selected participants were invited to review summarized findings to verify the accuracy of interpretations and confirm the authenticity of their responses. For confirmability, a research audit trail was maintained, documenting key decisions made throughout data collection, coding, and analysis to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

After the conduct of the study, the narratives of pupils, parents and teachers on the factors influencing the reading difficulties of Grade 6 pupils were revealed. Then, the specific themes from the factors affecting reading difficulties based on the participants responses were derived. Lastly, based from the result of the study a proposed intervention plan is designed.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transcript data from semi-structured interviews were subjected to thematic analysis to reveal the experiences of pupils, teachers, parents or guardians regarding the reading difficulties of their children. The findings are presented in this section according to the themes emerged from the pupils, parents and teachers' perspectives. To support the author's narrative, verbatim excerpts are included. To maintain the confidentiality, the participants identities have been concealed using the codes were employed to distinguished participants. The themes emerged from the data are addressed individually in the following subsections.

Core Ideas	Sub-Theme	Theme
"I always use my cellphone to play games and watch videos." (Pupil 1) "Because of using cellphone, he did not mind to review." (Parent 1) "Too much use of cellphone." (Teacher 1)	Overuse of gadgets	1. Technological Distractions
"If I do not have something to do, I am using my cellphone because I am addicted to social media and games." (Pupil 2) "She hides using her cellphone." (Parent 2)	Social media addiction	
"I forget to read because of gadgets." (Pupil 3) "They are not interested to read, they just search for answers online." (Parent 3)	Prioritizing gadgets over reading	

"No one is teaching me at home." (Pupil 4) "I don't have sufficient time to follow-up his lessons daily at home because I am a working mom." (Parent 4)	No parental guidance	2. Lack of Home Support
"I am busy taking care of my siblings at home." (Pupil 5) "Busy working for our living." (Parent 5)	Household responsibilities	
"My studies are not constant due to the failed relationship of my parents." (Pupil 6) "She is living with her father and I was working away for almost a year." (Parent 6)	Lack of parental presence	
"I am not fond of reading." (Pupil 7) "He has no interest in reading books." (Parent 7) "They do not have interest in reading." (Teacher 2)	No interest in reading	3. Low Motivation and Interest
"I always go playing soccer and basketball." (Pupil 8) "He is very playful." (Parent 8)	Prefer to play	
"We do not have reading books at home." (Pupil 9) "Few books at home." (Parent 9)	Lack of books and resources	4. Limited Access to Reading Materials
"No time to review because of noisy surroundings." (Pupil 10)	Inadequate reading environment	
"During pandemic, I just copied the answers from the answer key." (Pupil 11) "I was not there to supervise my child answering modules." (Parent 10)	Poor module engagement	5. Learning Disruptions During Pandemic
"Because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, no one was teaching me." (Pupil 12)	Loss of in-school learning	
"They did not master the letter sounds and names of the alphabet." (Teacher 3) "Saan da namaster ti decoding, fluency ken vocabulary." (Teacher 4)	Poor phonics and decoding	6. Foundational Reading Deficiencies
"Inappropriate teaching methods of teachers." (Teacher 5)	Inconsistent instruction	
"Did not master the sounds of the alphabets in lower grades." (Teacher 6)	Missed early interventions	
"He could hardly pronounce words due to speech defect." (Parent 11) "I have an eye problem; sometimes my sight gets blurred." (Pupil 13)	Learning or speech difficulties	7. Health and Cognitive Barriers
"I easily forget what I am reading." (Pupil 14)	Easily forgets or	



14) "Lack of concentration in reading and I easily get stressed." (Pupil 15)	distracted	
"They are used to mother tongue in lower grades; now they could hardly read Filipino and English." (Parent 12) "Limited vocabulary that is why they could not understand what they are reading." (Teacher 7)	Mother tongue shift	8. Language Transition Issues

### ***Theme 1: Technological Distractions***

The findings revealed that excessive gadget use, social media engagement, and the prioritization of screen-based activities over academic reading significantly hinder pupils' reading development. Pupils often admitted preferring mobile games and videos to books, while parents and teachers observed a decline in reading motivation due to digital distractions.

This implies that without structured regulation of technology use, children may develop fragmented attention and disengagement from literacy activities. Schools and families must establish boundaries and promote balanced, purposeful technology integration in support of reading.

Hwang et al. (2020) found that overuse of mobile devices negatively affects students' attention spans and academic performance, while Paul and Elder (2019) linked social media addiction to reduced study time and lower academic achievement, reinforcing the urgent need to manage digital consumption among learners.

### ***Theme 2: Lack of Home Support***

Participants highlighted that minimal parental involvement due to work obligations, household responsibilities, or family separation adversely affects pupils' reading development. Pupils lacked academic reinforcement at home, and parents acknowledged being unable to provide consistent guidance or presence due to socioeconomic constraints.

This suggests that without structured academic support at home, learners are left to navigate foundational reading skills independently, increasing the risk of persistent literacy gaps. Schools must proactively collaborate with families to promote supportive home learning environments through community-based literacy initiatives.

Fan and Chen (2001) emphasized that strong parental involvement is significantly correlated with higher academic performance, while Dearing et al. (2006) found that reduced parental presence, often linked to economic hardship, is associated with lower reading outcomes in children.

### ***Theme 3: Low Motivation and Interest***

The data showed that many pupils displayed disinterest in reading and preferred recreational activities like playing over engaging with texts. Both parents and teachers observed that pupils lacked intrinsic motivation and often resisted reading tasks.

This indicates that without internal drive or external reinforcement, pupils are unlikely to develop essential literacy habits, which may hinder their academic performance across subjects. Interventions must focus on promoting reading engagement through interest-based materials and positive reinforcement strategies.

Denton et al. (2013) linked low reading motivation with weaker literacy performance in longitudinal studies, while Gambrell (2011) stressed that student motivation is a critical predictor of sustained reading behavior and academic achievement.

#### ***Theme 4: Limited Access to Reading Materials***

Pupils and parents reported a lack of books and reading resources at home, as well as environments that were not conducive to quiet study, such as noisy households. These limitations hinder regular reading practice and exposure to varied vocabulary and content.

This suggests that limited material access and poor study conditions create structural barriers to literacy development, especially among economically disadvantaged learners. Bridging this gap requires community partnerships, mobile libraries, and school-led resource distribution efforts.

Johnson and Wang (2021) emphasized that students with restricted access to diverse reading materials show lower literacy outcomes, while Banbury and Berry (2005) demonstrated that noise and poor environmental conditions significantly impair reading comprehension and retention.

#### ***Theme 5: Learning Disruptions During the Pandemic***

Pupils and parents revealed that during the pandemic, children often completed modules without genuine learning engagement, sometimes copying answers without comprehension. The absence of in-person instruction and limited parental supervision further weakened reading development.

This disruption in structured learning environments significantly contributed to gaps in foundational literacy skills. Recovery efforts must prioritize diagnostic assessments and targeted reading interventions to address pandemic-related learning loss.

Engzell, Frey, and Verhagen (2021) found that school closures during COVID-19 led to substantial learning loss, particularly in low-support households. Sweller's (1988) cognitive load theory also highlights how unscaffolded self-learning can overwhelm learners and reduce meaningful learning outcomes.

#### ***Theme 6: Foundational Reading Deficiencies***

Teachers observed that many pupils lacked mastery in core reading components such as phonics, decoding, and vocabulary. Inconsistent teaching strategies and missed early interventions in lower grades contributed to these persistent deficiencies.

This indicates a need for systematic early literacy instruction and professional development to ensure consistent and evidence-based pedagogical approaches across grade levels. Early screening and timely remediation are critical to prevent long-term academic delays.

The National Reading Panel (2000) emphasized that phonemic awareness and decoding are essential for reading success, while O'Connor and Jessup (1995) demonstrated that inconsistency in instruction leads to uneven literacy outcomes, especially among at-risk learners.

#### ***Theme 7: Health and Cognitive Barriers***

Participants shared that pupils faced health-related challenges such as speech difficulties, eye problems, and cognitive issues like poor memory and distractibility. These conditions directly hindered reading fluency and comprehension.

This suggests the importance of early identification and accommodations for learners with health or cognitive barriers. Schools should collaborate with health professionals and special education services to provide appropriate interventions.

Maughan and Pickles (2000) found that mental and physical health problems in childhood significantly affect long-term academic achievement. Eysenck and Keane (2015) emphasized that attention and memory are core cognitive functions necessary for reading comprehension.

### **Theme 8: Language Transition Issues**

Both parents and teachers reported that pupils struggled with transitioning from mother tongue instruction in lower grades to Filipino and English in later grades. Limited vocabulary in second languages impeded comprehension and fluency.

This highlights the need for well-structured language transition programs and sustained vocabulary support. Multilingual scaffolding and culturally relevant materials can ease this linguistic shift and promote inclusive literacy growth.

Cummins (2001) emphasized that learners benefit when instruction bridges their mother tongue and second languages, and the National Reading Panel (2000) reported that vocabulary development is essential for reading comprehension across languages.

## **PROPOSED INTERVENTION PLAN**

### **Rationale:**

The findings of this study revealed a multidimensional set of factors contributing to the reading difficulties of Grade 6 pupils at Pudtol Central School, including technological distractions, lack of home support, low motivation, limited access to reading materials, learning disruptions during the pandemic, foundational reading deficiencies, health and cognitive barriers, and language transition issues. These challenges underscore the urgent need for context-specific, learner-centered, and multi-stakeholder interventions.

Addressing reading difficulties requires a strategic and evidence-informed response that strengthens the home-school connection, promotes early literacy foundations, and builds responsive support systems. The proposed intervention plan is designed to translate thematic findings into actionable programs that will enhance reading proficiency and support holistic learner development.

Identified Theme	Proposed Intervention	Objective	Target Stakeholders
Technological Distractions	Integrate digital literacy and enforce gadget-free reading times.	To minimize non-academic gadget, use and enhance reading focus.	Teachers, Parents, ICT Coordinators
Lack of Home Support	Develop home-based reading kits and conduct parent engagement sessions.	To strengthen parental involvement in at-home reading practices.	Parents, Teachers, School Leaders
Low Motivation and Interest	Introduce interest-based materials and establish reading incentive programs.	To boost pupils' intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes toward reading.	Teachers, Pupils, Reading Coordinators
Limited Access to Reading Materials	Mobilize mini-libraries and organize book donation drives.	To ensure equitable access to varied and age-appropriate reading materials.	School Administrators, LGUs, NGOs



Learning Disruptions During the Pandemic	Launch remedial reading clinics and re-engagement workshops.	To recover reading skills lost during pandemic-related school closures.	Teachers, Pupils, Parents
Foundational Reading Deficiencies	Implement phonics-based instruction and diagnostic assessments.	To address foundational reading gaps through systematic instruction.	Teachers, Literacy Coaches, School Heads
Health and Cognitive Barriers	Establish health screening referrals and create individualized support plans.	To support learners with health or cognitive-related learning barriers.	Health Personnel, Teachers, Guidance Counselors
Language Transition Issues	Develop bridging modules and vocabulary enrichment routines.	To ease linguistic transitions and support vocabulary development.	Teachers, Curriculum Developers, Pupils

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The study identified eight key factors contributing to reading difficulties among Grade 6 pupils: technological distractions, lack of home support, low motivation, limited access to reading materials, pandemic-related disruptions, foundational reading deficiencies, health and cognitive barriers, and language transition issues.
2. Reading difficulties stem from interconnected academic, environmental, and socio-emotional factors, rather than individual pupil limitations alone.
3. Excessive use of gadgets and lack of regulation at home reduced pupils' reading time and engagement.
4. Minimal parental support and inconsistent home learning environments hindered reading development.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions to structured learning, resulting in widened reading gaps.
6. Inadequate early literacy instruction and lack of timely interventions led to persistent foundational skill deficits.
7. Health issues, cognitive distractions, and speech problems negatively affected pupils' reading fluency and comprehension.
8. Transitioning from mother tongue to Filipino and English created additional challenges due to limited vocabulary and comprehension support.

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