

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING (ARAL) READING PROGRAM AMONG GRADE 1 PUPILS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Reading Program among Grade 1 pupils at Pintong Bukawe Elementary School, Rizal, during the School Year 2025–2026. The study aimed to determine the learners' reading performance before and after the intervention and to assess whether a significant difference exists between pre-test and post-test scores. A quasi-experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design was employed involving 43 Grade 1 pupils selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a standardized reading assessment patterned after the Comprehensive Reading Literacy Assessment (CRLA), which measured word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to describe the data, while a paired sample t-test was utilized to determine significant differences at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the majority of learners initially performed at low reading levels, with a mean pre-test score of 8.56. After the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program, the mean score increased to 15.02, indicating improved reading performance. The computed t-value of -5.952 with a p-value of 0.001 showed a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Additionally, no significant differences were found when post-test scores were grouped according to age and gender. The study concludes that the ARAL Reading Program is an effective intervention in improving the reading skills of Grade 1 learners. A strengthened reading intervention program is recommended to sustain and further enhance early literacy development.

Keywords: *ARAL Reading Program, reading intervention, early literacy, Grade 1 learners, quasi-experimental design, reading performance, learning recovery program*

INTRODUCTION

The persistent reading crisis in the Philippines is echoed by several local studies. For instance, a study conducted by Idulog et al. (2023) shows that Filipino students'

reading abilities have posed challenges for both educators and policymakers. Even with government initiatives aimed at enhancing literacy rates in the Philippines, recent studies indicate that numerous students struggle with reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and critical thinking skills. This research note looks into the reading abilities of Filipino students today and identifies possible areas for enhancement. Poor reading abilities can be linked to various factors, such as limited resources and socioeconomic conditions. There are potential areas for improvement, including promoting early literacy programs, investing in teacher training, and creating reading materials that are culturally relevant and engaging for Filipino students.

In the Philippines, a key measure of student performance is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which evaluates the abilities of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science. The Philippines participated in PISA for the first time in 2018, and the results revealed significant gaps in literacy and problem-solving skills. The 2018 and 2022 PISA results show that Filipino students have consistently scored below the international average in reading, mathematics, and science. There were some small improvements in mathematics for low-achieving students, but reading performance did not show any significant progress, and many students continued to score below the baseline level of proficiency. The findings indicate that Filipino learners face challenges not just in understanding but also in using knowledge in real-life situations, which affects the quality of basic education (OECD, 2023). The Department of Education (DepEd) has recognized that reading is a fundamental skill that remains a significant challenge for learners, particularly following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent study by Into (2024) emphasized the importance of enhancing intervention programs in reading, writing, and arithmetic throughout all key stages of the K to 12 curriculums. Using a broader range of assessment formats, in addition to multiple-choice questions, could be advantageous. In response, DepEd introduced the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program, a national initiative designed to tackle learning gaps in literacy and numeracy with targeted interventions and remedial programs. At the local level, some provinces reflect the national literacy issue. Teachers in public schools have noticed that elementary students often start school with different levels of reading readiness. Some students show strong skills in decoding and understanding, while others find it difficult to recognize simple words and sentences. Gaps in reading ability during early grades are important, as they can affect a child's ability to handle more advanced subjects in later grades.

Given these circumstances, this study examined how effective the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Reading Program is for certain Grade 1 students at Pintong Bukawe Elementary School in Rizal. This research used a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test to assess improvements in students' reading performance. This study's results are anticipated to offer evidence that can assist teachers, school administrators, and policymakers in enhancing reading instruction and implementing effective interventions to tackle literacy gaps among Filipino learners.

Reading is one of the most important skills a child needs to learn in the first few years of school. It opens the door to learning other courses and sets you up for academic and personal success for life. Literacy is known to be very important, but many Filipino

students still have a hard time improving their reading ability and speed. Most 15-year-old students in the Philippines did not meet the minimum level of reading competence on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests given in 2018 and 2022, which put the country among the bottom performers in the world. These results show that Filipino language learners have trouble not only understanding what they read, but also using what they have learned in real life.

As observed in classrooms, the problem of reading ability is not only shown by numbers, but also by what happens in daily learning. Students in many public schools are ready to read at different levels. Some children are ready to read when they start first grade, while others have trouble recognizing letters and easy words. If these gaps aren't fixed early on, they could stay with a child throughout their schooling and make it harder for them to do well in later grades. Because of this, early reading interventions are not a choice but a requirement.

The COVID-19 pandemic made these problems even worse by stopping official schooling and making learning gaps bigger, especially in reading and writing (Forster, Forthmann, Back & Souvignier, 2022). The Department of Education (DepEd) saw this as an urgent issue and created the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program (DepEd, 2024). This is a learning recovery program that uses remedial and targeted teaching to help students who need it in reading, writing, and math. The program has been made available across the country, but more research needs to be done to see how well it works in the classroom, especially in public schools where funding and help are often limited.

This was the idea behind this study, to find out how well the implementation of ARAL Reading Program works with children in the first grade. In particular, this researcher studied at 43 Grade 1 students from three sections of Pintong Bukawe Elementary School in Rizal. It used a quasi-experimental approach with a pre-test and a post-test to do this. This study looked to find out if the ARAL Reading Program made a big difference in how well students read by comparing their results in the pre-test and posttest. This study was initiated because this researcher realized that not much study has been done locally on the implementation of ARAL Program, especially on students in the first few grades, since this is the first year of its implementation. The study hopes to fill this gap by giving useful and up-to-date information—giving teachers practices that have been shown to work, helping school administrators make decisions and to improve literacy teaching in Pintong Bukawe Elementary School in the following school year. Finally, this study was chosen because it directly addresses a problem that has been seen in the community: the pressing need to improve the reading skills of young students so that they are ready for future academic success.

The reviewed literature and studies highlight the critical importance of early reading interventions in supporting literacy development among young learners. Local initiatives such as DepEd's ARAL Program, Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs), and Project SIKAP focus on structured remedial instruction, individualized attention, and parent–teacher collaboration to address learning gaps intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. These programs demonstrate that targeted, short-term interventions—like the ARAL Reading Program—can significantly improve students' reading skills when

implemented consistently and systematically (DepEd, 2024–2025; Magno & CLAD-Asia, 2022; UNICEF Philippines, 2023).

Empirical studies further support these approaches. Programs such as BRPT (Cubillas, 2021), the Ten-Minute Reading Habit (Ismael & Aking, 2021), Project READY PLUS (Centeno, 2024), and other structured learning recovery interventions (Mercado et al., 2023; Pocaan et al., 2022) show measurable improvements in reading fluency, comprehension, and overall literacy among early-grade students. International studies reinforce these findings by emphasizing the value of phonemic awareness, integrated literacy interventions, and parental involvement in early reading (Alvis et al., 2024; Relyea et al., 2022; Guevara et al., 2020; Dunn et al., 2022). These studies collectively affirm that structured, time-bound, and well-supported literacy programs are effective in accelerating reading progress, particularly among at-risk or struggling learners.

While the majority of research aligns with the goals of the ARAL Reading Program, some studies point out limitations or varying impacts. For example, Guevara et al. (2020) found that very early literacy promotion improved home reading environments more than immediate language outcomes, suggesting that effects may differ depending on the timing, intensity, or context of interventions. Similarly, Tijer (2024) raises questions about the continued relevance of tools like the Phil-IRI, highlighting that assessment methods must be carefully adapted to post-pandemic learning contexts. The literature indicates that structured and focused reading interventions, particularly those that include teacher training, home support, and systematic monitoring, can improve early literacy skills. This study expands on existing evidence by assessing the effectiveness of the ARAL Reading Program for Grade 1 learners in Rizal. It aims to provide localized data that supports the program's impact and highlights potential areas for improvement in early literacy interventions in the Philippines.

Theoretical Framework

Early Reading Intervention (ERI) Framework Simmons's (2006)

Early Reading Intervention (ERI) Framework serves as a primary theoretical foundation for this study. The ERI Framework emphasizes the importance of systematic, explicit, and small-group literacy instruction for children at risk of reading difficulties. It is based on the principle that reading skills improve most effectively through structured, research-based teaching methods focusing on phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and continuous formative assessment. Explicit teaching within the ERI model promotes guided, repeated practice of foundational reading skills, ensuring that learners develop competence in a step-by-step manner.

The ERI program was initially designed to assist kindergarteners struggling with early reading skills through 30-minute daily lessons targeting alphabetic understanding, word recognition, phonemic awareness, and basic comprehension. These structured lessons provide consistent opportunities for guided practice under teacher supervision, resulting in measurable gains in literacy outcomes such as phonemic awareness, letter naming, and word recognition. The framework also emphasizes

formative assessment, allowing teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and adjust instruction accordingly (Simmons, 2006).

In this study, the ERI Framework aligns closely with the ARAL (Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning) Reading Program. Both emphasize small-group instruction, guided 21 reading, and individualized monitoring of student progress. Lessons are scaffolded, moving from simple to more complex reading tasks, ensuring that learners gradually master foundational skills before progressing to higher-order reading and comprehension tasks. Guided reading sessions foster safe and supportive learning environments, encouraging active teacher-student interaction, timely feedback, and skill reinforcement. The ERI framework underlines that early intervention is key to preventing long-term reading difficulties, an idea central to the ARAL Reading Program's approach for Grade 1 learners.

Vygotsky's Social Development

Theory Lev Vygotsky's Social Development Theory enhances the ERI framework by emphasizing the social aspect of learning. Vygotsky posited that successful reading interventions emphasize social interactions, language development, and guided learning within a child's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—the spectrum between what a learner can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with assistance from a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), such as a teacher or peer (McLeod, 2024). Learning is most effective when instruction is structured: tasks are customized to the learner's existing capabilities and progressively modified as skills develop (Yusof, 2021).

Within the framework of the ARAL Reading Program, Vygotsky's theory supports the implementation of guided reading and small-group instruction. Teachers and facilitators serve as More Knowledgeable Others by offering modeling, feedback, and encouragement, which allows students to participate in reading tasks that are slightly beyond their independent level. Interactions among peers during group activities enable students to observe strategies, collaborate, and internalize reading skills within a socially enriching environment. The combination of social interaction, scaffolding, and personalized support is consistent with Vygotsky's claim that cognitive.

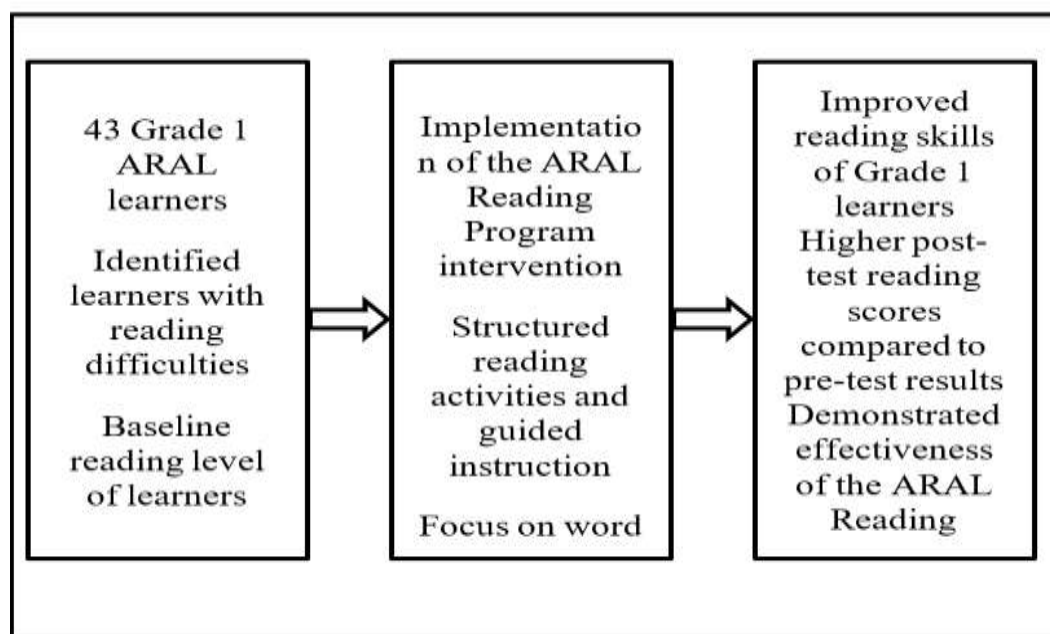
Integration of ERI and Vygotsky's Theories

The integration of Simmons's ERI framework with Vygotsky's Social Development Theory establishes a solid theoretical foundation for this study. The ERI framework provides a structured, explicit, and data-driven approach to literacy instruction, whereas Vygotsky's theory highlights the social, collaborative, and guided elements of learning. The frameworks collectively support the ARAL Reading Program's emphasis on early, targeted, small-group interventions that are structured and closely supervised by teachers, allowing struggling Grade 1 learners to develop reading competence, confidence, and essential literacy skills for life.

Conceptual Framework

The study is anchored on the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model, which illustrates how the implementation of an intervention program leads to improvements in learners' reading skills. The framework focuses on the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Reading Program among Grade 1 learners.

The input of the study consists of 43 Grade 1 ARAL learners who are identified as participants of the intervention. These learners represent the group whose reading performance will be assessed to determine the effectiveness of the program. Their initial reading level serves as the baseline for comparison.



The process involves the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program intervention, which is designed by the Department of Education to address learning gaps in reading. The intervention includes structured reading activities, guided instruction, and targeted lessons that focus on improving word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. A pre-test is administered before the intervention to determine the learners' initial reading performance, while a post-test is conducted after the intervention to measure any improvement.

The output of the study is the improved reading skills of the Grade 1 learners, as shown through the comparison of pre-test and post-test results. A significant increase in reading performance indicates that the ARAL Reading Program is effective in enhancing learners' foundational reading abilities.

Research Questions

This study assessed the effectiveness of the implementation of ARAL Reading Program among Grade 1 pupils in Pintong Bukawe Elementary School, Division of Rizal during the school year 2025-2026.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following problems:

1. What is the profile of the respondents with respect to:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Gender
2. What are the pre-test scores of the respondents in Quarter 3 before the implementation of ARAL Reading Program?
3. What are the posttest scores of the respondents after the implementation of ARAL Reading Program?
4. Is there a significant difference between pre-test and posttest scores of the respondents after the implementation of ARAL Reading Program?
5. What programs for the specific school can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the respondents after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program.

Scope and Delimitation

This study examined the effects of the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Reading Program in Quarter 3 among Grade 1 pupils at Pintong Bukawe Elementary School in San Mateo, Rizal during the 2025–2026 school year.

The study included 43 pupils from three Grade 1 sections. They were the recipients in the ARAL Reading Program intervention conducted in Quarter 3 of school year 2025-2026.

The study assessed the students' reading performance before and after the intervention using a pre-test and post-test. The assessments were the primary tool for gathering data. The researcher considered only two variables in the pupils' profile: age and sex. Other factors like socio-economic background, parental involvement, access to learning materials at home, or prior exposure to early childhood programs were not included, as they fall outside the scope of the study.

The study took place over eight weeks' time frame that aligned with the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program. The findings are limited to the particular school and sample population. It is important to be cautious when generalizing the results to other contexts.

The study provided valuable insights that can be used in similar situations, especially in public schools facing the same reading challenges in the early grades.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In studying the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Reading Program on selected Grade 1 public school pupils in Rizal, the researcher used a quasi-experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002; Creswell, 2012, 2018). The study also employed purposive sampling, wherein the participants were intentionally

selected based on their inclusion in the ARAL Reading Program and their identified need for reading intervention.

The quasi-experimental design focuses on determining the learning gains of the pupils by comparing their pre-test and post-test results. The pre-test was administered to measure the learners' reading skills before the implementation of the ARAL intervention, while the post-test was given after the intervention to assess any improvement in their reading performance. The difference between the two test results served as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the ARAL Reading Program in enhancing the learners' reading abilities.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Pintong Bukawe Elementary School, Rizal, Philippines. It is one among the fourteen elementary public schools in San Mateo Sub-Office. It is located at Purok 3, Brgy. Pintong Bukawe, San Mateo Rizal. It was established in 1989 catering Kindergarten to Grade Six, 14 classrooms and with a minimal number of pupils and teachers. The first principal was Ms. Wilma Arellano. Currently, it has 4 buildings with 28 classrooms for 666 pupils from kindergarten to Grade Six with 21 teachers under the supervision of Mrs. Melissa A. Olila, Principal I. Famous tourist destinations in the locality are Caza Peregrine, The Mount Sinai 10 Commandments Tablet Replica, and Amianan Mountain Hugs overlooking the newly built WAWA dam.

The participants in this study are 43 Grade 1 students only of SY 2025-2026 who are the ARAL recipients. The school serves as one of the public elementary schools implementing the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program under the Department of Education. The locale was chosen due to its accessibility to the researcher, its willingness to participate in the study, and its representation of a typical public-school setting where pupils display varying levels of reading readiness.

Respondents/Subjects of the Study

The respondents in this study are Grade 1 students at Pintong Bukawe Elementary School during the 2025–2026 school year. 43 kids from three different Grade 1 classes were part of the study. Purposive sampling was used to choose the participants because they were picked because they were in the ARAL Program and their teacher recommended them.

The use of purposive sampling was considered appropriate for this study because the researcher aimed to select participants who could provide the most relevant information regarding the program's implementation.

Research Instrument

The researcher utilized a standardized assessment tool in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Education (DepEd), specifically the Comprehensive Reading Literacy Assessment (CRLA) under the ARAL Reading Program. This is aligned with DepEd Order on reading assessment and intervention implementation, which supports the use of standardized tools to measure learners' reading proficiency and monitor learning progress.

The researcher prepared a standardized test based on the CRLA framework, consisting of a pre-test and post-test form designed to gather the necessary data for the study. The CRLA was used to assess the reading skills of the Grade 1 learners before and after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program intervention.

The instrument is composed of a 30-item test, which evaluates key reading competencies such as word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. The same assessment tool was administered as both pre-test and post-test to determine the learners' reading performance improvement after the intervention.

Data Gathering Procedure

To get the information needed for the study, the following procedures were taken:

Phase	Activity	Participants Involved	Purpose
1. Preparation Phase	In order to conduct the study, the researcher asked the school principal for permission and got it from the parents or guardians of Grade 1 students. The schedule and grouping of participants were finalized.	Researcher, school principal, parents/guardians, Grade 1 pupils	To secure approval and ensure ethical participation in the study.
2. Pre-Test Administration	A researcher-made reading assessment patterned after CRLA was administered.	All Grade 1 pupils	To assess the pupils' initial reading performance in letter sound recognition, rhyming words, and reading sentences.
3. Implementation of the ARAL Reading Program	The ARAL learners went to ARAL Reading Program sessions that focused on tasks for guided reading, building vocabulary, and understanding what they read.	ARAL Learners	To implement the intervention and maintain standard instruction for comparison.
4. Post-Test Administration	The same reading assessment used in the pre-test was administered after the intervention period.	43 ARAL learners	To measure the pupils' reading improvement after the intervention.

5. Data Recording and Analysis	The researcher collected and recorded pre-test and post-test scores for statistical analysis.	Researcher	To compare results and determine the effect of the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program.
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Statistical Treatment of Data

Using the right statistical tools, the data from the pre-test and post-test were carefully compiled, examined, and explained. To deal with the study's problems and theories, the following statistical methods were used:

1. Descriptive Statistics

To summarize and address the main parts of the data, descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used. These measurements were used to show the average age and gender of the respondents as well as how well they did on the pre-test and post-test.

The performance of the pupils was interpreted on the following scale:

Score Range	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Learner reads less than 25% and answers 0 question	Full Intervention	Emerging Reader
Learner reads less than 26%-50% and answers 1-2 questions correctly	Moderate Intervention	Developing Reader
Learner reads less than 51%-75% and answers 3-4 questions correctly	Light Intervention	Transitioning Reader
Reads more than 76% and correctly answers 5 questions	Meet expectations	Read at Grade Level

2. Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were utilized to evaluate the study's hypotheses and ascertain the statistical significance of the variations noted between pre-test and post-test outcomes.

Statistical Test	Purpose	Decision Rule	Research Question Addressed
Paired Sample t-test	To determine whether there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores.	If the computed t-value > tabulated t-value at 0.05 significance level, reject the null hypothesis.	1. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the subjects?

3. The Level of Significance

The 0.05 level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) was used for all inferential tests. This suggests that there is a 5% chance that we will reject the null hypothesis when it is true. The level was set to achieve a compromise between statistical accuracy and practical relevance

Compliance with Ethical Standards

A. Confidentiality and Anonymity.

All of the information gathered from the interviewees was kept confidential at all times. The students' names were not given out in any part of the report, and all of their answers were coded to protect their privacy. Only the researcher and study advisor were able to access the data because they were stored safely. The results were shown as a whole to protect people's privacy.

B. Data Privacy and Protection.

The researcher followed data privacy rules to keep all the information they collected safe. The parents and participants were told what would be done with, kept, and protected with the data that was gathered.

C. Minimizing Harm and Maximizing Benefits.

There was no risk to the subjects' health, mental health, or social lives in the study. It was only about evaluating students' work and helping teachers. The researcher made sure that the activities were proper for the kids' ages, wouldn't be too stressful, and would help them learn. It is hoped that the study's results will help improve reading teaching and help young children learn to read and write.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Research Question 1. Profile of the Respondents

1.1. Gender

Table 1.1 Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Gender

Table 1.1

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	20	46.51
Male	23	53.49
Total	43	100

1.2. Age

Table 1.2 Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age

Table 1.2

Age	Frequency	Percentage
6 Years Old	33	77
7 Years Old	10	23
Total	43	100

Research Question 2. Pre-test scores of the respondents in Quarter 3 before the implementation of ARAL Reading Program.

Table 2. Pre-Test Scores of the Respondents in Quarter 3 Before the Implementation of the Aral Program

Table 2

Score Interval	Description	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	Outstanding	0	0
19-24	Very Satisfactory	0	0
13-18	Satisfactory	4	9.3
7-12	Fair	27	62.8
0-6	Poor	12	27.9
Total		43	100
Mean		8.56	
SD		3.33	

Research Question 3. Posttest scores of the respondents after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program.

Table 3

Score Interval	Description	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	Outstanding	8	18.6
19-24	Very Satisfactory	6	14.0
13-18	Satisfactory	10	23.3
7-12	Fair	11	25.6
0-6	Poor	8	18.6
Total		43	100
Mean		15.02	

SD	7.79
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Research Question 4. Difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the respondents after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program

Table 4

Difference Between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Respondents Before and After the Implementation of the ARAL Reading Program

Test	Mean	Increase/Percent	Computed Paired T-Test Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Before	8.56	6.46 (75%)	-5.952	0.001	Reject the Hypothesis	Significant
After	15.02					

Note: p-value ≤ 0.05 – significant, p-value > 0.05 – not significant

Research Question 5. Difference in the posttest scores of the respondents after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program when grouped according to profile.

Table 5

Difference Between in the Posttest Scores of the Respondents After the Implementation of ARAL Reading Program When Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Profile	Mean	Computed T-Test Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Gender					
Female	16.50	1.164	0.251	Do not Reject the Hypothesis	Not Significant
Male	13.73				
Age					
6 years old	14.64				Not Significant

7 years old	16.30	-0.587	0.560	Do not Reject the Hypothesis	
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Note: $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$ – significant, $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ – not significant

DISCUSSION

Research Question 1. Profile of the Respondents

1.1. Gender

Table 1.1 Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Gender

Table 1.1

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	20	46.51
Male	23	53.49
Total	43	100

Table 1.1 presents the distribution of respondents in terms of gender. Out of 43 respondents, 23 (53.49%) are male, and 20 (46.51%) are female. The results indicate that male respondents slightly outnumber female respondents. However, the difference is minimal, suggesting a relatively balanced gender distribution. This implies that both genders are adequately represented in the study, allowing for more inclusive and reliable findings.

1.2. Age

Table 1.2 Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age

Table 1.2

Age	Frequency	Percentage
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6 Years Old	33	77
7 Years Old	10	23
Total	43	100

Table 1.2 indicates that a majority of the respondents are 6 years old, comprising 76.7% of the total, while 23.3% are 7 years old. The findings indicate that most Grade 1 learners in the study are within the expected age range for early primary education. The age distribution reflects a standard Grade 1 demographic, where learners are at the initial stage of reading development and literacy acquisition, which is consistent with early childhood literacy development frameworks (Department of Education, 2024–2025; Nkurunziza, 2024). This stage is critical for the development of foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness and early decoding abilities (Rice, Erbeli & Wijekumar, 2023; Brooks, Warmington & Thomson, 2024).

Research Question 2. Pre-test scores of the respondents in Quarter 3 before the implementation of ARAL Reading Program.

Table 2. Pre-Test Scores of the Respondents in Quarter 3 Before the Implementation of the Aral Program

Table 2

Score Interval	Description	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	Outstanding	0	0
19-24	Very Satisfactory	0	0
13-18	Satisfactory	4	9.3
7-12	Fair	27	62.8
0-6	Poor	12	27.9

Total	43	100
Mean	8.56	
SD	3.33	

Table 2 presents the pre-test scores of the 43 Grade 1 respondents prior to the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program, using the Comprehensive Reading Literacy Assessment (CRLA) classification.

Based on the results, most of the respondents performed at the “Fair” level (62.8%), which corresponds to learners requiring moderate refresher support (7–12 score interval). Meanwhile, a considerable proportion of the respondents (27.9%) were classified under the “Poor” category (0–6 score interval), indicating learners under the full refresher level who demonstrate very limited reading skills. Only 9.3% of the respondents achieved a “Satisfactory” level (13–18 score interval), while none of the learners reached the “Very Satisfactory” (19–24) or “Outstanding” (25–30) categories, which are considered closer to grade-ready performance.

This finding aligns with Cubillas (2021), who indicated that numerous early-grade learners initially exhibit frustration or non-reader status prior to the implementation of targeted intervention programs.

Additionally, Tijer (2024) underscored the significance of administering reading assessments before intervention, as they are essential for ascertaining learners' reading proficiency and informing appropriate instructional strategies. This supports the study's findings that students require targeted reading assistance due to their initial lack of success.

Research Question 3. Posttest scores of the respondents after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program.

Table 3

Score Interval	Description	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	Outstanding	8	18.6
19-24	Very Satisfactory	6	14.0
13-18	Satisfactory	10	23.3

7-12	Fair	11	25.6
0-6	Poor	8	18.6
Total		43	100
Mean		15.02	
SD		7.79	

Table 3 presents the post-test scores of the 43 Grade 1 respondents after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program.

The results indicate a noticeable improvement in the reading performance of the learners. The largest proportion of respondents (25.6%) is classified under the “Fair” category, followed by 23.3% who reached the “Satisfactory” level. In addition, 18.6% of the learners achieved an “Outstanding” level, while another 14.0% reached the “Very Satisfactory” level. Although 18.6% of the respondents remain in the “Poor” category, the distribution of scores shows that more learners have moved toward higher reading proficiency levels compared to the pre-test results.

The mean score increased to 15.02, indicating an overall improvement in the learners’ reading skills after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program. This suggests that the intervention was effective in enhancing learners’ foundational reading abilities.

However, the standard deviation of 7.79 reflects a relatively wide variation in the learners’ post-test scores. This implies that while some learners showed significant improvement and reached higher performance levels, others remained in the lower score categories. In other words, despite the overall improvement in reading performance, the high standard deviation suggests that there is still a need for more intensive and differentiated intervention for learners who continue to struggle with reading.

This enhancement corresponds with the results of Mercado et al. (2023), who indicated notable advancements in reading skills among students engaged in organized reading interventions. The results showed that the groups that got help always did better than the control groups after the introduction of remedial programs.

Similarly, Centeno (2024) found that reading intervention programs resulted in significant improvements in students’ reading comprehension, as shown by post-test scores reflecting a shift from average to mastery levels. Additionally, Ismael and Aking (2021) demonstrated that engaging in regular reading activities, even for short durations, can result in notable improvements in word recognition and reading fluency.

The combined evidence from these studies supports the current findings that structured and systematic reading interventions, such as the ARAL Reading Program, greatly improve learners' reading performance over time.

Research Question 4. Difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the respondents after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program

Table 4

Difference Between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Respondents Before and After the Implementation of the ARAL Reading Program

Test	Mean	Increase/Percent	Computed Paired T-Test Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Before	8.56	6.46 (75%)	-5.952	0.001	Reject the Hypothesis	Significant
After	15.02					

Note: $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$ – significant, $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ – not significant

The findings indicate that the average score rose from 8.56 in the pre-test to 15.02 in the post-test, demonstrating an enhancement of 6.46 points or roughly 75%. The paired t-test value calculated is -5.952, with a p-value of 0.001. This indicates that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The results show that the ARAL Reading Program significantly improved the reading skills of the Grade 1 students.

This finding is supported by Simmons (2006), who noted that structured early reading interventions with clear instruction and continuous assessment lead to significant enhancements in literacy skills. Structured and directed teaching in intervention programs is essential for improving reading success.

Additionally, Alvis, Brumbaugh, and Tambyraja (2024) found that focused and structured phonological awareness interventions significantly improve learners' reading skills. In a similar vein, Relyea et al. (2022) demonstrated that combined literacy interventions result in notable improvements in comprehension and language skills.

Mercado et al. (2023) showed that participants who took part in structured interventions experienced significant improvements in their performance compared to their results before the interventions. This study's results show that the ARAL Reading Program has significantly enhanced learners' reading skills.

Research Question 5. Difference in the posttest scores of the respondents after the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program when grouped according to profile.

Table 5

Difference Between in the Posttest Scores of the Respondents After the Implementation of ARAL Reading Program When Grouped According to Demographic Profile

Profile	Mean	Computed T-Test Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Gender					
Female	16.50	1.164	0.251	Do not Reject the Hypothesis	Not Significant
Male	13.73				
Age					
6 years old	14.64	-0.587	0.560	Do not Reject the Hypothesis	Not Significant
7 years old	16.30				

Note: p-value ≤ 0.05 – significant, p-value > 0.05 – not significant

The findings show that there is no statistically significant difference in post-test scores based on the grouping of respondents by gender and age. This indicates that the ARAL Reading Program demonstrates effectiveness across various demographic profiles.

This finding is consistent with the principles of structured literacy interventions outlined by Simmons (2006), highlighting that effective reading programs cater to diverse learner groups when instruction is both systematic and individualized. The lack of notable differences between genders and age groups indicates that the intervention offers fair learning opportunities for all participants.

Dunn et al. (2022) emphasized that differentiated instruction and supportive learning environments play a more crucial role in reading progress than demographic factors like age or gender. The results indicate that the quality of instructional strategies and interventions is more significant than the characteristics of the learners.

Similarly, the DepEd ARAL framework (2024–2025) highlights the importance of inclusivity and equal access to intervention programs, guaranteeing that every learner, irrespective of their background, gains from reading support initiatives. This

reinforces the conclusion of the current study that the ARAL Reading Program is effective irrespective of gender and age variations.

Research Question 6. What programs for the specific school can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

This study found that the ARAL Reading Program significantly improved the reading skills of Grade 1 learners. The results demonstrate that combined literacy interventions contribute to notable improvements in comprehension and language development. Moreover, structured early reading interventions that employ clear instruction, continuous assessment, and systematic implementation are essential in enhancing learners’ literacy skills. These findings highlight the importance of well-planned and consistently implemented reading programs in improving reading proficiency among early-grade learners.

However, the findings also indicate that not all components of the ARAL Reading Program were fully and consistently implemented during the current school year. This highlights the need to strengthen both learner-centered interventions and teacher capacity to ensure effective program delivery.

Thus, the following intervention plan is proposed.

A. Proposed Enhancement Program: Strengthened ARAL Reading Intervention Program (SARIP)

The Strengthened ARAL Reading Intervention Program (SARIP) is designed to provide structured, targeted, and data-driven literacy support to Grade 1 learners with reading difficulties. The program integrates differentiated instruction, phonics-based strategies, continuous assessment, and active parental involvement to ensure a holistic approach to literacy development. In addition, sustained teacher training, coaching, and mentoring are included to ensure consistent and effective implementation of the ARAL Reading Program in the classroom.

Table A. Proposed Enhancement Program: Strengthened ARAL Reading Intervention Program (SARIP)

Name of Activity	Rationale for the Activity	No. of Hours	Participants	Resource
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				Persons
<i>Targeted Reading Intervention Sessions</i>	To provide focused support for learners in the “Fair” and “Poor” reading categories and improve their literacy levels	3–5 hours weekly	Identified Grade 1 Learners	Teachers / Reading Specialist
<i>Differentiated Instruction Grouping</i>	To ensure instruction is tailored based on learners’ reading levels for more effective learning	2 hours weekly	All Grade 1 Learners	Classroom Teachers
<i>Phonics and Phonemic Awareness Activities</i>	To strengthen foundational decoding and sound recognition skills essential for reading development	1 hour daily	Grade 1 Learners	Teachers
<i>Regular Progress Monitoring and Assessment</i>	To track learner progress and inform instructional adjustments through continuous assessment	2 hours weekly	Learners	Teachers
<i>Parent Involvement and Home Reading Program</i>	To extend literacy learning at home and engage parents in supporting reading development	2–3 hours monthly	Parents and Learners	Teachers / School Head

Table B. Teacher Enhancement Program

Name of Activity	Rationale for the Activity	No. of Hours	Participants	Resource Persons
<i>Teacher Training on Reading Intervention Strategies</i>	To enhance teacher competence in delivering effective and structured reading interventions	6–8 hours (per training)	Teachers	Literacy Expert / Master Teacher
<i>Coaching and Mentoring Sessions</i>	To provide ongoing support and improve implementation of intervention strategies in the classroom	1 hour monthly	Teachers	Master Teacher / School Head

<i>Development and Utilization of Reading Materials</i>	To ensure availability of appropriate and leveled materials for intervention activities	6 hours (initial) + ongoing	Teachers	Reading Coordinator
<i>Program Review and Evaluation</i>	To assess effectiveness and guide improvements of the reading program	2 hours quarterly	Teachers / School Head	Program Coordinator

C. Estimated Budget for Strengthening the ARAL Reading Intervention Program

The estimated budget supports the effective implementation of the strengthened ARAL Reading Intervention Program by ensuring the availability of instructional materials, capacity-building activities, and continuous monitoring mechanisms. Cost-efficient strategies such as the use of existing school facilities, partnerships with stakeholders, and reusable learning materials are recommended to optimize resources. Funding may be sourced from school Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE), Special Education Fund (SEF), and support from local stakeholders. All costs are estimates in Philippine Pesos and may be adjusted based on school context, available resources, and partnerships.

Table C. Estimated Budget for Strengthening the ARAL Reading Intervention Program

Item	Estimated Cost (PHP)	Remarks
Venue	3,000	For teacher training and parent orientation (may be waived if school-based)
Materials and Printing	12,000	Worksheets, reading modules, assessment tools, parent guides
Facilitators Honorarium	15,000	For literacy experts/trainers during workshops
Meals and Refreshments	10,000	For trainings, meetings, and parent sessions
Certificates and Documentation	2,500	Printing of certificates, documentation, reports
Classroom Technology Fund	20,000	Audio-visual aids, speakers, or basic digital tools
Manipulative Kits and Reading Materials	18,000	Flashcards, phonics kits, leveled readers, storybooks

Monitoring and Evaluation Materials	4,500	Assessment forms, reading logs, progress tracking sheets
Total Estimated Budget:	Php 85,000	

Expected Outcome:

The initiative seeks to enhance reading skills, decrease the prevalence of struggling readers, and guarantee that a greater number of students achieve “Grade Level” performance.

The proposed Strengthened ARAL Reading Intervention Program is based on the findings of this study and is reinforced by literature that highlights the importance of targeted, structured, and differentiated instruction.

Foorman et al. (2021) emphasized the significance of ongoing assessment and tailored teaching approaches in enhancing literacy results. In a similar vein, Pocaan et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of diagnostic assessment and customized instructional materials in tackling the reading challenges faced by learners.

Magno and CLAD-Asia (2022) highlighted that effective learning recovery programs rely heavily on structured planning, teacher training, and community involvement. This emphasizes the importance of incorporating teacher training and engaging parents in the suggested program.

Additionally, UNICEF Philippines (2023) emphasizes the importance of targeted remedial instruction and active parental involvement, highlighting the necessity for reading support at home. Tijer (2024) advocates for the implementation of continuous assessment tools to track learner progress and modify interventions as needed.

Summary of Findings

Important findings of this research show that:

1. Among the 43 respondents, 23 (53.5%) were male and 20 (46.5%) were female, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. In terms of age, the majority of the learners were 6 years old (76.7%), while 23.3% were 7 years old. This suggests that most respondents fall within the expected age range for Grade 1.
2. The pre-test results revealed that most respondents were at the “Fair” level (62.8%), while a considerable proportion were categorized as “Poor” (27.9%). Only 9.3% reached the “Satisfactory” level, and none achieved higher performance levels. The computed mean score of 8.56 indicates generally low reading performance prior to the implementation of the intervention.
3. The post-test results showed a notable improvement in reading performance following the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program. The largest proportion of learners was classified under the “Fair” category (25.6%), followed by “Satisfactory”

(23.3%), “Outstanding” (18.6%), and “Very Satisfactory” (14.0%). The mean score increased to 15.02, indicating improved reading performance after the intervention.

4. A comparison of pre-test and post-test results revealed that the mean score increased from 8.56 to 15.02, with a mean difference of 6.46, equivalent to approximately a 75% improvement. The computed paired t-test value of -5.952 with a p-value of 0.001 indicates a statistically significant difference. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that the ARAL Reading Program significantly improved the learners’ reading performance.

5. Analysis of post-test scores showed no statistically significant difference when grouped according to gender ($p = 0.251$) and age ($p = 0.560$). This implies that the effectiveness of the intervention is consistent across groups and that all learners benefited regardless of gender and age.

Based on the findings, the ARAL Reading Program significantly improved the reading performance of Grade 1 learners. The intervention effectively increased learners’ reading scores from pre-test to post-test, and its effectiveness was not influenced by the respondents’ gender or age.

Conclusions

Based on the aforementioned findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The respondents were Grade 1 learners with a relatively balanced distribution in terms of gender and were mostly within the appropriate age range for early literacy development.
2. The pre-test results indicated that the majority of the learners demonstrated low reading performance, with most classified under the “Fair” and “Poor” categories, highlighting the need for structured reading intervention.
3. The post-test results revealed an improvement in learners’ reading performance, as evidenced by higher mean scores and an increased number of learners reaching “Satisfactory,” “Very Satisfactory,” and “Outstanding” levels.
4. There is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, indicating that the ARAL Reading Program had a significant positive effect on the reading performance of Grade 1 learners.
5. There is no statistically significant difference in post-test scores when grouped according to gender and age, suggesting that the intervention is equally effective across different demographic groups.
6. Overall, the ARAL Reading Program is an effective intervention for improving the reading performance of Grade 1 learners, regardless of gender and age differences.

Recommendations

In light of the conclusions drawn from the study, the following are recommended:

1. **Sustained Implementation of the ARAL Reading Program.** School administrators and officials of the Department of Education are encouraged to continue implementing the ARAL Reading Program as an effective intervention for improving early literacy skills among Grade 1 learners.

2. **Strengthening of Reading Interventions.** Teachers should provide more intensive and targeted reading support for learners who remain in the “Fair” and “Poor” categories to further enhance their reading proficiency.
3. **Implementation of Differentiated Instruction.** Teachers are encouraged to group learners according to their reading levels and apply differentiated instructional strategies to address individual learning needs more effectively.
4. **Regular Assessment and Progress Monitoring.** Schools should conduct periodic assessments (e.g., weekly or monthly) to monitor learners’ progress and ensure that appropriate interventions are provided based on their reading levels.
5. **Enhancement of Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction.** Reading instruction should emphasize phonics, phonemic awareness, decoding, and fluency to strengthen learners’ foundational reading skills.
6. **Parental Involvement.** Parents should be actively engaged in supporting their children’s reading development through guided home reading activities and consistent communication with teachers.
7. **Teacher Training and Professional Development.** Teachers should undergo continuous training on effective reading strategies, literacy interventions, and assessment techniques to improve instructional delivery.
8. **Recommendations for Future Research.** Future researchers may consider expanding the sample size, including other grade levels, or extending the duration of the intervention to further validate the effectiveness of the ARAL Reading Program and explore other factors influencing reading performance.

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