



## READING PROFICIENCY LEVEL OF GRADE III LEARNERS: BASIS FOR A PROPOSED BASA TAYO PROGRAM

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### Abstract:

This study aimed to evaluate the reading proficiency level of Grade 3 learners at Labangal Elementary School as a basis for an intervention program. The researcher employed a quantitative research approach using a descriptive-evaluative survey method. Total enumeration was utilized, in determining including all 320 Grade 3 learners enrolled at Labangal Elementary School during the School Year 2022-2023. Findings revealed that half of the respondents were classified as frustration level readers, some were independent level readers, and others were instructional level readers. These results indicated that many Grade 3 learners struggled with decoding words, had limited vocabulary, poor comprehension, and lacked engagement in reading. Additionally, they often found it challenging to understand and make sense of texts at their grade level, which led to frustration and disengagement. Nevertheless, reading proficiency level is crucial for academic success as it enables students to comprehend complex texts, engage in critical thinking, and access information across subjects. Furthermore, strong reading skills are essential for lifelong learning, enabling individuals to communicate effectively, make informed decisions, and participate fully in society.

**Keywords:** educational management, learners, reading proficiency level, kindergarten, descriptive survey, Philippines

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## 1. Introduction

Reading is one of the most challenging. To read, one must first translate the visual signals into words and then the words into meaning. Many students acquire reading skills successfully and efficiently. Learning to read can be challenging for four out of every ten youngsters, and one in every five has serious reading challenges. There is a massive need for comprehension and enhanced management. Unfortunately, children with poor reading skills do not just grow out of their restrictions. Reading difficulties are a recurring problem (Missall *et al.*, 2019).

Moreover, fluency is important because it connects word recognition and comprehension. It gives the students time to concentrate on what the text is saying. They can draw connections between what they are reading and their prior knowledge. As a result, they can concentrate on comprehension.

Reading proficiency is required for a wide range of human activities, and knowledge consolidation nowadays entails power and the skills required for accessing, interpreting, and processing information. Children who enter school must be prepared to succeed early in elementary school. The capacity to read proficiently is a fundamental skill that influences all learners' learning and performance (McFarland *et al.*, 2019). Hence, early childhood education is important because it is the period during which the body and brain of a child are undergoing rapid development. During this stage, the learner develops skills and abilities like motor skills, language, psychosocial, cognitive, and learning. Studies revealed that children's readiness for early childhood education has a social and economic impact during adulthood (Owan *et al.*, 2022; van Dijk, 2018; Wong *et al.*, 2022).

Furthermore, teachers believe that learners encounter multiple challenges in their reading experiences. These include difficulties in decoding and word recognition, leading to comprehension problems. Unfamiliar vocabulary poses an additional hurdle in understanding passages. Inadequate reading strategies, such as predicting outcomes and summarizing, hinder information extraction and retention. Limited background knowledge and a lack of exposure to diverse reading materials impede comprehension skills. Learners struggle with focus, engagement, motivation, and concentration during the reading tasks. Inconsistent reading habits and limited access to resources outside the classroom contribute to the difficulties. To overcome these challenges, teachers must employ explicit vocabulary instruction, target comprehension strategies, and foster a reading culture to support and enhance the learners' reading proficiency (Kim *et al.*, 2021; Missall *et al.*, 2019).

On the other hand, research on the reading proficiency level of learners is urgent as it helps address the challenges and design effective instructional strategies. Identifying areas of struggle allows tailored teaching approaches. Research contributes to evidence-based practice and policies, develops curriculum design, teacher training, and educational policies for improved literacy rates. Timely research identifies emerging trends, keeping educational systems responsive to the evolving needs. Ultimately, such research empowers educators and policymakers with knowledge for informed decisions

and targeted interventions, leading to enhanced literacy outcomes (Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Shaffer, 2019; Tamara & Merentek, 2019).

Even though the study is widespread, the researcher would like to emphasize the appropriateness of the intervention program to address issues and problems with the number of frustrated readers in public schools. With the situation above, the researcher conducted this research to determine the reading proficiency level of Grade 3 learners as the basis for an intervention program for Labangal Elementary School in School Year 2022-2023.

## 2. Literature Review

This section presents the related literature, articles, and studies that support the research study.

Looking at a series of written symbols and deducing their meaning is known as reading. When reading, the eyes acquire written symbols for letters, punctuation marks, and spaces, and the brain converts them into words, sentences, and paragraphs that communicate with the readers. Reading can be done silently or aloud so that other people can hear. It is a receptive skill; we get information through it. However, the intricate act of reading necessitates the ability to speak to enunciate the words we read. Reading is a productive ability since we both receive and transmit information, even if only to ourselves (Beltrán, 2021; Chu & Sopher-Dunn, 2021; Coleman, 2019).

Moreover, reading stimulates the intellect in a variety of ways. To begin, processing the words requires comprehension. Reading words off a page can also help improve your analytical skills, awaken memories, and widen your creativity. Reading is a neurobiological activity that exercises the brain's muscles. You can aid in slowing cognitive decline and even delay the rate at which memory disappears. Reading can instill values. Reading from a religious or secular source can help you learn and educate yourself on the difference between right and wrong, as well as explore different cultural perspectives and ways of life (Chan & Yeung, 2020; Hjetland *et al.*, 2020; Septiyana & Aminatun, 2021).

Further, reading can increase one's creativity. Whether you read about a particular craft or skill to improve it or just for leisure, the words may stimulate new thoughts or images in your head. You may also perceive connections between seemingly unrelated topics, which can lead to even more creative outputs and expressions. Reading is a mental activity. It helps children relax and quiet down, allowing new knowledge to enter their minds and educate them. Children who read have superior cognitive abilities as adults. Reading benefits everyone, not just children and young people (Dijk, 2018; Johansson *et al.*, 2018; Werfel & Reynolds, 2019).

Furthermore, reading widens one's vocabulary. Even as adults, individuals often come across many new terms they have never encountered before. Moreover, reading provides an opportunity to learn. It exposes readers to new words, phrases, and writing styles, enriching their language understanding. It is particularly beneficial for young individuals. Children may struggle with pronunciation or be unsure of the meaning of

the words. However, through reading, they are introduced to new words more frequently, often with repetition, and can see them in context. Parental attention to their pronunciation, these youngsters are better equipped for school (Feruzi, 2021; McDonald, 2019; Paulynice, 2020).

Similarly, reading improves understanding. Children are encouraged to read from a young age to understand their surroundings better. They develop intelligent thinking skills and are more open to innovation and ideas than other children of their age. As a result, they grow up to be far cleverer and more observant of their environment than the non-reading children. The more you read, the more creative you will become. When you read a fiction novel, you are transported to another universe. In the new world, your imagination is at its peak as you strive to visualize things in your head (Saavedra, 2020; Smith *et al.*, 2021; Sung & Wickrama, 2018).

In addition, reading improves critical thinking abilities. The capacity to build critical thinking skills is one of the key advantages of reading literature. Reading a mystery novel, for example, sharpens the mind. If you read nonfiction, you could wonder if the author is correct. When it comes to making vital day-to-day decisions, critical thinking abilities are essential. Reading forces people to think and analyze information in ways that watching television does not. The more you read, the more you grasp what you read and how it applies to your life. Also, it enhances memory. Whenever you read a book, you must recall the scene, people, origins, history, personalities, subplots, and much more. Your memory improves when your brain learns to recall everything. Furthermore, each new memory you generate creates new pathways, which enhances the current ones (Falikman, 2021; Sung & Wickrama, 2018; Tzuriel, 2021).

Moreover, reading improves academic performance. Children who enjoy reading and discover new things perform better in school. They are more creative, receptive to new ideas, and develop empathy for others. For example, children who read about heroes revere them, while children who enjoy anatomy books aspire to be doctors. They develop empathy for the story's characters and aspire to be like them. Not only that, they also learn important life principles like assisting others and being kind. Moral norms such as good things being acknowledged and evils being punished take root in their minds, and as a result, they learn to avoid problems (Al Badi, 2020; Carlson, 2020; Chu & Sopher-Dunn, 2021). Additionally, reading is important in boosting self-assurance, particularly in a competitive society. It instills a strong sense of self-worth and prevents children from adopting a victim mentality due to a lack of confidence. By honing various skills and expanding horizons, reading builds self-confidence. It exposes readers to different cultures, regions, and perspectives, transporting them to unfamiliar lands and broadening their understanding of the world. Through books, readers gain knowledge, see the world through authors' eyes, encounter diverse people, and learn about their customs and unique qualities, creating memorable experiences (Lasdya *et al.*, 2022; Septiyana & Aminatun, 2021; Werfel & Reynolds, 2019).

Further, reading helps you write better. Reading a well-written book can help you become a better writer. Writers, like artists, have an impact on others. Many successful authors learned their craft by reading others' work. Children who learn to read have

higher writing skills. The explanation is that kids have been introduced to a world where words are their primary weapon and are free to fire. Literally! Parents must encourage their children to write. Children with good writing skills do not cram and may express themselves more candidly through their words (Falikman, 2021; Lasdya *et al.*, 2022; Septiyana & Aminatun, 2021).

Furthermore, reading is typically an individual activity performed silently, though occasionally, a person reads aloud for the benefit of other listeners or one's own use for better comprehension. Before the late Middle Ages, when separated text (spaces between words) was reintroduced, the ability to read silently was considered remarkable. Oral language skills, phonological awareness, rapid automatized naming, and verbal IQ are significant predictors of an individual's ability to read alphabetic and non-alphabetic scripts. Reading is a pleasurable and exciting pastime for both children and adults. Every year, roughly half of all adults in the United States read one or more books for pleasure. Approximately 5% of people read more than 50 books yearly (Widiyaningsih *et al.*, 2019; Zulmiyetri *et al.*, 2019).

Similarly, reading is an integral part of literacy, but historically, literacy has been defined as the ability to read and write. Some academics take a more philosophical approach to literacy and propose the concept of "multiliteracies." For instance, they claim that "this massive shift from traditional print-based literacy to 21st-century multiliteracies illustrate the impact of communication technologies and multimedia on the changing character of texts, as well as the skills and dispositions related to the consumption, production, evaluation, and distribution of those texts (Alfano & Douglas, 2018; Cadiz-Gabejan & Quirino, 2021; McDonald, 2019).

Additionally, once established, writing systems generally change more slowly than spoken languages, frequently preserving features and expressions no longer used in spoken language. A key advantage of writing systems is their capacity to store information in a permanent record that may be accessed without reference to the original act of formulation. Reading for pleasure has been linked to faster cognitive development in vocabulary and mathematics during adolescence. Lifetime reading at a high volume has been linked to high levels of academic achievement. According to research, reading can help with stress management, memory, focus, writing skills, and imagination. Reading has cognitive benefits that last into middle age and beyond (Beltrán, 2021; Coleman, 2019; Werfel & Reynolds, 2019).

For decades, reading has been the subject of extensive research and reporting. Numerous organizations, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), monitor and report on the reading proficiency of both children and adults. According to research, 95% of pupils can learn to read by the end of the first grade, yet 20% or more students do not meet that benchmark. 34% of fourth-grade children in the United States performed at or above the Basic reading level, according to the 2019 National Report Card. Based on race and ethnicity, there was a considerable disparity (52% of black students and 23% of white students). In 2022, the

average essential reading score fell by 3% due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Alfano & Douglas, 2018; Hindman *et al.*, 2020; Lynch, 2021).

Learning to read, also known as reading skill acquisition, is the acquisition and practice of the skills required to comprehend the meaning of printed words. Reading feels simple, effortless, and automatic to a skilled reader. However, reading is a complex process that builds on cognitive, linguistic, and social skills developed at a young age. Reading is essential for gaining a command of written language because it is one of the four core language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It is widely assumed in the United States and elsewhere that students who do not have the reading proficiency by the end of third grade will face challenges for the rest of their academic career (Feruzi, 2021; McDonald, 2019; Paulynice, 2020; Septiyana & Aminatun, 2021).

Every human being requires the ability to read. Most people say they dislike it or do not have enough time to read, and must discover their favorite genre. Everyone understands the value of reading and how it improves literacy. However, only some people understand the significance of reading and know its numerous positive benefits. It is beneficial not only to children but also to adolescents and adults. As a college student, you must devote much time to your studies. You must read research conducted by other researchers and books written by domain experts (Septiyana & Aminatun, 2021; Werfel & Reynolds, 2019).

Moreover, everyone understands the significance of reading for writing purposes. As students, various writing assignments and tasks are given, and everyone wishes to have a good grade and impress the teacher. Using academic vocabulary is necessary. A well-developed written output is always appreciated. When you read, you come into contact with other people's ideas while learning new words. Words that can come in handy when writing an essay. Reading, according to expert writers, dramatically expands your vocabulary, which can ensure your student's success (Dijk, 2018; Johansson *et al.*, 2018; Sung & Wickrama, 2018).

On the other hand, individuals live in a rapidly changing world where brands and businesses compete for their attention through flashy and eye-catching commercials and advertisements. This constant bombardment reduces their ability to focus and prevents them from reaching a flow state. There is always something vying for their attention, such as a notification on their phone. However, reading improves focus by allowing individuals to become immersed in and concentrate solely on it. Even if the topic is new, their attention is drawn to it. This heightened focus will also support their studies (Falikman, 2021; Lasdya *et al.*, 2022; Tzuriel, 2021).

In addition, students who read regularly have shown an increase in empathy. It is because they are reading books that explore the characters' inner worlds, including their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Students better understand how others perceive the world, which increases their empathy. Empathy is essential in any relationship and can help you succeed academically. You can effectively communicate with your classmates and professors. Reading is a relaxing activity that has been shown to reduce stress. Stress is a healthy emotion if not used excessively, as it can harm your physical and mental health. Students are anxious, especially as exam time approaches. Conversely, reading

immerses you in a different reality (Paulynice, 2020; Widiyaningsih *et al.*, 2019; Zulmiyetri *et al.*, 2019).

Similarly, reading is a stress-relieving activity. Stress is a healthy emotion, as it can harm physical and mental health. Students are nervous, particularly as exam time approaches. Reading allows us to escape to a different world, providing a break from daily stress and reducing its intensity. It involves listening, understanding, and deciphering written words, benefiting children's vocabulary expansion and listening comprehension. Exposure to stories introduces a wide range of words, aiding in language development. Understanding the story structures is crucial for reading comprehension. Even if not comprehending every word, children hear new sounds, words, and phrases that they can imitate. Parents are vital in nurturing their children's interest in books (Alfano & Douglas, 2018; Cadiz-Gabejan & Quirino, 2021; Feruzi, 2021).

Moreover, reading is a complex process that requires decoding, predicting, and questioning skills. Good readers recognize sight words, use context clues to decipher unfamiliar vocabulary, and draw on their prior knowledge to make connections between what they know and what they want to learn. Teaching children to read is also a difficult task. Students come to class with a wide range of abilities and learning styles. Early learning is influenced by various factors, including a child's experiences, family dynamics, health, and nutrition. Moreover, in teaching reading at any level, students must learn the reading skills to comprehend the text in all subject areas (Albaiz & Ernest, 2021; Chlapana, 2021; Werfel & Reynolds, 2019).

In addition, fluent readers of all ages are more likely to read independently, and the benefits of independent reading extend far beyond academic success. Students who can read independently and fluently are more likely to go to college or work in a trade. The National School Board Association (NSBA) gathered data to support the conclusion that adults with low reading skills are more likely to be in poor health, unemployed, or earn significantly less than those with high reading skills. Unfortunately, according to the NSBA, adults with the lowest literacy skills are the least likely to engage their children in literacy development activities, such as reading or playing rhyming games (Feruzi, 2021; McDonald, 2019; Paulynice, 2020).

## **2. Reading Comprehension**

The ability to interpret written words is referred to as comprehension. Unlike the capacity to recognize words, it is different. Recognizing words on a page without understanding what they mean falls short of comprehension, which is the purpose or goal of reading. Let us say a teacher gives a pupil a reading assignment. When asked to explain what was read, the youngster can read the whole chapter but is at a loss for words. Reading comprehension gives the written word meaning. When the words on a page convey more than just words—but rather concepts and ideas—then reading comprehension happens. When reading is understood, it becomes more enjoyable, enlightening, and amusing. It is necessary to excel in school, the workplace, and life (Mercer, 2020; Owan *et al.*, 2022; Sabol *et al.*, 2018).

Reading comprehension also refers to the capacity to read text, analyze it, and comprehend its meaning. It is built on two interrelated abilities: language comprehension and word reading, which entails interpreting the meanings of the words and phrases on the page. Good comprehension is essential for reading to have a purpose, for a reader to engage with and learn from a book, and, finally, to enjoy reading. Reading comprehension is the application of a skill developed for another reason (hearing or oral comprehension) to a new kind of input to text (Ardhian *et al.*, 2020; Epstein *et al.*, 2018; Shaffer, 2019).

On the other hand, reading comprehension, unlike listening comprehension, is not something for which our brains have evolved. Whereas oral understanding appears to develop "naturally" with little purposeful intervention, reading comprehension is more complex and requires deliberate teaching. Humans have been proficient in oral comprehension for 100,000 years or more, and nearly all humans do it; reading comprehension has only been trained for 5,000 years, and most humans did not do it for most of that period. It should come as no surprise that reading comprehension is challenging. The application of comprehension to literature expands our mental capabilities (Hussar *et al.*, 2020; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018; Tamara & Merentek, 2019).

In addition, since the invention of writing until the present, humans have been reading to understand and adapt to society's rapidly changing structure. Reading can be defined as making sense in a regular environment according to an appropriate method and purpose, based on effective communication between the author and the reader, and involving cognitive behaviors and psychomotor skills. When the definitions are examined, we can define reading as the mental process of making sense. Text and symbols are subjected to cognitive processes (Al Badi, 2020; Carlson, 2020; Chu & Sopher-Dunn, 2021).

To be practical, reading, the process of making sense of texts and symbols, must be considered a fluent, sense-making, strategic, motivation-based, and lifelong process. The skills involved in this process comprise five fundamental reading principles. Individuals must learn fluent reading skills. One of the fundamentals of reading skills is to read effectively and at the expected level. Fluent reading is the student's ability to read the text at an appropriate speed, as if he or she speaks naturally (Septiyana & Aminatun, 2021; Werfel & Reynolds, 2019).

However, students who lack interest and experience in education and instruction are affected due to the inadequacy. They have particular difficulties understanding, explaining, reading, writing, drawing, recognizing, and conceptualizing due to organic and functional reasons, despite having the same level of intelligence as their peers. A good reader needs help to transfer prior knowledge to the reading environment during the reading process. Individuals who struggle with fluency also struggle to read a text (Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Hindman *et al.*, 2020; Lynch, 2021).

Literacy is commonly defined as the skills and knowledge required to learn to read, which include phonological awareness/beginning reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Reading is a collection of interconnected skills that must be learned to absorb meaning from various texts. "English Language Arts" refers to the ability to grasp and



communicate effectively in English. Reading proficiency is necessary for academic success, particularly after the third grade. Students are expected to be readers by the end of the third grade (Bench, 2018; Epstein, 2018; Sabol *et al.*, 2018).

In addition, some children learn to read effortlessly from an early age, while others struggle. Reading is a complex ability that must be taught purposefully, methodically, contextually, and gradually at a young age. The appropriate literature must be provided at the appropriate time to develop the child's reading abilities. Children who can read well are more likely to excel in disciplines other than languages. Reading competency is comprised of two components: decoding abilities that allow children to read a text and meaning-making or comprehension skills that allow children to understand, engage, and become connected with a piece of literature (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019; Shah *et al.*, 2018; Troyer, 2022).

As a result, "reading proficiency" refers to all the thinking that occurs in our brains before, during, and after reading. The ability to think critically about what we read in various ways is increasingly being measured. Proficient readers preview content, make predictions, activate past knowledge (schema), and even create a reading goal. Proficient readers think beyond the text, and the Common Core Standards encourage this practice from an early age. Readers are encouraged to make connections between texts, with themselves, and with the world around them. Good readers continue reading when the tale or book ends (Owan *et al.*, 2022; van Dijk, 2018; Wong *et al.*, 2022).

Consequently, comprehension is a fundamental aspect of reading proficiency, as it reflects a reader's ability to understand and interpret the content of a text. To assess comprehension, educators can present learners with a long paragraph on a specific topic and ask them to summarize the main idea and key details. For example, consider a paragraph describing a bustling market square. This paragraph might detail the various vendors selling their goods, the vibrant atmosphere created by the diverse array of products, and the social interactions that take place within this space (Albaiz & Ernest, 2021; Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Chlapana, 2021).

Additionally, a learner with strong comprehension skills captures the essence of the market square as a central hub for commerce and community engagement. They would identify the key points, such as the types of goods sold, the interactions between people, and the overall lively environment, without getting lost in extraneous details. This ability to distill the core message from a passage is crucial for compelling reading, as it demonstrates the reader's capacity to understand and retain the essential information conveyed by the text (Mercer, 2020; Owan *et al.*, 2022; Sabol *et al.*, 2018).

Further, vocabulary proficiency is another critical indicator of reading proficiency, as it demonstrates a learner's ability to understand and use language effectively. When evaluating vocabulary, educators can present learners with a paragraph containing challenging or unfamiliar words and assess their ability to interpret them in context. For instance, a paragraph about a serene garden might include words like "sanctuary," "respite," and "tranquillity." A proficient reader can use context clues to derive the meanings of these words, understanding that a sanctuary is a safe and peaceful place, respite refers to a break from the hectic pace of life, and tranquillity denotes a state of

calm and peace. This skill enhances comprehension and expands the learner's vocabulary, as they can infer the meanings of new words based on their context (Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Bench, 2018; Epstein & Sheldon, 2019).

Fluency is essential to reading proficiency, as it reflects a reader's ability to read text smoothly, accurately, and with appropriate expression. When assessing fluency, educators can ask learners to read a long paragraph aloud and observe their reading performance. For instance, a paragraph describing an ancient library might contain complex sentences and rich vocabulary that require careful navigation. A fluent reader can read this paragraph with a natural pace, pausing appropriately at punctuation marks, and using intonation to convey the atmosphere of wisdom and mystery described in the text (Feruzi, 2021; McDonald, 2019; Paulynice, 2020).

Moreover, they would pronounce words correctly and handle challenging vocabulary without stumbling, demonstrating their familiarity with the language structures and the ability to read seamlessly. Fluency is crucial for reading comprehension. It allows the readers to focus on understanding the text rather than decoding individual words. Fluent reading also enhances engagement with the text, as the reader's expressive reading can bring the content to life, making it more enjoyable and easier to understand (Hindman *et al.*, 2020; Lynch, 2021; Tamara & Merentek, 2019).

On the other hand, analytical skills are vital for deep comprehension and engagement with a text, as they involve the ability to interpret and critique the content and the techniques used by the author. Educators can ask the learners to analyze a long paragraph, identify the author's purpose, and the literary devices employed. For example, a paragraph about a photographer capturing human emotions might use imagery and symbolism to convey the depth and complexity of the emotions depicted in the photographs. A proficient reader can identify these literary techniques and explain how they contribute to the overall message of the text (Albaiz & Ernest, 2021; Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Chlapana, 2021). In addition, a proficient reader uses vivid descriptions to create a visual image in his or her mind. His ability to analyze and interpret literary devices is crucial for a deeper understanding of the text, as it allows the readers to appreciate the nuances and layers of meaning that contribute to the work's overall impact. Analytical skills also enable the readers to engage critically with the text, considering the different perspectives and forming reasoned opinions based on their analysis (Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Bench, 2018; Epstein & Sheldon, 2019).

Critical thinking is essential for reading proficiency, as it involves evaluating and responding to a text thoughtfully and logically. When assessing critical thinking, educators can present learners with a long paragraph discussing a complex issue, such as the urgency of climate change, and ask them to formulate a critical response. For instance, a paragraph might outline the evidence of climate change, such as rising sea levels and extreme weather events, and discuss the various factors that contribute to the debate, including political and economic interests (Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Shaffer, 2019; Tamara & Merentek, 2019).

A proficient reader would understand and engage with the argument critically, considering the evidence and the broader implications. They might evaluate the strength

of the evidence, consider different perspectives, and form a reasoned opinion based on their analysis. This ability to think critically is crucial for a well-rounded understanding of a text, as it allows readers to move beyond mere comprehension to engage with the content on a deeper level. Critical thinking also enhances problem-solving and decision-making skills, encouraging readers to consider multiple perspectives and to support their conclusions with evidence and logical reasoning (Mercer, 2020; Owan *et al.*, 2022; Sabol *et al.*, 2018).

Instructional reading serves as a bridge between independent and frustration bridges independent and frustrating reading levels, helping learners who need guidance to process texts effectively. This approach aligns with educational theories emphasizing scaffolding, where teachers model and support reading strategies, gradually encouraging students to apply these strategies independently. Research underscores that instructional reading activities, such as guided reading, think-alouds, and interactive questioning, effectively develop decoding abilities, vocabulary, and comprehension. Guided reading, a central strategy within instructional reading, allows targeted instruction that meets students at their current reading level, enabling progression without causing frustration. Furthermore, literature points to the importance of using texts at an appropriate challenge level, which enhances student engagement and builds their confidence in reading (Alfano & Douglas, 2018; Cadiz-Gabejan & Quirino, 2021; Shaffer, 2019).

Moreover, instructional reading strategies encourage students to think critically, a process known as metacognition, which is essential for monitoring comprehension and making meaning from the text. Through guided reading and structured questioning techniques, students learn to self-regulate to understand a passage and employ strategies to clarify meaning. It aligns with cognitive theories that suggest metacognitive skills, which are the foundation for academic success across all subjects. Instructional reading not only develops reading proficiency but also enhances critical thinking skills in all areas of learning (Albaiz & Ernest, 2021; Chlapana, 2021; Tamara & Merentek, 2019).

Furthermore, in a collaborative setting, such as small-group reading sessions, students develop social and communication skills by engaging in discussions, sharing insights, and supporting each other's learning. This interaction fosters community and accountability among students, allowing them to learn from their peers and gain confidence in expressing their thoughts about the texts. Social learning theory posits that students acquire knowledge effectively through observation, imitation, and modeling, suggesting that an instructional reading collaborative approach can significantly enhance comprehension and retention. Silent reading also assists a child in retaining thoughts in his subconscious mind that he can employ daily (Sabol *et al.*, 2018; Widiyaningsih *et al.*, 2019; Zulmiyetri *et al.*, 2019).

In addition, silent reading is frequently referred to as recreational reading or autonomous reading since it is done in a relaxed state with only one person paying attention. Reading silently increases pupils' comprehension since it allows them to focus on what they are reading rather than individual word pronunciation. We can build mental pictures of the issue being read and discussed when we read silently. We also do not have to read one word at a time. When you encourage your kids to read silently, you

are assisting them in developing the tools they need to read faster and with more comprehension (Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Shaffer, 2019; Tamara & Merentek, 2019).

Similarly, instructional reading has been shown to support students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, offering tailored instruction that respects and incorporates students' unique experiences. Research indicates that instructional reading strategies can be adapted to reflect the linguistic diversity of classrooms, supporting bilingual or multilingual students in bridging their native language and English proficiency. This adaptability is particularly relevant in culturally responsive teaching, as it allows educators to select texts that resonate with students' cultural backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive learning environment (Bench, 2018; Hindman *et al.*, 2020; Lynch, 2021).

On the other hand, the advantages of good silent reading include a consistent increase in educational efficiency, studying a diverse range of reading material, learning how to read with purpose, and confidence in dealing with all forms of reading, whether for school, business, or enjoyment. Learning to pay attention to different types of reading material, determining the essential ideas of reading text, grasping main ideas with minimal eye fixations, trying together closely related ideas in the text, achieving comprehension of the text without difficulty, and subconsciously determining what might be best for recollection later are all part of the successful transition from oral reading to silent reading. In other words, oral reading is essential initially, whereas silent reading is good throughout one's life (Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Bench, 2018; Epstein & Sheldon, 2019).

Hence, the capacity to sit and read material silently is a talent that all pupils will require as they progress through secondary school and into higher education. Students must have several daily opportunities to practice reading silently, such as learning and active reading strategies. Moreover, as with all explicit education, we must explain why this ability is vital to our pupils. Students at college and work are occasionally obliged to study complex literature throughout the week. They will not be required to read aloud or to request that a colleague read for them (Kim *et al.*, 2021; Missall *et al.*, 2019).

Independent reading refers to children reading the text without significant adult assistance, encompassing various materials and contexts. It includes reading for pleasure or assigned reading in and outside of school. Independent reading strongly correlates with reading achievement and fosters reading fluency, vocabulary development, background knowledge, and spelling skills. Motivation is crucial in independent reading, as interested and motivated children tend to engage more. Unfortunately, children with reading learning disabilities often struggle to read independently due to difficulties, limited access to appropriate reading materials, or negative attitudes resulting from past failures (Albaiz & Ernest, 2021; Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Chlapana, 2021).

Moreover, the National Reading Panel concluded that more research was needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of commonly used independent reading programs in schools, such as Sustained Silent Reading. (In these programs, students may spend a significant amount of time silently reading books of their choice, with the teacher reading

silently simultaneously. Furthermore, the panel cautioned that these programs are ineffective for students who need more basic word decoding skills, particularly as a sole or primary treatment. These warnings are significant for children with learning disabilities, who frequently struggle with word decoding (Mercer, 2020; Owan *et al.*, 2022; Sabol *et al.*, 2018).

Similarly, independent reading is used in educational settings to describe how students select and read material such as fiction, nonfiction, magazines, and other media for their consumption and enjoyment. Students who read independently emphasize creativity in what they want to read and learn. Independent reading is typically done with the ongoing classroom or home curriculum. It can be linked to assessment and evaluation or treated separately. Independent reading is reading that students do on their own. It reflects the reader's preference for the material and the time and place it will be read. Independent reading can be done for information or enjoyment. Nobody assigns it, no one requires a report, and no one checks for understanding (Mercer, 2020; Shah *et al.*, 2018; Troyer, 2022).

On the other hand, volunteer reading, leisure reading, spare time reading, recreational reading, and reading outside of school are all terms for independent reading. Voluntary reading entails making a conscious decision to read widely from various sources and selecting what one reads. Alliterates, or people who can read but choose not to, miss out on just as much as those who cannot. Individuals read to enjoy life to the fullest, to earn a living, to understand what is going on in the world, and to benefit from civilization's accumulated knowledge (Feruzi, 2021; McDonald, 2019; Paulynice, 2020).

Frustration reading level is when a reader needs more background knowledge for a topic and does not meet the instructional level accuracy and criteria. It necessitates extensive or even moderate assistance from an educator. It can be improved gradually with the help of an educator.

Moreover, frustration level in reading is a significant challenge in literacy development, affecting students' academic success, motivation, and self-confidence. The concept of frustration in reading emerged from early educational research on reading levels, which distinguishes among independent, instructional, and frustration levels. When reading at a frustration level, students experience frequent obstacles that hinder comprehension and fluency, often leading to negative emotional responses and a lack of motivation to continue reading.

Furthermore, decoding and comprehension are primary difficulties, as students who struggle with phonemic awareness or have a limited vocabulary often find it challenging to understand complex texts. Cognitive load theory also suggests that frustration increases when reading demands exceed a student's working memory capacity. Students with difficult vocabulary or complex syntax may become overwhelmed, leading to disengagement and frustration, especially among younger readers or those with learning disabilities. Repeated reading failures may lead to learned helplessness, where students perceive themselves as inherently poor readers and may avoid reading.

A classroom environment also influences reading frustration; supportive classrooms emphasizing encouragement and constructive feedback can reduce frustration, while unsupportive settings can heighten stress and discourage students' engagement. Effective strategies can help alleviate reading frustration. Differentiated instruction and scaffolding, where the reading materials and support are adapted to students' needs, can reduce frustration. It is done by helping students tackle the texts at an appropriate level. Motivation also plays an essential role; research shows that students who read engaging and relatable materials are more likely to persevere despite the challenges. Allowing students to select reading materials and using culturally relevant texts can also increase engagement.

These concepts and theories have a bearing in the present study and became the basis for evaluating the reading proficiency level of Grade 3 learners in Labangal Elementary School. Hence, reading proficiency involves two things: First, decoding skills allow the learners to read a text; second, comprehension skills enable the children to understand, engage, and get involved with the text. The levels are as follows: The beginning level suggests that the learner's reading skills are struggling with an Equivalent Numerical Value of 74% or below. The development level suggests that the learners possess minimum knowledge, skills, and core understanding, with an Equivalent Numerical Value between 75% and 79%.

Relatively, approaching Proficiency Level suggests that the learners have developed the fundamental knowledge, skills, and core understanding with little guidance from the teacher, and an Equivalent Numerical Value between 80% and 84%. Proficiency level suggests that the learner can read independently and with an Equivalent Numerical Value between 85% and 89%. The advanced level suggests that the learners have developed the fundamental knowledge and skills to perform the task independently, with an Equivalent Numerical Value of 90% and above.

### **3. Material and Methods**

This study is anchored mainly with the Theory of Automaticity by LaBerge & Samuels (1974), which has been applied to reading fluency to assess a student's capacity to scan and read words mechanically. The theory focuses on word recognition, which should be developed through more straightforward texts for students with reading difficulties. The accuracy and speed of the performance increase as the learner's automaticity grows. The automaticity theory strongly emphasizes repeated performance or practices because it takes multiple exposures for a learner to retain and understand new words. The argument that sounding spelling forms typically become automatic through the repetition of visual and articulatory sequences supported the need for repetition to improve automaticity.

This theory is supported by the Bottom-Up Reading Model by Gough *et al.* (1972). A bottom-up reading model emphasizes the written or printed text claims that reading is motivated by a process that generates meaning (or, to put it another way, reading is motivated by a text), and asserts that reading moves from part to whole. To be more

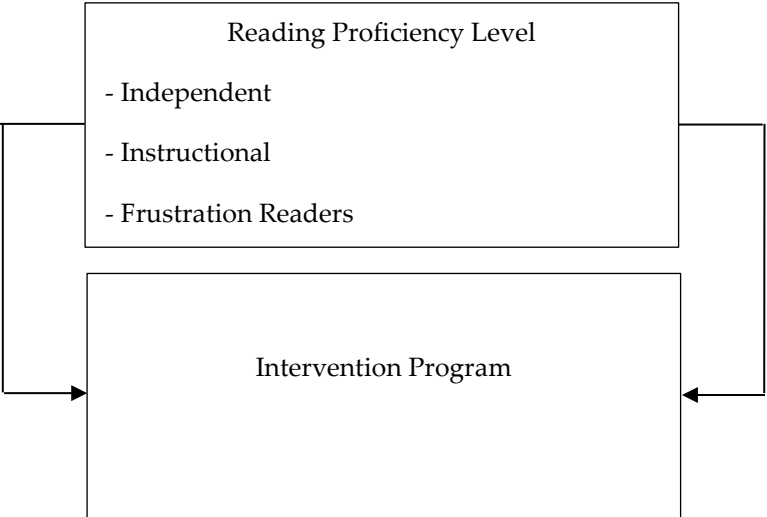
specific, a bottom-up or phonics-based model of reading depicts the reading process as moving sequentially from letter to sound, to word, and to meaning.

The Zone of Proximal Development by Vygotsky (1962) states the difference between a child's potential development level and their actual development level as measured by their ability to solve problems independently or with the help of a more experienced peer. That is, Vygotsky understood the ZPD to describe the learner's current or actual level of development and the next level attainable through mediating semiotic and environmental tools. Individuals learn best when they collaborate with others. Learners learn and absorb new concepts, psychological tools, and abilities through such collaborative undertakings with more skilled individuals.

Lastly, the Constructivism Theory by Piaget, as cited by McLeod (2007), states that humans generate knowledge by interacting with their experiences and ideas. Because of his belief that the individual is at the heart of the knowledge creation and acquisition process, his constructivism inspires radical constructivism. Most of Piaget's beliefs arose from his work with children, where he challenged the notion that children are inferior thinkers to adults. His research shows that children are not mentally inferior to adults. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. The two boxes represent this.

The upper box shows the gap under investigation: Reading Proficiency Level. Reading is a multifaceted cognitive process characterized as a collection of interconnected skills essential for deriving meaning from diverse texts, which involves the mechanical recognition of words and the more profound comprehension of ideas and concepts embedded within those words. Reading opens up a world of knowledge and actively stimulates the intellect in numerous dimensions, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills as readers learn to interpret, evaluate, and synthesize information. Furthermore, the act of reading triggers memories and associations, allowing individuals to draw upon past experiences, which enriches their understanding and creates connections between different pieces of information (Chan & Yeung, 2020; Hjetland *et al.*, 2020; Septiyana & Aminatun, 2021).

Based on the findings of the study, an intervention program is proposed. An intervention program is an intervention curriculum designed to achieve a result. Reading proficiency holds a global significance as it is a fundamental skill for individuals to access education, information, and opportunities, enabling social and economic development worldwide. Strong reading proficiency is essential for fostering critical thinking, empowering individuals to make informed decisions, participating actively in society, and contributing to the overall progress and well-being of communities and nations. Additionally, enhancing reading proficiency directly contributes to achieving SDG #4 by improving educational outcomes and promoting equal access to learning resources, which can break the cycles of poverty and promote social mobility. This study hoped to provide relevant data to the Department of Education on the reading proficiency level of Grade III learners that is beneficial in this time of New Normal Education. The result of the study would be the basis for the school administrators and school heads as a reference in formulating school policies and programs that will aid the learners' reading skills.



**Figure 1:** The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Additionally, it can guide them in formulating policies, plans, programs, projects, activities, and other reforms for the reading program in the new regular education. Moreover, the study's findings are beneficial because they would strengthen the relationship between the teachers and the learners, wherein the teachers support the needs of the learners in improving their reading proficiency. Finally, this study can be used to study the learners' reading proficiency. Other researchers who wish to undertake a similar study may find this a good source of information.

**3.1 Definition of Terms**

The researcher defines the following terminologies operationally for better understanding:

**3.1.1 Intervention Program**

As used in this study, it refers to structured activities and learning dynamics designed to help learners who struggle to improve their reading ability. This program incorporates targeted practices to address specific reading challenges each student faces. An intervention program also emphasizes small-group or one-on-one instruction, allowing the teachers to provide personalized support and feedback.

**3.1.2 Learners**

This study refers to students participating in the educational setting, acquiring new knowledge, skills, or competencies. They range across various reading levels, with specific attention to those experiencing difficulties in reading comprehension, fluency, or decoding. These learners are the primary focus of intervention strategies designed to support their progress and improve their academic outcomes in literacy.



### 3.1.3 Reading Proficiency Levels

As used in this study, it refers to the ability of the Grade 3 learners in Labangal District to process a series of written symbols and understand their meaning. It is scaled through the standardized questionnaire on the Philippine – Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) materials wherein independent readers obtained 97-100% of word reading score and 80-100% comprehension score, instructional readers obtained 90-96% of word reading score and 59-79% comprehension score, and frustration readers obtained 89% and below word reading score and 58% and below comprehension score.

This study used a quantitative research design, a descriptive-evaluative survey. In quantitative research, closed-ended questions are frequently preferred. The respondents were given a predetermined list of options to provide in-depth, open-ended responses. This design ensures that the quantitative research process is much more effective than open-ended questions of the qualitative type (Swat *et al.*, 2019).

Moreover, quantitative research design aims to ascertain the proportion of people who hold a given belief, behavior, or emotion. Large sample sizes are the standard in quantitative projects, focusing on the volume of responses rather than the more nuanced or emotional understanding the qualitative research seeks to elicit. Each respondent is typically asked the same questions in a quantitative research design, which ensures that the entire data sample can be analyzed. The data are provided in a numerical format and can be analyzed statistically in a quantifiable way (Rahman, 2020).

Further, quantitative research design aims to gather quantitative data and extrapolate it to other populations, which is the aim of quantitative research design. This design makes every detail well thought out and planned before collecting the data. The researcher also has a well-defined research topic that is being answered objectively. The data includes things like numbers and statistics. A project can be used to look into causal linkages, forecast results, or generalize ideas more widely (Cooksey & Cooksey, 2020).

Furthermore, closed-ended questions are often favored in quantitative research. Generally, the respondents cannot deliver detailed, open-ended answers unless given a preset list of possibilities. Compared to the case of using an open-ended qualitative research question, this approach ensures that the quantitative research procedure is far more successful. It is more efficient because it does not require re-coding an open-ended reply.

On the other hand, descriptive survey research reveals an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. Researchers from various fields use descriptive research to precisely define the population, market, or circumstance. In order to give accurate and pertinent information, descriptive survey research uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. A descriptive survey design, a quick research technique, engages the subjects who are the focus of the study's goal (Millner *et al.*, 2020).

Similarly, descriptive survey research involves collecting data to examine hypotheses or answer inquiries about the subject. It systematically describes events, phenomena, or facts in a particular area or population to accurately portray a group's or situation's characteristics. Descriptive studies can cover various aspects such as teacher

demographics, length of service, socioeconomic status, educational level, and even teachers' health, safety, and welfare conditions.

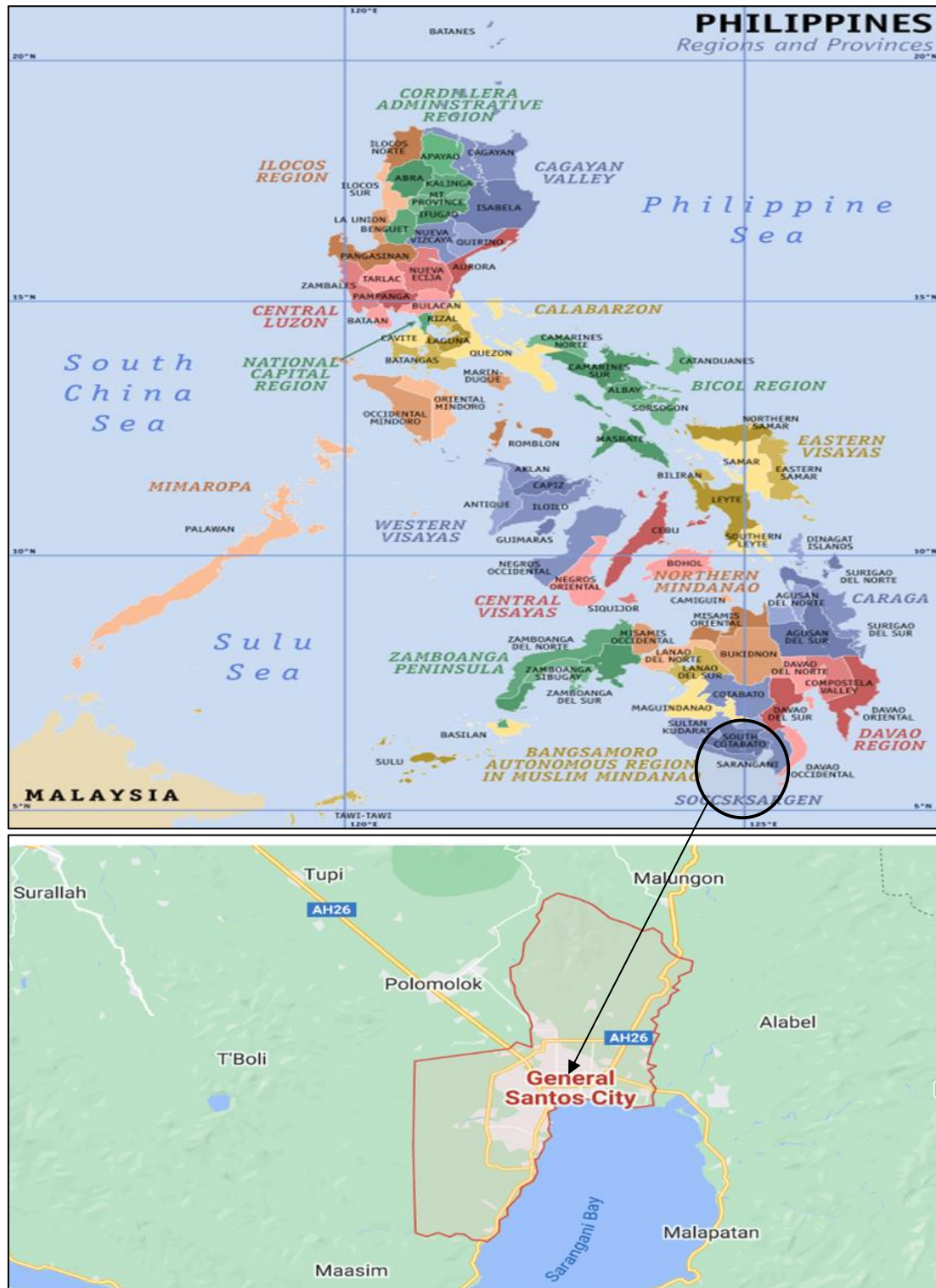
Moreover, descriptive survey research is a quantitative method used to collect and analyze data from a specific population or sample at a particular time. It aims to describe the characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, or opinions through structured questionnaires or interviews (Story *et al.*, 2019). An evaluative survey design is a research method used to assess the effectiveness, impact, or efficiency of programs, interventions, policies, or services. It combines evaluative techniques to systematically collect the data from the respondents or stakeholders. This design aims to determine whether the specific objectives are met to gather feedback and to identify improvement areas. The data are typically collected through surveys or questionnaires. The Likert scale, multiple-choice questions, or open-ended items captured quantitative and qualitative insights. Evaluative surveys focus on the key criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. It is a design particularly valuable in fostering accountability and evidence-based decision-making. By directly engaging the participants or the stakeholders, it ensures that the perspectives of those affected by the program are considered, making the evaluation more inclusive. The analysis involves identifying overall trends and patterns, often using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis (Mohajan, 2020).

This approach also allows researchers and practitioners to identify intended positive or negative outcomes that might go unnoticed. Furthermore, the findings from an evaluative survey often serve as the foundation for strategic planning. It will enable the organizations to refine their initiatives, allocate resources more effectively, and enhance overall program performance (Chang *et al.*, 2024).

### **3.2 Research Locale**

This study was conducted at Labangal Elementary School. Labangal is a vibrant neighborhood in General Santos City, Philippines. It has a natural beauty, lively food scene, and warm hospitality. Nestled near pristine white-sand beaches and clear waters, Labangal offers a stunning sunset and a perfect setting for beach relaxation, snorkeling, and diving. Adding to its community appeal, Labangal is home to the Sangguniang Kabataan Labangal, which collaborates with Kidlikasan to host Camp Langguyin, an environmental camp aimed at empowering the youths in leadership and promoting awareness of SDG #14: Life Below Water. This initiative immerses the young people in environmental stewardship, fostering a commitment to sustainable marine conservation. Labangal Elementary School, located in Labangal, General Santos City, is a vibrant and progressive institution committed to providing quality education to its students. The school fosters and nurtures an inclusive environment where the learners are encouraged to achieve academic excellence and develop holistically. Equipped with modern facilities and a dedicated teaching staff, Labangal Elementary School offers a comprehensive curriculum that integrates academic subjects with co-curricular activities, promoting each child's intellectual, social, and emotional growth. It actively engages the community

through partnerships in outreach programs, ensuring that education remains collaborative.



**Figure 2:** The Philippine Map and the Locale of the Study

### 3.3 Population and Sample

The study's respondents included the 320 Grade three learners from the eight sections of Labangal Elementary School enrolled during the SY 2022-2023. Census or total enumeration was applied to get the desired population (Paler-Calmorin & Calmorin, 2007).

**Table 1:** Distribution of the Respondents

Sections	N
1	40
2	40
3	40
4	40
5	40
6	40
7	40
8	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>

The researcher set the inclusion criteria in selecting the respondents: male or female, regardless of religion and ethnicity, aged 7-9 years old, who were currently enrolled as Grade three learners of Labangal Elementary School.

Some learners were excluded from participating in this study, including those Grade 3 learners aged six and below and ten and above. Additionally, the respondents who were unable or unwilling to cooperate in data collection were excluded from the study. Nevertheless, the respondents had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without providing a reason. Any respondent who chose to withdraw was assured that their decision would not have any negative consequences or impact on their relationship with the school or program. Furthermore, any respondents who displayed discomfort, distress, or emotional unease during the study may avail themselves of appropriate measures taken to support and ensure their well-being.

### 3.4 Research Instruments

This study utilized a standardized questionnaire on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) materials to assess the respondents' reading proficiency level. It is an assessment tool comprising graded passages designed to determine the learner's proficiency level in reading. It only provides a guesstimate of the learner's reading skills and may be blended with reliable assessment tools. The Phil-IRI Group Screening Test (GST) can help teachers determine whether learners read at, above, or below grade levels. The individually administered Phil-IRI Graded Passages can be utilized to evaluate learners' Oral Reading, Silent Reading Comprehension, and Listening Comprehension levels.

### 3.5 Data Collection

The researcher collected data from the survey conducted. A standardized questionnaire on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) was used to conduct the survey. The RMMC Ethics and Review Committee of the Graduate School was consulted regarding the research. The researcher asked for approval to conduct the survey. Upon its approval, the researcher approached the Schools Division Superintendent, Schools Division Office of the Division of General Santos City, and requested authorization to conduct the study. Moreover, the researcher made the reproduction preparations of the questionnaires based on the anticipated number of target respondents. The researcher explained the Informed Consent Form (ICF) and distributed the questionnaires to the respondents. The respondents were given the time to answer all the questions. Also, the researcher checked that all of the items in the questionnaire were answered and completed by the respondents while retrieving the forms.

The Phil-IRI reading test was used to identify each student's reading level for each passage. It has a predetermined criterion. These criteria include the percentage of word recognition accuracy and the percentage of correct answers to comprehension questions (Abril *et al.*, 2022).

**Table 2:** Data Analysis and Interpretation of Word Reading and Comprehension Level

Reading Level	Word Reading Score (in %)	Comprehension Score (in %)
Independent	97-100%	80-100%
Instructional	90-96%	59-79%
Frustration	89% and below	58% and below

### 3.6 Statistical Tools

#### 3.6.1 Frequency Counts

It was used to determine the number of respondents belonging to each category.

#### 3.6.2 Percentage

It was used to determine the number of respondents per category and the total number of respondents.

### 3.7 Ethical Consideration

Significant ethical issues play a vital role in gathering the data. The ethical considerations in this research are concerned with the proper conduct of the study, confidentiality, and anonymity. The RMMC Ethics and Review Committee's requirements for ethical consideration were adhered to in this study, especially when dealing with the participants and the data, including but not limited to the following:

#### 3.7.1 Voluntary Participation

The respondents were allowed to participate without any plan of repercussion, reparations, or loss of benefits. Following the respondent's explanation of the study's objective, the respondent's rights to contribute to the body of knowledge were carefully

considered and anticipated. The respondents in this study were not coerced into taking part. If people get uncomfortable while participating in the study, they can stop.

### **3.7.2 Privacy and confidentiality**

The Data Privacy Act of 2012 ensures that the respondents' privacy rights are protected with their informed consent form. In a quantitative study, privacy was maintained by allowing the respondents to omit their names from the survey. Information like age, gender, occupation, and health conditions is also withheld to protect their identity. The answers provided in the survey were treated confidentially, thus upholding their privacy and security.

### **3.7.3 Informed consent process**

Given the limitations of the inquiry, potential research volunteers were fully informed of the study's goals, methods, and rewards in the most detailed way conceivable. Because the respondents' permission was requested, their participation was freely given. The respondents were given the necessary information about the survey's methodology. The informed consent form required the respondents to sign to indicate that they freely chose to participate in the study. Since the respondents were minors, a consent form was also required to ensure that their parents or guardians formally approved their involvement. The respondents' identities were not listed in the survey form, and their responses were kept private. The respondents knew they could withdraw from participating at any time.

### **3.7.4 Recruitment**

The respondents were informed of why they had become part of the study. For the respondents to understand what the study was all about, the researcher explained the purpose of the study so that they could further infer from the researcher and also view the study's essence. The researcher also gave the rationale for the research and its significance.

### **3.7.5 Risks**

The research was conducted to determine an acceptable, favorable benefit-to-risk ratio. This study must protect the respondents from significant harm, which is equally essential. The researcher prioritized the welfare of the respondents. Furthermore, the respondents were not harmed since their identities were held confidential. Their security and safety were of the utmost concern. As a researcher, I needed to ensure that the respondents were physically, emotionally, and socially ready. In answering the survey questionnaire, the researcher considered male or female grade three learners regardless of their religion, and age, race; and who were currently enrolled at Labangal Elementary School.

### **3.7.6 Benefits**

Reading proficiency holds a global significance as it is a fundamental skill for individuals to access education, information, and opportunities, enabling social and economic

development worldwide. Strong reading proficiency is essential for fostering critical thinking, empowering individuals to make informed decisions, participating actively in society, and contributing to the overall progress and well-being of communities and nations. This study hoped to provide relevant data on the Department of Education's reading proficiency level of Grade III learners during the New Normal. The result of the study would be the basis for creating an intervention program for the school administrators and school heads as a reference in formulating the school policies and programs that could aid the learners' reading skills.

### **3.7.7 Plagiarism**

The study had no trace or evidence of misinterpretation of someone else's work. The study was subjected to plagiarism detectors like Grammarly software. As a researcher, one needs to have a positive character and integrity, associated with moral virtues and values. The researcher must have better knowledge about the paradigm of plagiarism to have a credible research paper.

### **3.7.8 Fabrication**

The study had no indication or cue of purposive misinterpretation of what had been done. There was no making up of data and results or purposefully putting forward conclusions that were not accurate. The researcher employed and integrated theories related to the information and other inferential concepts.

### **3.7.9 Falsification**

The study did not purposefully misrepresent the work to fit a model or theoretical expectation and had no evidence of overclaiming or exaggeration. Furthermore, this study needed to adhere to manipulating the data, which involved formulating statements or disregarding important details, maneuvering materials, tools, or methodologies that would mislead others. Additionally, every effort was made to prevent bias by faithfully recording the observations, including all the relevant data, thereby supporting a reliable and trustworthy representation of the research findings.

### **3.7.10 Conflict of Interest (COI)**

The study was free of any indications of a conflict of interest, such as the disclosure of a COI, which is a set of circumstances in which a professional's judgment about a primary interest, like the welfare of the participants or the validity of the research, is likely to be influenced by a secondary interest, like monetary or academic gains or recognitions. In addition, the respondents were not coerced by the researcher into participating in the study. The researcher had no control or influence over them.

### **3.7.11 Deceit**

The study had no trace of misleading the respondents about any possible danger. There must be humongous protection of the rights of the participants in any study, especially since they have attained higher education, so balanced and appropriate principles shall

be adhered to. Every precaution was taken to maintain transparency throughout the research process, upholding ethical standards to foster trust and safeguard the participants' well-being.

### **3.7.12 Permission from the Organization/Location**

The researcher of this study followed protocols. Upon receiving the signal from the panelists, the adviser, and the committee of the RMMC ERC, the researcher sought approval from the School Division Superintendents for the conduct of the study through a formal letter. After this, the researcher wrote a formal letter to the district supervisor and the school principal involved in the study, attaching the school's endorsed letter from the Schools Division Superintendent. The Grade three learners in the study were oriented before administering the survey questionnaire.

### **3.7.13 Authorship**

Ethical authorship ensures that all individuals who contributed substantially to the research were appropriately acknowledged as authors. The researcher ensured that the study's results appropriately reflected the contributions of all parties involved and were fair and transparent. Research outputs maintained credibility and made a fair and transparent contribution to knowledge progress by following ethical authoring norms.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data gathered in the study.

Table 2 presents the reading proficiency level of Grade 3 learners. Frequency count and percentage were utilized to treat the data gathered.

Data revealed the reading proficiency level of 320 Grade 3 learners. Only 16% (52 learners) of the cohort were classified as independent readers, demonstrating excellent reading skills with scores of 97–100 in word reading and 80–100 in comprehension. Additionally, 34% (108 learners) were identified as instructional readers, capable of functioning with moderate support, as indicated by their word reading scores of 90–96 and comprehension scores of 59–79.

50% of the learners (160) were categorized as frustrated readers, struggling significantly with reading skills. These learners obtained word reading scores of 89 and below and comprehension scores of 58 and below. This group was particularly at risk, as their decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension difficulties could impede their academic performance and engagement. Without effective intervention, these challenges could exacerbate the learning gaps and hinder the overall educational progress of the learners.



The high percentage of frustration readers underscores the urgent need for targeted and structured intervention. It is where the Basa Tayo Program becomes essential. It is designed to address the specific needs of struggling readers. This program aims to decrease the number of frustration readers by focusing on the foundation of reading skills, such as phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

**Table 3:** Level of Reading Proficiency of the Respondents

Reading Levels	Frequency (N=0)	Percentage (%)
Independent	52	16
Instructional	108	34
Frustration	160	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>

## **5. Intervention Program**

### **I. Name of the Program: Basa Tayo Program**

### **II. Proponent: Judith Diocales**

### **III. Description**

The Basa Tayo Program aims to provide targeted and intensive instruction to students who struggle with reading skills. The program seeks to improve students' phonemic awareness, decoding skills, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and reading motivation. The reading intervention program's goals include helping the students read based on their grade level, building their confidence and self-esteem, increasing their enjoyment of reading, and improving their overall academic achievement through scouting camp activities.

### **IV. Rationale**

Reading is a complex developmental challenge linked to many other developmental achievements, such as attention, memory, language, and motivation. It is a social as well as a cognitive psycholinguistic activity. Reading is essential because it develops the mind and provides knowledge and life lessons. It improves understanding of the world around us. It stimulates the mind and improves creative abilities. Reading improves comprehension. Children are encouraged to read from a young age to understand their surroundings better. They develop critical thinking skills and are more open to new ideas and innovations than other children of their age. As a result, they grow up far more intelligent and aware of their surroundings than the non-reading children.

What is unique about this program? This program aims to upgrade the reading proficiency levels through enjoyable teamwork, collaboration, and meaningful experiences, developing the spirit of scouting while establishing good reading habits and environment. Through this, the learners will enjoy the habit of reading.

**a. Mechanics**

The learners will be grouped into patrols of 16 members. Each team will have its patrol leader, patrol name, yell, and song. They will undergo ten stations, each with reading materials and reading activities to be performed. The team will proceed to the next station with a perfect score. The first team that can finish all the stations will be given the reward. The same procedure will be followed from the easiest to the most complex questions, from noting details to comprehension level.

**b. General Objectives**

1. Provide enjoyable reading activities among the Grade three learners.
2. Increase the reading proficiency level from frustration to instructional, and from instructional to independent.
3. Develop the spirit of collaboration and teamwork.
4. Provide meaningful activities that could enhance the reading proficiency of Grade 3 learners.
5. Provide varied, unique reading activities to develop the love of reading and good reading habits.

**c. Program Plan**

### **"Basa Tayo Program"**

Key result areas	Objective	Activity	Time Frame (one month and one week)	Persons Involved	Budget	Expected outcome
Frustration Readers	Decrease the percentage of frustration readers among from 50% (160 learners) to 30% (96 learners) by the end of the program implementation.	Reading Scouting Camp  Learners will be grouped by patrols, with 16 members to be monitored by their monitoring adviser.	The first week of June 2023 (June 1-8)	School heads, Reading Coordinators, Teachers, and Learners	MORE /PTA FUND	Learners improved their reading skills by obtaining higher comprehension and word reading scores with the help of the school head, reading coordinator, and teachers.
Independent Readers	Increase independent readers coming from 108 instructional readers.	Engage in book clubs and peer discussions to foster higher-level comprehension and critical thinking	The first week of June 2023 (1-8)			
Instructional Reader	Sustain and enrich reading skills, enhancing comprehension and critical thinking abilities	Weekly creative assignment  Provide age-appropriate chapter books that challenge vocabulary and comprehension skills	The second week of June 2023 (June 13-16)			
	Support students to achieving independent reading proficiency through guided reading and skill reinforcement	Small-group sessions with a reading specialist to reinforce decoding skills and comprehension strategy Provide parents with reading resources and encourage home reading sessions	The third week of June 2023 (June 19-23) The first week of July 2023 (July 3-7)			

This chapter discusses the data on the reading proficiency level of Grade 3 learners in Labangal Elementary School.

## 5.2 The Reading Proficiency Level of Grade 3 Learners

The data on the reading proficiency levels among the Grade 3 learners revealed distinct groupings with specific needs. The Independent readers, comprising 16% of the learners, showed high proficiency, scoring between 97 and 100 in word reading and 80 to 100 in comprehension. These students can read fluently and comprehend the material independently, reflecting strong foundational reading skills that enable them to engage with grade-level texts with minimal assistance. While these students excel, continued enrichment opportunities enhance their reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities.

Additionally, instructional readers comprised 34% of the Grade 3 learners, scoring between 90 and 96 in word reading and 59 and 79 in comprehension. These students can engage with grade-level reading material but benefit from guided support to fully understand and interpret the text. Their scores indicated that they possess the basic reading skills, yet still need the targeted strategies to move toward independent reading. With additional instructional support and focused practice on comprehension strategies, these learners have the potential to progress to independent reading levels.

Moreover, frustration readers represented 50% of the learners, scoring 89 and below in word reading and 58 or lower in comprehension. These students faced significant reading fluency and comprehension challenges, likely struggling to read and understand the grade-level texts. This group requires intensive, individualized interventions to build foundational literacy skills, such as phonics, decoding, and vocabulary development. Addressing these needs is critical for enabling Frustration readers to reach a level where they can engage meaningfully with the reading material and progress toward instructional or independent reading levels. Similarly, the study conducted by Sabol *et al.* (2018) states that literacy is commonly defined as the skills and knowledge required to learn to read. Furthermore, these skills and knowledge include phonological awareness/ beginning reading, listening, speaking, and writing. "Reading" refers to the interconnected skills that must be learned to absorb meaning from various texts. The ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English is called "English Language Arts." Reading proficiency is required for academic success, especially after the third grade. Reading instruction is reduced or eliminated in favor of other subjects because students are expected to be readers by the end of the third grade.

Reading proficiency is understanding the text before, during, and after reading. The ability to think critically about what we read in various ways is increasingly being measured. Proficient readers preview the content, make predictions, activate past knowledge (schema), and even create a reading goal. They think beyond the text, and the Common Core Standards encourage this practice from an early age. Readers are encouraged to make connections between the texts, with themselves, and with the world around them. Good readers continue reading when the tale or book ends (Owan *et al.*, 2022; van Dijk, 2018; Wong *et al.*, 2022).

Consequently, comprehension is a fundamental aspect of reading proficiency, as it reflects the reader's ability to understand and interpret the content of a text. To assess comprehension, educators can present the learners with a long paragraph on a specific

topic and ask them to summarize the main idea and key details. For example, consider a paragraph describing a bustling market square. This paragraph might detail the various vendors selling their goods, the vibrant atmosphere created by the diverse array of products, and the social interactions that take place within this space (Albaiz & Ernest, 2021; Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Chlapana, 2021).

## **6. Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are given.

This study hoped to provide relevant data on the reading proficiency level of Grade III learners that is beneficial in this time of New Normal Education. The results of this study may help administrators create an intervention program as a reference in formulating school policies and programs that would aid the teachers, parents, and learners in enriching their reading skills. Moreover, it would help the teachers with the necessary approaches to guide the learners to improve their reading skills. The study may guide them in formulating policies, plans, programs, projects, activities, and other reforms for the reading program in the new standard setting. For the researchers, the study could be used as the basis for further studies on the reading proficiency level of the learners. Other researchers who wish to undertake similar development studies may find this a good source of information.

Furthermore, the Reading Scouting Camp Activity is highly recommended to increase the reading proficiency level of Grade 3 frustration readers by assessing their specific needs and tailor instructions accordingly. This personalized approach could help address their specific areas of difficulty and provide necessary targeted interventions. Ultimately, the Basa Tayo Program is strongly recommended for use in addressing the reading proficiency challenges among the learners. Its targeted approach to improving phonemic awareness, decoding skills, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and reading motivation is designed to help the learners reach the grade-level reading proficiency while building their confidence, enjoyment of reading, and academic success.

## **7. Conclusion**

The following conclusions were established: 160 or 50% of Grade 3 learners were frustrated readers, 52 or 16% were independent, while 108 or 34% were instructional readers. It can be concluded that they need to undergo an intervention program to remediate their reading problem. The majority of them lacked comprehension in reading.

## **Acknowledgements**

The researcher would like to express her sincere and genuine gratitude to the people who contributed in so many ways to making this study possible.

To the members of the panel: Dr. Francisco M. Espinosa; Dr. Noe P. Garcia, the Executive Director for Academic Affairs, Dr. Geraldine D. Rodriguez; and to the Dean of

Graduate School, Dr. Emie A. Genton; who made scholarly suggestions to this work, she is equally grateful.

To her loving family, specifically her husband, for his untiring support morally and financially, and for helping her in exploring the internet and in encoding the final manuscript of the study.

To all whom she owed the inspiration, her heartfelt thanks.

Above all, to the Almighty God, who showered her with all the countless blessings, strength, good health, and wisdom that enabled her to undergo this study.

All the highest glory is lifted up to the Lord Jesus Christ, the sovereign God.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors whose names are listed below certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; membership, employment, consultancies, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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