



EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS-IN-CHARGE IN THE ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING (ARAL) PROGRAM: BASES FOR AN INTERVENTION PLAN

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of teachers-in-charge in implementing the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program as bases for an intervention plan using a phenomenological qualitative research design. Five (5) teachers-in-charge from selected public schools in the District of Barotac Viejo, Schools Division of Iloilo, participated in the study. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews. Findings revealed improvements in learners' literacy skills and engagement, strengthened collaboration with teachers and stakeholders, and expanded instructional and leadership responsibilities. However, teachers-in-charge encountered challenges related to workload, time constraints, and instructional and learner support conditions. To cope, they employed instructional flexibility, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement. An intervention plan was developed based on these findings.

Keywords: *Teachers-in-charge, ARAL Program, experiences, challenges, coping strategies, intervention plan*

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, strengthening foundational literacy has become a pressing concern in Philippine basic education. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, regional and international assessments revealed persistent challenges in learners' reading proficiency, a concern shared across many developing education systems in Asia (UNESCO Bangkok, 2022; World Bank, 2023). When schools shifted to remote learning, these challenges intensified, resulting in wider literacy gaps. Upon the return to face-to-face classes, many learners continued to struggle with basic reading comprehension and fluency.

In response to these learning gaps, the Philippine government enacted RA. No. 12028, known as the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program Act, mandates the Department of Education to implement a nationwide learning recovery initiative. The subsequent issuance of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) and DepEd Order No. 018, s. 2025 provided the framework for program implementation. The ARAL Program offers structured and free academic support to learners performing below proficiency in Reading, Mathematics, and Science, with reading identified as the most urgent priority (DepEd, 2024; DepEd, 2025).

The program is anchored on diagnostic assessments, tiered interventions, and structured tutorial sessions. While policy guidelines clearly outline ARAL implementation, its effectiveness largely depends on teachers-in-charge, who oversee learner identification, instructional planning, coordination of tutorials, progress monitoring, and the balancing of ARAL responsibilities with regular teaching duties.

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Studies on remediation and literacy interventions indicate that targeted reading support can improve learners' skills; however, teacher often face challenges such as limited time, insufficient instructional materials, diverse learner needs, and inconsistent parental support (Jumao-as et al., 2025; Rosano et al., 2025). Given that ARAL allows schools to contextualize implementation, examining the experiences of teachers-in-charge becomes essential.

Documenting their lived experiences provides a grounded basis for developing an intervention plan that supports effective and sustainable ARAL implementation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This part includes the procedures involved in conducting the study, including the research design, participants, sampling technique, data collection procedures, instrument development, and data analysis. The study is focused on examining the experiences and challenges of Teachers-In-Charge in implementing the ARAL Program and utilizing their insights as the basis for developing an intervention plan.

Research Method

This study used a qualitative research design, which is suitable when the focus is on exploring lived experiences, personal interpretations, and the meanings individuals assign to their professional practices. In the context of the ARAL Program, a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to capture the narratives of teachers-in-charge regarding how they

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plan, coordinate, implement, and reflect on ARAL-Reading activities. These narratives provided insight into the nuanced and complex realities of program implementation that cannot be sufficiently explained through quantitative data.

Purposive sampling was utilized to guide the choosing of participants, ensuring that only Teachers-In-Charge with direct and active involvement in ARAL implementation were included in the study. Data collection relied on semi-structured interviews, which allowed a balance between guided questioning and open discussion. This format enabled participants to openly express their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies while keeping the conversation aligned with the objectives of the study.

Every interview was audio-recorded upon participants' agreement and transcribed in full. The transcriptions served as the primary data source for analysis. The study utilized thematic analysis following the updated guidelines of Braun et al. (2024) further informed the analytical process, particularly in strengthening inductive theme generation. Through this method, patterns reflecting the collective experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of teachers-in-charge in implementing the ARAL Program were identified and analyzed.

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological design to delve into the lived experiences of Teachers-In-Charge during the application of the ARAL Program. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that focuses on understanding how individuals experience, interpret, and give meaning to a particular phenomenon within their real-life contexts. Contemporary phenomenological scholars emphasize that this approach is suited for capturing

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the essence of human experiences as described from the participants' own perspectives, particularly in complex educational settings (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Stolz, 2022).

In this study, the phenomenon pertains to the active participation of Teachers-In-Charge in the practice of the ARAL Program. This includes how they planned and coordinated reading interventions, interpreted diagnostic assessment results, managed learners with varying proficiency levels, addressed implementation challenges, and employed coping strategies to sustain program delivery. A phenomenological design was appropriate because it recognizes that teachers-in-charge construct meaning from their experiences based on their professional roles, workloads, school contexts, and instructional responsibilities within learning recovery initiatives.

Recent literature underscores that phenomenological research values participants' subjective narratives and situates their experiences within specific social and institutional contexts. Alhazmi and Kaufmann (2022) emphasized that phenomenology enables researchers to examine complex educational experiences by identifying shared patterns of meaning across individual accounts, while still honoring the uniqueness of each participant's perspective. Similarly, Stolz (2022) highlighted that phenomenological inquiry allows researchers to move beyond surface descriptions and examine how participants understand and make sense of their lived realities in educational practice.

By applying a phenomenological research design, this study was able to capture in-depth accounts of teachers-in-charge's instructional decisions, leadership responsibilities, coping strategies, and sense of accountability in implementing the ARAL Program. The

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approach was therefore well-suited for investigating a learning recovery program where human experiences, perceptions, and adaptive responses play a central role in program implementation and sustainability.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study is composed of five (5) Teachers-in-Charge from selected public schools in the District of Barotac Viejo, Schools Division of Iloilo. They were purposely selected because of their direct and firsthand involvement in the planning, execution, coordination, and monitoring of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program. Their insights were essential in understanding how the program operated at the school level, particularly in relation to instructional demands, leadership responsibilities, learner participation, and implementation challenges.

Although all participants belonged to the same district and schools division, they came from schools that varied in size, learner population, and resource availability. These variations allowed the study to reflect a broad range of experiences and perspectives while maintaining consistency in policy context and ARAL implementation guidelines. This diversity contributed to a deeper understanding of how contextual factors influenced the experiences of teachers-in-charge in implementing the ARAL Program.

Sampling Design

The study used purposive non-random sampling, selecting participants based on predetermined criteria relevant to the study's objectives. Oliver and Jupp (2006) describe purposive sampling as a method in which individuals are chosen for their direct knowledge of

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or engagement with the phenomenon under investigation. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) Teacher-in-Charge must be directly handling ARAL-Reading sessions; (2) They must be assigned to a public school where ARAL is officially implemented; (3) They must have at least one year of experience implementing ARAL or ARAL-related activities; and (4) They must agree to join and freely share their encounters through an interview.

This sampling design ensured that the participants had meaningful involvement in ARAL and could provide detailed accounts of their experiences, challenges, and support needs.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher initially sought formal approval from the Schools Division Office of Iloilo. Once approval is given, the researcher coordinated with school heads to identify eligible participants and schedule interviews.

Appointments were arranged at times convenient for the teachers to minimize disruption to their instructional duties.

Before the interview, the researcher explained the objectives, process, and ethical guidelines of the study. Informed consent were obtained from all participants, including explicit permission to audio-record the interview sessions. Interviews took place in quiet, secluded areas within the school premises to ensure focus and confidentiality.

Each interview was recorded to preserve accuracy and capture the full nuance of participants' responses. After completing the interviews, the researcher transcribed the recordings verbatim and reviewed those multiple times to ensure fidelity to the participants' intended meanings. These transcripts formed the basis for the thematic analysis.

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Using the guidelines of Braun et al. (2024), the researcher proceeded with familiarization, initial coding, pattern identification, and theme refinement. This method enabled the researcher to systematically organize the data and extract themes that reflected teachers' experiences with ARAL-Reading, including the challenges they encountered, coping mechanisms and the supports they needed. These themes later informed the design of the proposed Literacy Development Program.

Research Instrument

A researcher-developed tool served as the main instrument for the data collection interview guide. It includes four components: (1) a letter informing each participant about their inclusion in the study and assuring confidentiality; (2) a consent form confirming voluntary participation; (3) a brief profile sheet to gather basic information about the participants; and (4) an interview guide which includes open-ended questions corresponding to the study's research questions.

The instrument was designed to encourage teachers to share personal insights while ensuring that essential areas — such as experiences, challenges, strategies, coping mechanisms and support needs — is consistently addressed.

Validity of the Research Instrument

To ensure the interview guide's clarity, appropriateness, and relevance, the instrument underwent face and content validation conducted by experts in the field of education, assessment, and qualitative research. These validators reviewed the instrument based on criteria such as clarity of phrasing, conformity with the study's objectives, and sensitivity to

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ethical considerations. Their feedback informed revisions that improved the instrument's structure and ensured that the questions elicited rich, meaningful responses.

In line with Fraenkel and Wallen's (2003) assertion that content-related validity strengthens the alignment between research tools and constructs being measured, the validation process ensured that the instrument reflected the depth and nuance required for a phenomenological inquiry.

Data Analyses

After transcription, the researcher subjected the data to thematic analysis, an approach frequently used to identify and interpret themes in qualitative data. Following Braun et al. (2024), the researcher began by immersing themselves in the transcripts, generating initial codes that captured significant statements, phrases, and ideas shared by participants. These codes will be organized into broader patterns and grouped into emerging themes.

As the process continued, themes were refined, merged, or reorganized to reflect the most accurate representation of the data. The updated version of thematic analysis proposed by Braun et al. (2024) also guided the careful interpretation of meaning behind teacher experiences, ensuring that themes reflected both the explicit and implicit dimensions of the data.

The final themes provided insight into the teachers' experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and program implications in implementing ARAL-Reading. These themes served as the foundation for developing a contextualized Literacy Development Program that addresses the realities described by the participants.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study was carried out to examine the experiences of Teachers-In-Charge in the implementation of the ARAL Program as bases for an intervention plan in 5 selected teachers-in-charge in the District of Barotac Viejo, Schools Division of Iloilo, during the School Year 2025–2026. In particular, the study focused on identifying the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of Teachers-In-Charge involved in the implementation of the ARAL Program.

A phenomenological research design was employed under a qualitative approach. This design was deemed consistent with the study’s aim to understand the firsthand experiences of Teachers-In-Charge, particularly how they perform their roles in planning, implementing, monitoring, and coordinating ARAL-related activities within their respective school contexts.

The study was composed of five (5) participant that are teachers-in-charge who were directly involved in the implementation of the ARAL Program in selected public schools within the District of Barotac Viejo, Schools Division of Iloilo.

A researcher-made interview guide served as the primary data-gathering instrument. The interview questions were designed to elicit in-depth responses regarding the teachers-in-charge’s experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in implementing the ARAL Program. A mobile phone with an audio-recording feature was used during the interviews to ensure accurate documentation of the participants’ responses, with their informed consent.

The clarity of the interview guide was established through validation by a panel of experts, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. All needed permissions were secured prior to data collection. The researcher personally conducted the interviews in

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locations convenient to the participants to encourage open and detailed sharing of their experiences.

Data collected from the interviews were documented verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis. This process involved careful examination of the transcripts, identification of recurring ideas, and organization of responses into themes and sub-themes that captured the essence of the Teachers-In-Charge's lived experiences.

The following findings emerged from the analysis of the interview data:

The experiences of Teachers-In-Charge in implementing the ARAL Program included observing improvements in learners' literacy skills and engagement, strengthening collaboration among teachers and stakeholders, and assuming expanded instructional and leadership responsibilities necessary for effective program coordination and monitoring.

The challenges encountered by teachers-in-charge included increased workload, time constraints, limited instructional materials and resources, irregular learner attendance, varying levels of parental involvement, and the need for stronger institutional and logistical support. The mechanisms used to cope by teachers-in-charge involved instructional flexibility, preparation of improvised learning materials, collaboration with teachers and external partners, delegation of tasks, strategic scheduling, continuous monitoring of learner progress, and efforts to enhance parental and community engagement.

These findings served as the basis for identifying key areas that informed the development of an intervention plan aimed at supporting Teachers-In-Charge, strengthening

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ARAL implementation, and enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of learning recovery initiatives in the District of Barotac Viejo, Schools Division of Iloilo.

Conclusion

Based on the outcomes of this study, several important insights were extracted regarding the experiences of teachers-in-charge in the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program in the District of Barotac Viejo, Schools Division of Iloilo. These insights reveal how teachers-in-charge navigate instructional responsibilities, leadership demands, and contextual challenges while sustaining learning recovery efforts.

First, the study uncovered that Teachers-in-Charge experienced a strong sense of professional fulfillment when they witnessed improvements in learners' literacy skills and engagement. Observing gradual progress among struggling readers enhances teachers' motivation and reinforces their commitment to the ARAL Program. This suggests that meaningful learner outcomes serve as a powerful source of professional satisfaction and resilience for Teachers-In-Charge. When teachers see the direct impact of their interventions, they are more willing to exert additional effort despite program demands.

Second, the findings showed that the role of Teachers-In-charge extends beyond instructional delivery to include leadership, coordination, and monitoring responsibilities. Teachers-In-Charge are not only facilitators of reading interventions but also organizers of resources, coordinators of teacher collaboration, and liaisons with parents and stakeholders.

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This expanded role highlights the growing importance of instructional leadership at the school level, particularly in implementing nationwide programs such as ARAL. However, the increased scope of responsibility also places significant pressure on Teachers-In-Charge, especially when leadership roles are carried out alongside regular teaching duties.

Another important insight is that workload and time constraints remain major challenges that may affect teacher well-being and program sustainability. Teachers-In-Charge often manage ARAL responsibilities in addition to multi-grade teaching, administrative tasks, and documentation requirements. This situation may lead to stress and fatigue if not properly supported. The study indicates that while Teachers-In-Charge demonstrate dedication and adaptability, reliance on personal resilience alone may not be sufficient to sustain long-term implementation.

The findings also revealed that resource limitations significantly influence ARAL implementation. Insufficient instructional materials, limited access to appropriate learning tools, and logistical constraints affect the quality and variety of interventions that Teachers-In-Charge can deliver. These constraints contribute to the need for instructional improvisation and increased preparation time.

Despite these challenges, Teachers-In-Charge display resourcefulness and creativity, reflecting their commitment to ensuring learner support regardless of available resources.

Learner attendance and parental involvement emerged as critical factors influencing the success of ARAL-Reading. Teachers-In-Charge noted that learners who most needed intervention were sometimes irregular in attendance, and parental support varied across

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households. This insight underscores the importance of strengthening school-home partnerships and improving communication with families. Without consistent learner participation and parental engagement, the effectiveness of learning recovery initiatives may be compromised.

The coping methods adopted by Teachers-In-Charge reflect adaptability, collaboration, and proactive leadership. Teachers rely on peer support, delegation of tasks, strategic scheduling, instructional flexibility, and community engagement to address challenges. These strategies demonstrate that teachers-in-charge can manage complex demands when supportive conditions are present.

However, the study also suggested that these coping mechanisms are largely self-initiated rather than systematized, indicating a gap in formal support structures.

Overall, the insights from this study suggest that the success of the ARAL Program depends not only on policy directives but also on the capacity, support, and well-being of Teachers-In-Charge. While the program provides a clear framework for learning recovery, effective implementation requires institutional mechanisms that support instructional leadership, resource provision, workload management, and stakeholder collaboration. These insights indicate the need for a structured intervention plan that addresses both instructional and organizational dimensions of ARAL implementation.

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