



READINESS AND RESILIENCE STRATEGIES OF ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING (ARAL) TUTORS: FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the readiness and resilience strategies of Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) tutors to formulate policy recommendations for strengthening the ARAL Program in selected elementary schools in New Lucena District for School Year 2025–2026. Findings revealed that tutors viewed ARAL Program as educational intervention, collaborative recovery learning intervention, and program to strengthen the foundational skills of learners. On the other hand, tutors’ readiness included high level of tutor preparedness and confidence, partial readiness due to limited time and competing responsibilities, and readiness rooted in personal commitment and willingness to improve. There were also challenges identified and resilience strategies employed by the tutors in the implementation of the ARAL Program. Based on the results of the study, the researcher proposed policy recommendations to improve the implementation of ARAL Program.

Keywords: *Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program, ARAL Tutors, Framework, Policy Recommendations, Readiness and Resilience Strategies*

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INTRODUCTION

Quality education stands as a vital and universal human right, yet many Filipino children remain disadvantaged. Access to quality learning is often limited to families with financial means, leaving marginalized communities behind. The Philippines faces a severe learning crisis, lagging five to six years behind countries of similar economic standing (PISA, 2022). National and international assessments consistently show low proficiency in reading and mathematics (DepEd, 2019, 2023; UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2019), while the World Bank (2022) reported that 91% of children cannot read and understand simple texts by age 10. Declines in literacy and numeracy are most evident among learners in low-income households, indigenous groups, and geographically isolated areas, where access to resources, internet, and parental support is scarce. These realities underscore the urgent need for targeted remediation and enrichment programs to bridge learning gaps and ensure equitable opportunities for all learners.

In response to these learning gaps, Republic Act No. (RA) 12028, or the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program Act of 2024, established the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program to provide a national learning intervention program that shall be grounded on the following premises; 1) well systematized tutorial sessions which demonstrate higher achievement gains; 2) well- organized intervention plans and learning resources developed in consultation with curriculum and reading specialists, following a learner- centered approach that is supportive and empathetic of the learners needs, motivation, and behavior, including but not limited to one-on-one or group tutorials;

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3)effective and accessible delivery modes for tutors and learners; 4)careful determination and assessments of learners; 5)well- chosen and trained tutors and learning facilitators; 6) alignment with existing.

As a tutor in the ARAL program, the researcher directly encountered challenges that highlighted the need for this study. Many tutors entered with insufficient training, making it difficult to address varied learner needs. Limited resources forced them to rely on improvisation, while the diversity of learners’ abilities and backgrounds required constant adaptation without adequate guidance. These conditions often led to emotional strain, as setbacks such as disengagement, irregular attendance, and slow progress tested tutors’ resilience. Although community volunteers showed strong commitment, uneven preparation emphasized the importance of structured capacity-building. These realities revealed a lack of empirical evidence on how ARAL tutors prepare, adjust, and recover in the face of adversity, underscoring the importance of documenting their experiences to inform policies that can strengthen and institutionalize learning recovery programs.

This study explored the readiness and resilience strategies of Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) tutors as a framework for policy recommendations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

The research methodology, research design, study participants, data collection process, research tools, and data analytics were covered in this chapter.

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Research Method

In this study, the descriptive research method was applied through in-depth interviews, enabling the researcher and participants to engage in direct discussions guided by specific questions. This approach generated qualitative insights into tutors' view of the ARAL Program, particularly their readiness and resilience strategies they employed to cope with the challenges during implementation.

Descriptive research was chosen to capture and interpret the lived realities of ARAL tutors, aligning with Ward and Delamont (2020), who emphasize its value in identifying important educational phenomena, and Lichtman (2023), who highlights interviews as an effective tool for exploring perceptions and experiences in qualitative inquiry.

Research Design

The study used the qualitative research design through phenomenology to find out the readiness and resilience strategies of ARAL tutors, which served as the basis for crafting policy recommendations in the District of New Lucena.

Phenomenology in qualitative research was characterized by a focus on understanding the meaning of lived experience from the perspective of the individual. Instead of testing hypotheses or seeking to generalize findings to a larger population, phenomenological research aimed to illuminate the specific and to challenge structural or normative assumptions by revealing the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals. This approach was

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particularly valuable for gaining insights into people’s motivations and actions, and for cutting through taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom (McLeod, 2024).

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were ten (10) ARAL tutors in the selected elementary schools in the District of New Lucena, Iloilo. Specifically, the group included two (2) tutors from Cabilauan Elementary School, two (2) from New Lucena Central School, two (2) from Baclayan Elementary School, two (2) from Pasil-Jelicuon Elementary School, two (2) from Bololacao Elementary School, and two (2) from Wari-Wari Elementary School.

The teacher participants were identified as Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Sampling Design

The participants in the study were selected through purposive sampling. The participants were purposively chosen on the basis of objectives set at the beginning of the study (Hund, 2015).

Participants were chosen according to clearly defined inclusion criteria: (1) they were ARAL tutors, and (2) they were teaching in the elementary schools in the District of New Lucena. These criteria ensured that the sample was both targeted and appropriate for the objectives of the study.

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Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made in-depth interview guide and questionnaire as its primary data collection instrument. This tool included thoughtfully crafted questions aimed at capturing participants' perspectives on their readiness and resilience strategies throughout the implementation of the ARAL Program. All shared experiences were meticulously recorded and documented to ensure the richness and accuracy of the qualitative data.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The instrument—a researcher-made in-depth interview guide and questionnaire—was carefully constructed based on the study's objectives and conceptual framework. The questions were designed to align directly with the core themes of readiness and resilience strategies, thereby ensuring content validity. To further strengthen its validity, the instrument was reviewed by experts in education and qualitative research, who assessed the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of each item. Their feedback was incorporated to refine the wording and structure of the questions.

Data-Gathering Procedures

The data-gathering procedure followed a systematic and ethically guided approach to ensure reliability and depth. A structured interview guide and questionnaire were developed and validated by educational experts to align with the study's focus on readiness and resilience strategies. Necessary approvals were secured from academic and school authorities before implementation. The researcher personally visited participants, conducted face-to-face

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interviews to capture their perceptions, challenges, and resilience strategies employed in ARAL Program implementation. Documentation was maintained through notes, voice, and video recordings, while ethical protocols such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed. The data gathered were organized using thematic analysis, then served as the framework for policy recommendations to enhance support for ARAL tutors.

Data Analyses

The study employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase framework, as later emphasized by Author, (2020), who highlighted its applicability in educational and social research. This process involved transcription, coding, and identifying recurring themes related to tutors’ experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and instructional practices in the ARAL Program. Categories were organized around readiness, instructional practices, and resilience, then interpreted within the broader educational context.

In this study, the process included familiarization with the data, coding significant statements, clustering codes into themes, refining and naming them, and finally interpreting the results to serve as the basis for policy recommendations.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research sought to determine the readiness and resilience strategies of ARAL tutors involved in the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program as a framework for policy recommendations during the School Year 2025–2026 using the interview guide.

Purposive sampling was used to choose ten (10) ARAL tutors for a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach that involved in depth- interviews.

The following findings were:

The ARAL tutors’ views on ARAL Program were educational intervention, collaborative recovery learning intervention, and program to strengthen the foundational gaps.

Tutors’ readiness in the implementation of the ARAL Program were: high level of tutor preparedness and confidence, partial readiness due to limited time and competing responsibilities, and readiness rooted in personal commitment and willingness to improve.

The challenges encountered by tutors were: limited learning resources and instructional materials, learner-related barriers: irregular attendance, low motivation, and foundational gaps, overwhelming teacher workload and burnout, diverse learners need within limited instructional time, and insufficient parental support and home reinforcement.

The resilience strategies applied by tutors were: differentiated and adaptive instructional strategies, resourcefulness and creative material development, positive and supportive learning environment (SEL integration), collaboration of *bayanihan* approach and personal resilience: flexibility, time management, and self- care.

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Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following insights were drawn:

The study found that ARAL tutors view the program positively, seeing it as an important way to close learning gaps in reading, math, and science. They stressed that ARAL is a structured program, not just an extra activity, and valued its teamwork with teachers, para-teachers, pre-service educators, parents, and community partners. This cooperation was seen as a key strength in promoting equal learning opportunities.

Many tutors felt confident delivering the ARAL program because of their teaching experience, knowledge, and the support of guides and workbooks. However, some struggled with limited preparation time, late training, and other work responsibilities. Even with these challenges, their dedication and willingness to improve showed a strong commitment to helping learners recover.

The challenges encountered were limited resources, inconsistent learner attendance, low motivation among struggling readers, and wide differences in learner abilities. Tutors further faced overwhelming workload and fatigue as they balanced regular teaching responsibilities with remediation sessions.

Resilience became a key trait of the tutors. They used flexible teaching methods, created local learning materials, added social-emotional support, worked with colleagues and parents, and practiced personal strategies like time management and self-care. These efforts helped them keep sessions meaningful and ensured the program's goals were met.

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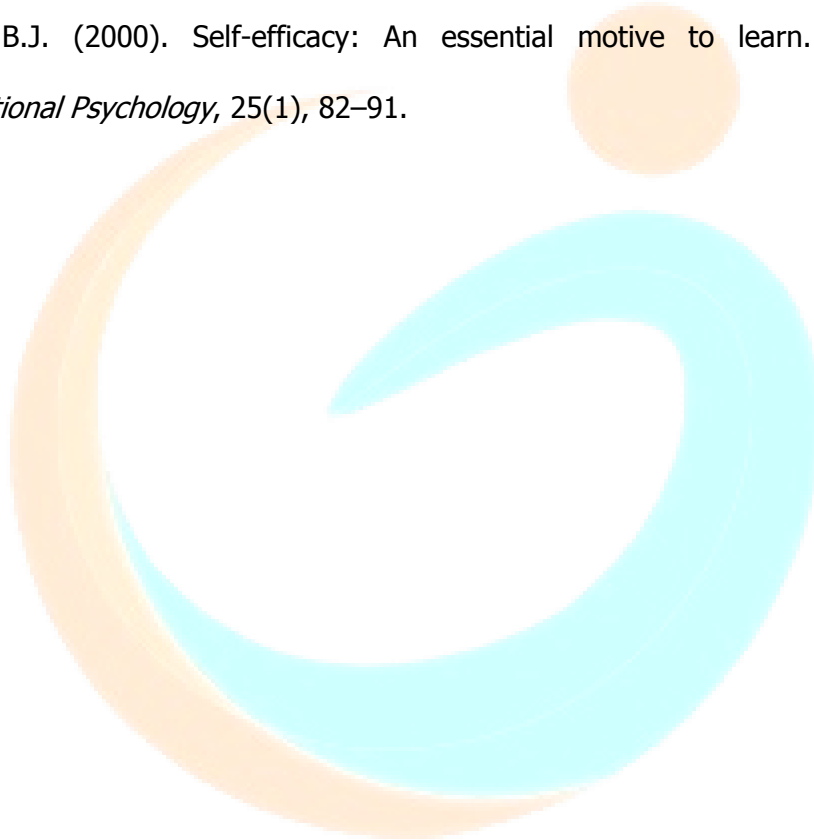


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