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## TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING (ARAL) PROGRAM IN AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL: BASIS FOR INTERVENTION PLAN

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated elementary and junior high school teachers' experiences in implementing the ARAL program in the Schools District of Banate during the school year 20252026. Ten teachers, five from elementary and five from junior high school, participated were interviewed. Thematic analysis revealed that elementary teachers were motivated to assist struggling readers and observed positive learner engagement. However, they faced hindrances such as a restricted timeframe and inadequate reading materials, and coped by improvising teaching resources and relying on peer support. Junior high school teachers, meanwhile, experienced difficulties in handling struggling learners and managing time. Their challenges included increased workload and a lack of specialized materials, which they addressed through collaboration and effective time management. Findings served as the basis for designing an intervention program to strengthen ARAL implementation.

**Keywords:** *Teachers' Experiences, ARAL Program, Integrated Schools, Intervention Plan Teachers' Implementation of Aral Program*

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## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program in the Philippines was designed to address learning gaps and recovery from disruptions, focusing on strengthening foundational skills, especially Reading and Math for struggling learners through targeted, free interventions, tutors, and resources like "EduKahon" kits, aiming to bring learners back to grade-level proficiency (DO 18, s. 2025).

A teacher's experience is a deeply personal journey that encompasses one's actions, thoughts, and emotions from the moment of entry into the profession until its conclusion—and often continues to shape perspectives even beyond. Sometimes, school heads provide teachers with opportunities to explore new strategies, develop new topics, and build important life skills that will serve them well in the future.

The Department of Education's (DepEd) ARAL program is a major initiative under Republic Act No. 12028 to help students below minimum proficiency levels catch up and achieve grade-level competencies, especially in Reading, math, and science.

Cagoco (2022) said that the world faces a reading crisis today; traditional brick-and-mortar methods, though effective, reach few and may be too late for too many. Solving the reading problem requires the strategic use of innovative technologies that enable rapid implementation and broad reach, thereby ensuring more effective interventions.

In essence, the ARAL program is DepEd's comprehensive strategy to build strong foundations, accelerate learning, and ensure educational equity for all Filipino students.

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This generates an atmosphere by incorporating enjoyable, engaging activities that promote student engagement, socioemotional skills, personal development, and character formation.

Teachers in elementary and secondary schools can collaborate to provide students with a good literacy foundation that they can use and grow on for the rest of their life, hopefully assisting them in graduating from college and establishing careers. A solid literacy foundation can help students become effective adults. An effective partnership between school heads and teachers can provide learners with a better education than either schools or parents could provide (Wilfong, 2020).

Education has always earned society's respect. To live comfortably, people should educate themselves and find a well-paying profession. It promotes a better reputation and contentment. It contributes to a better reputation and raises the likelihood of moving up the job ladder more simply and quickly. It provided financial resources for stable lives (Broward, 2023).

On the other hand, researchers believed that teachers' experiences in the ARAL program entail heavy workload, lack of compensation for extra hours, logistical issues, and inconsistent application, leading to teacher burnout and frustration despite the program's good intentions to address learning gaps.

The researcher's concern is that this study should be explored. The experiences of teachers in elementary and junior high schools within the conduct of the ARAL Program

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will serve as a basis for an intervention plan in the Schools District of Banate within the academic year 20252026, providing a springboard for improving the ARAL Program.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in the study. It presents the research design, identifies the respondents, and describes the data collection procedures. The chapter also details the instruments used to gather information and explains the methods of data analysis that guided the interpretation of results.

### Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using in-depth interviews. According to Boyce and Neale (2020), an in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves interviewing a small number of participants to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, progress, or situation.

Boyce and Neale (2020) noted that qualitative research methods are effective for obtaining specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, experiences, and social contexts of particular populations. An in-depth interview is a qualitative method designed to elicit detailed information that goes beyond surface-level responses. In this study, the researcher will conduct faceto-face interviews in strict adherence to health protocols.

The purpose is to capture participants' perspectives and experiences through their vivid and comprehensive responses to the questions.

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## Research Design

This study employs a phenomenological design within the qualitative research tradition. Phenomenology seeks to uncover the shared meanings among individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon, thereby providing an understanding of their “lived experiences.” As Creswell (cited in Merriam, 2020) explains, phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience—particularly as it is lived and structured through consciousness.

In this study, the researcher must identify that the phenomenon experienced by the participants, regarding school heads' perspectives on the conduct of the ARAL Program, is the essence they wish to investigate. Through studying the common experiences of the participants, a deep understanding, valuable for psycho-social interventions, can be achieved (Smith, 2023).

## Participants of the Study

The respondents of this research were the chosen five (5) elementary teachers and five (5) JHS teachers who were involved in the implementation of the ARAL program in the Schools District of Banate during the school year 2025-2026.

Considering such inclusion criteria among participants makes them good subjects for this specific study. Purposive sampling, also known as judgment, selective, or subjective sampling, is a sampling technique in which the researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study (Creswell, as cited by Golzar, 2025).

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## Sampling Design

Purposive sampling design was used in the study. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling of the study (Creswell as cited by Jordan, 2023.)

Sampling design is the strategic plan for selecting a representative sample from a population to conduct research, balancing cost and accuracy.

The researcher gained some insights into the world of his or her participants and describe their perceptions and selections.

## Research Instrument

The primary research instrument utilized in this study was a researcher-developed interview guide. To ensure its validity, the tool underwent expert review. All feedback, comments, and suggestions provided by the panel were carefully considered and incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

Zoom, Messenger, and other accessible platforms (if face-to-face was not available) were used to conduct the in-depth interviews.

Voice and video recorders were utilized to document the entire proceedings of the in-depth interviews. This ensured that all responses were captured accurately and preserved for transcription and subsequent analysis.

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## Validity of the Research Instrument

The study's research tools are a researcher-created interview guide, which will be validated by expert jurors using Good and Scates' Eight-Point Scale Criteria for Content Validation (as cited in Oducado, 2020).

A panel of research specialists content-validates the study instrument. Content validity is the extent to which a measure captures all aspects of a particular notion. To establish the instrument's validity, since it was constructed by the researcher herself, jury validation was used (Nickerson, 2023).

## Data Gathering Procedures

After identifying the participants for this study, the researcher secured their voluntary participation through signed consent forms.

School heads who met the inclusion criteria were purposively selected for interviews. Each was provided with a formal letter, their profile, and a consent form for approval. Signing the document granted the researcher permission to conduct and record the interview, ensuring ethical compliance throughout the process.

Once participants provided their written consent, interviews were conducted at times convenient to them, either face-to-face or through Facebook Messenger. The interview process employed three formats: open-ended, semistructured, and structured. The structured component focused specifically on the prepared interview questions, while

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the open-ended and semi-structured formats allowed participants to elaborate on their perspectives and experiences.

Initially, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather participants' perspectives on the study, ensuring that each respondent's ideas were captured in detail. The entire interview was recorded to preserve the participants' exact words.

After completing a series of interviews, the researcher consolidated the data using a thematic approach.

Both the original and translated transcripts were segmented into meaning units and subjected to thematic analysis, allowing patterns and insights to emerge from the participants' responses.

## Data Analysis

The gathered information was examined using a thematic method.

The qualitative analysis procedure was utilized to identify the themes of school heads involved in the conduct of the ARAL Program as a basis for an intervention plan in the Schools District of Banate.

Thematic analysis is the process of detecting patterns and themes in qualitative data. According to Maguire & Delahunt (2020), a thematic analysis aims to identify the themes, such as patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. This involves summarizing, analyzing, and interpreting the gathered data, and making sense of it.

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On the other hand, Braun & Clarke (2023) have identified the six phases of thematic analysis: (1) Familiarization; (2) Generating initial codes; (3) Searching for themes; (4) Reviewing themes; (5) Defining & Naming Themes; and (6) Writing the report.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study was to learn about elementary and junior high school teachers' experiences administering the ARAL program in order to develop an intervention plan for the school year 2025-2026.

The participants in this study were five selected elementary teachers and five junior high school instructors from an integrated school in the Banate Schools District. This study used a descriptive research design with in-depth interviews. The interviewer was allowed to sit at a substantial distance and ponder on a series of questions concerning a certain topic. The goal is to elicit the major or necessary perspectives of participants on a given subject in a social environment through their responses to questions.

Phenomenology was employed as a qualitative research method in the study. This study's research instrument was a researcher-developed interview schedule focused primarily on the study's purpose.

With respondents' consent, voice and video recorders were utilized for data collection and documentation. Such instruments were used for analysis, including the field notes taken during the interview.

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Before assessing the researcher's interview schedule, the adviser and a panel of jurors reviewed and modified each item. To conduct the study, the researcher got all approvals from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, school heads, and, most importantly, the individual participants. The researcher personally went to the school/community/location that was convenient for the participants to conduct the face-to-face interview.

Following the interviews, the researcher compiled the acquired data. The collected data was evaluated using a thematic method.

Based on the study's results, elementary school teachers' experiences in implementing the ARAL program in integrated schools were motivated by helping struggling readers and by positive learner engagement. The difficulties elementary teachers experienced in implementing the ARAL program included a lack of time and reading materials. As for the coping strategies of elementary teachers in implementing the ARAL program, the most frequently used strategies were improvising instructional materials and having supportive teachers.

Based on the study's results, JHS teachers' experiences in implementing the ARAL program included handling struggling learners and difficulties with time management. The challenges encountered by JHS educators in implementing the ARAL program included increased workload and a lack of specialized learning materials, and the coping strategies included collaborating with fellow teachers and proper time management.

The study's output was based on its results.

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## Insights

The experiences of educators in implementing the ARAL program encompass everything they do, think, and feel from the moment they are done, and even beyond. Teachers in elementary and JHS in an integrated school have the opportunity to explore new strategies and develop vital life skills that will benefit them in the future, helping learners below minimum proficiency levels catch up and achieve grade-level proficiency.

Teachers implementing the DepEd ARAL program face significant challenges, primarily due to factors that hinder its effectiveness. Key struggles include managing diverse learner abilities, leading to a desire to transition into teaching once opportunities arise. On the other hand, teachers lament that the ARAL program has become an added burden for regular teachers.

Teachers in an integrated school are willing to help learners recover from learning setbacks. It is not an ability that can be "picked up" by teachers specifically trained to teach Reading. Strong teachers' commitment helps learners read better in the early grades and increases their chances of pursuing a college education.

## CONCLUSION

In light of the study's findings and insights, the following recommendations are made.

The Department of Education must ensure that the ARAL program serves students while also providing fair compensation, enough support, and clear implementation

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guidelines for instructors who carry out the initiative.

Teachers, citing growing worries about workload, a lack of instructional tools, and confusing procedures, requested DepEd to address on-the-ground challenges in the ARAL program's implementation.

The DepEd shall provide specialized, continuous training on remedial instruction, pedagogical skills, and content knowledge.

Established guidelines on tutor compensation and workload to prevent burnout and ensure consistent, quality delivery.

The DepEd shall ensure adequate, high-quality learning materials are available to support remediation efforts.

Parallel studies should be conducted on a larger scale to validate the study's findings, accounting for additional variables not addressed in this study.

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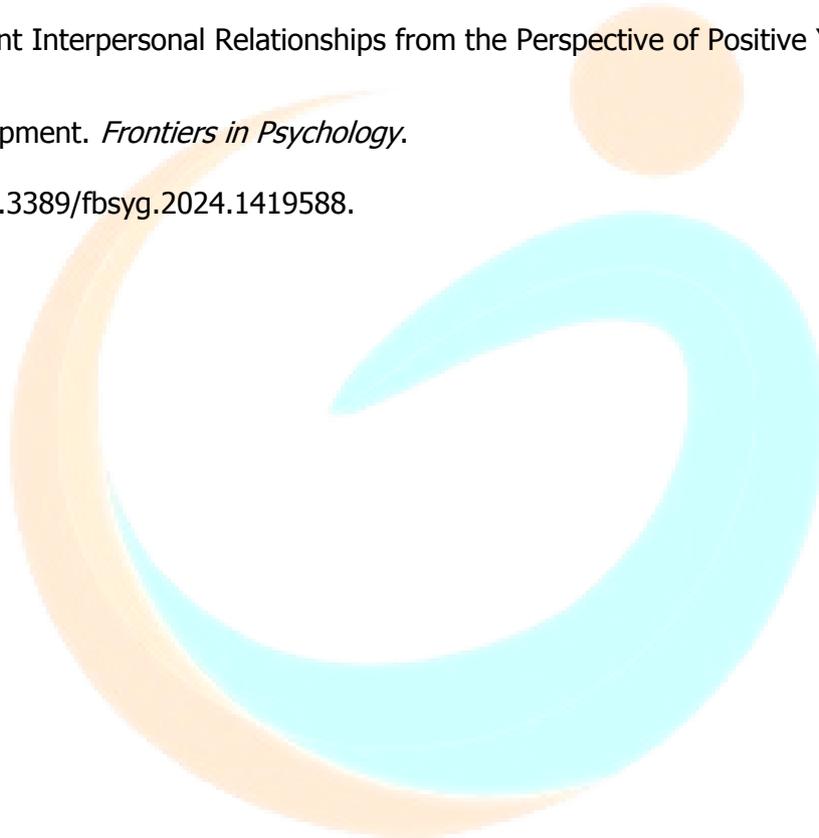
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