



BEYOND THE LETTERS A CLOSER LOOK AT THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NON-READERS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Reading is vital for academic and personal development. This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of junior high school non-readers, revealing key challenges shaped by anxiety, nervousness, determination, and doubt. These are captured in three core themes: Dancing with the Wind, Turning Pages, and Running in the Learning Marathon. Six additional themes reflect their deeper struggles; Shrinking in the Spotlight, Climbing the Summit, Chasing Shadows, The Labyrinth of Learning, Facing the Giants, and The Barren Landscape, rooted in shame, envy, confusion, bullying, and limited resources. Guided by Piaget's constructivism and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the study surfaces coping strategies that demonstrate resilience and self-efficacy in Reflections of Determination, Bridges of Understanding, and The Lantern's Glow. Institutional support emerges in The Lighthouse, The Architect, and The Wind Beneath the Wings. Finally, student-centered pathways to bridge learning gaps are proposed in Code Blue for Literacy, The Recovery Ward, and The Cognitive Gym.

Keywords: *beyond the letters, code blue for literacy, recovery ward, cognitive gym*

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