



**DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE-BASED READING MATERIALS:
BASES FOR IMPROVING THE READING COMPREHENSION
OF GRADE 10 STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is essential for developing students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, making it a vital foundation for academic success across subject areas. This study employed a qualitative methodology to assess the reading comprehension levels of Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, and to identify the factors affecting their comprehension skills. The goal was to justify the development of culture-based reading materials to improve students' comprehension. The primary assessment tool was the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Pre-Test. Out of six hundred forty-seven students who took the Grade Screening Test (GST), only sixty passed, and five hundred eighty-five proceeded to Stage Two. Among students given texts two grade levels below, one hundred sixty-nine were independent readers, one hundred twenty-one were instructional, and eighty-six were at the frustration level. For students assessed with texts three grade levels below, one hundred four were independent, eighty-one were instructional, and sixty-one were at the frustration level. Focus group discussions were conducted to explore underlying causes, revealing four major influencing factors: individual, family, school, and community. These findings emphasized creating culturally responsive reading materials rooted in students' local

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experiences, values, and traditions. Such materials can strengthen comprehension by connecting reading content with learners' backgrounds and lived realities, making reading more meaningful and engaging.

Keywords: *reading comprehension level, factors influencing reading comprehension development, Grade 10 students, Philippine Informal Reading Inventory, and culture-based reading materials.*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted cognitive process encompassing understanding, interpreting, and critically analyzing written texts. It extends beyond mere word recognition to construct meaning, identify main ideas, make inferences, draw conclusions, and connect new information with prior knowledge. This skill is foundational for academic achievement, career success, and lifelong learning. In today's digital and information-rich society, where the ability to synthesize and critically assess information is vital, strong reading comprehension skills are more essential than ever.

As global educational priorities shift toward ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, reading comprehension has become a central focus in addressing disparities in student performance. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, emphasize quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, reinforcing the importance of foundational skills such as reading comprehension. This skill supports many

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cognitive abilities, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication—essential for modern society's functioning.

However, reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge in many educational systems worldwide. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), many students struggle to achieve proficiency in reading. Several interrelated factors influence these challenges, including prior knowledge, vocabulary, text complexity, socioeconomic status, and cultural context. Educators have adopted varied approaches to these issues, including explicit instruction, vocabulary training, and culturally responsive teaching strategies.

In the Philippines, reading comprehension continues to be a pressing concern. The Department of Education (DepEd) has acknowledged the critical role that reading skills play in academic performance and national development. In response, it has implemented numerous programs aimed at improving reading outcomes. An example of such an initiative is the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), which was launched during the 2011–2012 school year. This program aimed to assess and categorize students' reading abilities into three levels: independent, instructional, and frustration, allowing teachers to tailor instruction based on individual needs. This diagnostic approach represents a significant step toward data-driven education reform.

Despite these efforts, the Philippines struggles with poor reading comprehension outcomes. In the 2022 PISA results, the Philippines placed 77th out of 81 participating countries in reading, science, and mathematics, highlighting a continuing gap in literacy and

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academic performance. Although there was a slight improvement in reading scores, Filipino students, particularly those in Grade 9, remained significantly below the global average. This disparity has profound implications for students' academic trajectories and future career opportunities, making it imperative to examine and address the underlying causes of poor reading comprehension.

In 2023, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP) to address learning gaps resulting from the pandemic and pre-existing educational challenges. A key component of this initiative is the National Learning Camp (NLC), which targets students in Grades 7 and 8 and focuses on enhancing competencies in English, Science, and Mathematics. The NLC featured three distinct learning tracks—Enhancement, Consolidation, and Intervention—each designed to cater to different learner profiles. A primary aim of the NLC was to improve reading comprehension by addressing students' learning needs through targeted support.

In January 2024, DepEd introduced another significant intervention—"Catch-Up Fridays"—to dedicate one day each week to literacy-focused activities. This initiative was complemented by implementing the Rapid Literacy Assessment (RLA) and the revised Phil-IRI in DepEd Region V, including Bicol. These assessments evaluated decoding and comprehension skills in English and Filipino, enabling educators to gather accurate data and develop responsive teaching strategies. These efforts demonstrate DepEd's continued commitment to improving reading literacy through instruction, assessment, and intervention.

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Despite these national efforts, challenges remain at the local level—grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, continues to face challenges in developing their reading comprehension skills. These difficulties hinder their ability to process information effectively, slowing the pace of learning and negatively affecting academic performance. Contributing to this problem is the lack of accessible and relevant reading materials tailored to these students' cultural context and specific needs. As a result, reading instruction often fails to engage learners meaningfully, further widening the comprehension gap and limiting students' educational and professional prospects.

Recognizing these persistent issues, there is a need to adopt a more localized and culturally responsive approach to reading instruction. The development of culture-based reading materials presents a promising solution. Reading materials become more relatable and engaging by incorporating content that reflects the students' cultural heritage, daily experiences, and community values. This, in turn, enhances motivation, comprehension, and overall academic performance. When students see their identities and communities reflected in the texts they read, they are more likely to connect emotionally and intellectually with the content, facilitating deeper learning and better retention.

One proposed intervention to address these challenges is the integration of "Community Chronicles: A Journey Through Domingueños' Local Culture, Traditions, and Way of Life" into reading programs. This culture-based reading material aims to bridge the comprehension gap by fostering cultural awareness, sensitivity, and empathy while developing essential reading skills. The material will serve as a medium for promoting inclusivity,

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enhancing critical thinking, and nurturing independent reading habits. Furthermore, it is designed to support teacher-student interactions, encourage parental involvement, and utilize community resources, creating a holistic learning environment.

The implementation of culture-based materials also aligns with pedagogical research that highlights the benefits of contextualized learning. Such materials foster academic engagement and improve language acquisition and vocabulary development. When used with regular reading assessments and teacher professional development, these interventions can produce meaningful and sustainable improvements in student outcomes. Additionally, incorporating localized content into the curriculum underscores the importance of valuing diversity and promoting equity in education.

Given these considerations, this study sought to determine the current reading comprehension levels among Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, and to determine the factors that affect the development of their reading comprehension skills. Through this analysis, the study aimed to design and implement culturally relevant and pedagogically sound culture-based reading materials. By doing so, it endeavors to close the existing reading comprehension gap, enhance academic performance, and contribute to the long-term educational development of Filipino learners.

Ultimately, the rationale behind this study is grounded in the belief that effective reading instruction must be both evidence-based and culturally relevant. By integrating localized content into reading interventions and using data to guide instructional decisions, teachers can more effectively address the diverse needs of learners. In doing so, the education

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system can foster academic success and empower literate and culturally aware citizens

prepared to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study was to develop culture-based reading materials that can be utilized as supplementary reading materials in conducting reading interventions to improve the reading comprehension of Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. Determine the status of the reading comprehension levels in English of Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, based on the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Pre-Test Results conducted in the school year 2024-2025, along the following categories:

- a. Independent Level
- b. Instructional Level
- c. Frustration Level

2. Identify the factors influencing the development of Grade 10 students' reading comprehension skills in Sto. Domingo, Albay, along:

- a. Individual Factors
- b. Family Factors
- c. School Factors
- d. Community Factors

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3. Develop culture-based reading materials to improve the reading comprehension of the Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay.

METHODOLOGY

This section details the methodologies and procedures used to address the study's research questions. It described the research design, instruments used for data collection, methods for gathering data, participants' selection, sampling technique, study site, sources of data, and data analysis plan.

This study utilized a qualitative research design to explore the reading comprehension levels of Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo and Albay investigate the factors affecting their reading development and collect pertinent data to inform the development of culture-based reading materials.

As Creswell (2014) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) emphasized, qualitative research involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting non-numerical data to gain a deeper understanding of human experiences.

To address the objectives, the researcher analyzed data from the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Pre-Test in English, administered during the 2024–2025 academic year. This data was supplemented by qualitative methods, including focus group discussions (FGDs) and unstructured interviews, to provide a holistic understanding of students' reading comprehension challenges and cultural backgrounds.

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FGDs were conducted with two groups: twelve purposively selected Grade 10 students and six language teachers from four public secondary schools in Sto. Domingo, Albay. Guided by open-ended questions, these discussions examined the factors affecting the development of reading comprehension. Additionally, the researcher conducted unstructured interviews with residents to collect cultural information essential for creating relevant reading materials. All qualitative instruments were designed to be flexible, open-minded, non-directive, and culturally sensitive.

The study site included Sto. Domingo National High School, San Fernando National High School, Bical High School, and Alimsog Integrated School. Additionally, interviews extended to community members across Sto. Domingo to explore local culture, beliefs, and traditions. The researcher obtained approval from the Bicol College Graduate School Thesis Committee and subsequently secured permissions from the Albay Schools Division Superintendent, the District Supervisor, and the respective school principals to use the 2024–2025 Phil-IRI Pre-Test data.

The Phil-IRI followed a four-stage process established by DepEd (DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2018 and MEMORANDUM DM-CT-2024-447). In Stage 1, all Grade 10 students were given the 40-item Group Screening Test (GST). Students scoring 28 and above were classified as independent readers, while those scoring below 28 proceeded to Stage 2, receiving graded passages tailored to their reading level. Students who scored 16–27 read texts two grade levels below, while those who scored 0–15 received passages three grade levels below.

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Based on their word recognition and comprehension performance, students were classified as Independent, Instructional, or Frustration Level readers. Independent readers demonstrated accurate decoding and strong comprehension. Instructional readers showed partial comprehension and needed teacher support, while frustrated readers struggled significantly and required targeted intervention.

A total of six hundred forty-seven Grade 10 students participated in the assessment: four hundred eighty-two from Sto. Domingo National High School, ninety-eight from San Fernando National High School, thirty-nine from Bical High School, and twenty-eight from Alimsog Integrated School.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select participants for FGDs and interviews. This technique allowed the researcher to gather meaningful insights from individuals who could best articulate experiences related to reading comprehension and cultural heritage.

Data analysis involved transcription and systematic coding of FGD and interview transcripts. Emerging patterns and themes were grouped into categories, identifying four main factors influencing reading comprehension: individual, family, school, and community. Cultural interviews revealed local traditions and practices, which were integrated into the design of culture-based reading materials.

Finally, the researcher developed culturally responsive reading materials rooted in the community's heritage. These materials included pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities to promote critical thinking and comprehension. All narratives were verified using

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field notes and transcriptions, ensuring their authenticity and alignment with students' cultural experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results and discussion presented in this section were primarily based on existing data from the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Pre-Test Assessment, along with information gathered through focus group discussions, classroom observations, research, personal stories, narratives, and unstructured interviews with residents of Sto. Domingo, Albay. The qualitative research instruments used in this study were designed to assess the current reading comprehension levels of Grade 10 students, identify the factors influencing their reading development, and guide the creation of culture-based reading materials tailored to their learning needs. The study employed a narrative approach to present the findings, offering a rich, detailed, and contextualized interpretation of the data. This method enabled a clear and meaningful articulation of participants' experiences and perspectives, particularly those reflected in the Phil-IRI Pre-Test results. By utilizing narratives, the study captured the complexities and nuances of the students' reading comprehension challenges, providing a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the issues explored.

The Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Pre-Test Takers

A total of six hundred forty-seven Grade 10 students from four public secondary schools in Sto. Domingo, Albay, took the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-

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IRI) Pre-Test Assessment for the School Year 2024-2025. This study revealed that Sto. Domingo National High School had the highest number of test-takers, with four hundred eighty-two students. On the other hand, Alimsog Integrated School had the smallest number of test-takers, with twenty-eight students, followed by Bical National High School, with thirty-nine students, and San Fernando National High School, with ninety-eight students.

The Status of the Reading Comprehension Levels of Grade 10 Students in Sto. Domingo, Albay for School Year 2024-2025

The Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Pre-Test results revealed a significant concern regarding the reading comprehension levels of Grade Ten students in Sto. Domingo, Albay. Out of six hundred forty-seven students assessed, only sixty demonstrated independent reading skills appropriate for their grade level. The remaining five hundred eighty-seven students required further evaluation using the Phil-IRI Graded Passages Pre-Test materials to determine their reading proficiency levels.

In this subsequent assessment, students who scored between sixteen and twenty-seven on the initial screening were administered reading passages two grade levels below their current level, while those who scored fifteen and below received passages three grade levels below. Among the students tested with passages two grade levels below, one hundred sixty-nine were found to be independent readers, one hundred twenty-one were at the instructional level, and eighty-six were at the frustration level. For those assessed with

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passages three grade levels below, one hundred four were independent readers, eighty-one were instructional-level readers, and sixty-one fell into the frustration level category.

These results highlighted a widespread deficiency in reading comprehension skills among most Grade Ten students in Sto. Domingo, Albay. The low number of students performing at an independent level indicated the urgent need for targeted reading interventions. The findings emphasized integrating culture-based reading materials tailored to students' reading levels to support comprehension development. It was also evident that it would be essential to incorporate these materials into reading interventions, small-group instruction, and differentiated teaching strategies. The study also underscored the value of collaboration between teachers and parents to implement culturally responsive reading resources effectively.

The findings of this study were supported by existing literature that emphasized the central role of reading comprehension in academic achievement and lifelong learning (Torres, 2019; Azmuddin et al., 2020; Idulog, 2023). The five hundred eighty-seven students identified at instructional and frustration reading levels aligned with Idulog's (2023) assertion that high school students must master reading to succeed academically. Furthermore, the variation in reading proficiency observed among students in this study reflected the complexity of reading comprehension, which involved cognitive and linguistic factors such as attention, memory, discourse processing, and vocabulary knowledge (Cunha & Capellini, 2016).

As proposed in this study, the development of culture-based reading materials was supported by Boyle's (2024) findings, which highlighted the significance of contextual and

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organizational factors in teaching reading comprehension. The emphasis on incorporating students' cultural backgrounds and life experiences into reading materials was consistent with Boyle's (2024) conclusion regarding the importance of emotional and social interactions in effective teaching. Moreover, the findings supported the recommendations by the Indeed Editorial Team (2022), which stressed the importance of assessing students' comprehension levels to tailor instruction, offer appropriate support, and develop meaningful reading interventions. The results also reinforced the literature's identification of key components in reading comprehension, including decoding, fluency, vocabulary, sentence construction, and background knowledge.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrated the urgent need for culturally responsive and level-appropriate reading materials, highlighting the importance of targeted interventions to improve reading comprehension among Grade Ten students in Sto. Domingo, Albay.

The Factors Influencing the Grade 10 Students Reading Comprehension Development Based on the Focus Group Discussion Conducted with the Twelve Grade 10 Students from Four Public Secondary Schools in Sto. Domingo, Albay

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing focus group discussions (FGDs) to gather in-depth data on the factors affecting the reading comprehension development of Grade 10 students. An FGD was conducted with twelve purposively selected students from four public secondary schools in Sto. Domingo, Albay. The discussions revealed that these

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students face significant challenges in developing practical reading comprehension skills.

These difficulties stem from individual, family, school, and community-related factors, negatively impacting their academic performance and literacy development.

Through the FGDs, students shared valuable insights and personal experiences, highlighting the multifaceted nature of their reading struggles. The data analysis identified several sub-factors contributing to these challenges, including language barriers, lack of reading motivation, limited parental support, financial constraints, inadequate school resources, and environmental distractions within their communities.

Individual Factors

Based on FGD with the twelve students from four identified schools in Sto. Domingo, Albay revealed innate factors and motivations as influencing factors on students' reading comprehension development.

1. Innate Factors

Participant 12 expressed difficulties answering questions. She shared:

"Dipisilon po mam mga questions mo kaya wara po ako maisimbag tapos English pa. Di po ako magaling sa English pero nakakaintindi man po ki diit. Nasasabutan ko man po maski papano." ("Your questions are challenging, ma'am, especially in English. Although, I'm not good at it, I try to understand somehow.")

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Participant 1 cited English vocabulary challenges as a significant obstacle to literacy.

She stated:

"Mam, ako po nadidipisilan ako sabuton mga leksiyon lalo na sa English ta diiton man sana ang aram kong mga words sa English, kaya dai ko nasasabutan ang pigbabasa ko. Dai man kaya nagtataram ki English si mama." ("Ma'am, I struggle understanding English lessons due to limited vocabulary, making reading comprehension challenging. My mother can't speak English.")

Participant 6 added:

"Ang haba po ng mga pinapabasa ng teacher namin sa English to the point na di mo na maiintindihan mga nakasulat. Yung mga words po parang bago lang po sa amin." ("Our teacher assigns lengthy English readings that become difficult to comprehend due to unfamiliar vocabulary.")

2. Motivations

The response of Participant 4 to the question was:

"Ako po madam, naapektuhan kan social media, kadakol videos sa social media na makaulok hilingon. Namangnuhan ko po ubos na oras ko palan kan kaka scroll." ("Ma'am, I'm affected by social media. The numerous entertaining videos distract me, causing me to spend excessive time scrolling.")

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This response was backed up by Participant 11. He said:

"Naa-addict po kami mam sa fake news at kaka-tiktok dance, wala na po, ayaw na naming mag aral. Masaya po kasi mag tiktok kaysa magbasa." ("We've become addicted to fake news and TikTok dances, losing interest in studying. We find TikTok more enjoyable than reading.")

Family Factors

Based on the FGD conducted with the twelve students from four identified schools in Sto. Domingo, Albay, revealed the family's financial situation and lack of parental support.

1. Family Financial Situation

Insufficient funds were cited by Participant 1 as one of the factors influencing reading comprehension skills development.

"Hale pa po ako mam sa Bayandong, minsan po wara pamasaha ta wara pa sweldo si mama kaya dai po ako nakaka eskwela." ("I travel from Bayandong, sometimes, I miss school due to lack of money for fare, as mama hasn't received her salary yet.")

Participant 2 supported Participant 1's claim.

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“For me po, I think finances. Pag may pera po madaming mabibili na mga reading materials, may internet at may pang data po na makakatulong. Kaya lang wala po kami kaya mahirap mag-aral ng kulang sa resources. (“For me, financial constraints are a significant barrier. Having sufficient funds would provide access to reading materials, internet and data, facilitating learning.”)

Participant 9 emphasized financial struggles.

“Gusto ko na po mam mag trabaho ta makatabang sa pamilya ko. Wara po kami kwarta para sa mga kaipuhan sa eskwelahan.” (“I want to work to support my family, we don’t have money for school necessities.”)

2. Lack of Parental Support

Participant 7 emphasized early encouragement. She shared:

“Parents po mam, dapat bata pa lang po binuboo na mag-aral. Kulang po ng support ako kaya parang bobo po ako.” (“Parents should encourage learning in children from a young age. (Unfortunately, I lacked support, hindering my academic progress.”)

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School Factors

This study identified the influence of school factors on reading comprehension development among participants. The FGD revealed financial school climate, teacher instruction, and insufficient reading materials.

1. School Climate

Participant 6 described how the physical environment affected learning, particularly reading literacy development. According to her:

“Ang iingay po ng mga tao sa barangay namin kasi dikit dikit mga bahay. Laging may vikadeoke sa kapitbahay, so di ka talaga makakapagaral. Dito naman po sa school ang liit ng library at madaming tao.” (“The people in our village are noisy because the houses are too close together. Our neighbor always has karaoke, so it's hard to study. And here at school, the library is too small and crowded.”)

This statement was supported by Participant 9, who said:

“Siguro po kung may mga tambayan kami na comfortable para mag review igwa man gayud kami comprehension.” (“Probably, if we have a comfortable place to study, we will have better comprehension”.)

Participant 7 further stated:

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“Dai ka man po madam ganahan digdi sa classroom ta pigbabaha na ngani tapos raraot pa mga tukawan. Nakakaapekto po talaga sa motivation ko na magpakaray sa pageskwela para makaukod.”
 (“Madam, I struggle to focus in this classroom due to flooding and broken chairs. It's demotivating and makes me less inclined to attend classes.”)

2. Teacher Instruction

Several participants shared their concerns about teachers' absenteeism affecting their learning. Participant 3 said:

“Teacher po mam, dai naglalaog, kung malaog po sige ang pandagit. Pano po kami makaukod.” (“It's teacher, some rarely attend classes and often scold us when present. How can we effectively learn?”)

Participant 4 added to this sentiment against teachers:

“Mga ibang teachers po, di na man sumasagot sa concerns namin. Pag mag tatanong ka nagagalit pa.”
 (“Some teachers ignore our concerns and get upset when we ask questions.”)

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Participant 2 mentioned:

“It is school po mam, madami kami sa loob ng klase na hindi na po natuturuan ng teacher.” (“It is school, many of us in class are not learning from our teacher anymore.”)

3. Insufficient Reading Materials

Participant 1 highlighted the challenge of lacking access to school activity updates through group chats due to not owning a cellphone. He stated:

“Wala po ako mam ki cellphone kaya dai ko po naaraman mga assignments mo na nasa GC, kaya dai po ako nakakaprepay.” (“Madam, I don't have a phone, so I missed assignments on GC and couldn't prepare.”)

This statement was confirmed by Participant 5:

“Dito po sa Alimsog, kakulangan po sa materials like books. Textbook lang po meron kami. Wala po kami internet at mga kagamitan.” (“Here in Alimsog, we face a shortage of reading materials, having only textbooks. We lack internet access and other essential learning resources.”)

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Community Factors

This study shed light on the impact of community factors on the reading comprehension development of Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay. Specifically, the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) revealed that environmental distractions were a significant community factor hindering students' reading comprehension development.

1. Environmental Distractions

Participant 1 identified environmental factors as significant predictors of literacy development, he stated that frequent suspension of classes hinders reading literacy development.

"Suspension of classes po mam. Kunti na lang na araw na may pasok. Di na po kami natututo". ("Frequent class suspensions significantly impact our reading literacy progress.")

This statement was supported by Participant 9 from Alimsog:

"Pirme pa pati suspended ang klase kaya diiton na sana naleleksiyon. Garo dai na kami nakaka ukod." ("Classes are frequently suspended, hindering our learning.")

Learning progress is hindered by factors beyond class suspensions, including peer influence. Participant 4 shared that when asked what hindered his reading literacy development. She added:

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“Mga classmates po mam, ang gugulo. Parepareho po kami na walang natutotunan”.
 (“Classmates are being noisy, Ma'am; we're not learning.”)

Participant 1 also confirmed this, stating:

“Mga tropa po mam. Naaaya po ako mag cutting class kaya di na po ako nakapag aral ng maigi.” (“My friends are tempting me to skip class, Ma'am.”)

This statement was corroborated by Participant 11:

“Video games po mam. Madami po kami nag lalaro sa computer shops kaya nag ka cutting class po kami.” (“We're hooked on video games at computer shops, thus skipping school.”)

Consistent with this, distractions from the environment, Participant 8 stated:

“Digdi po sa Alimsog pirme po kami wara kuryente puon pa pakabagyo, kaya dai kami nakakareview kan mga lesson ta madiklom” (“Here in Alimsog, we're always without electricity since the typhoon, so we can't review lessons.”)

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The findings from the focus group discussion (FGD) revealed that the development of reading comprehension skills among Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, was shaped by a confluence of individual, family, school, and community factors. These findings echoed and expanded upon previously reviewed literature.

For Individual Factors, two key individual-level themes emerged: innate challenges (such as limited English proficiency and vocabulary) and motivational influences (like declining reading interest due to social media). Participants expressed struggles with understanding English vocabulary, interpreting questions, and sustaining attention while reading—barriers that significantly hindered their comprehension development.

These findings aligned with the work of Saraswati (2021) and Hayati (2022), who identified language proficiency limitations and vocabulary deficiencies as primary obstacles in students' reading comprehension, particularly when English was a second language. Likewise, Tojolosa (2023) found that social media distractions led to a reduction in students' reading time and engagement, confirming participants' admissions of decreased reading interest due to digital consumption.

For Family Factors, two primary family-related factors emerged: financial constraints and lack of parental support. Several students indicated that poverty limited their access to necessary resources such as books, internet access, or private study spaces. Others shared that they lacked academic encouragement at home, with some even taking on responsibilities like working or doing chores that reduced their study time.

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These findings mirrored Meron’s (2018) and Yang et al.’s (2020) conclusions. Meron highlighted the impact of poverty and the absence of educational resources on Filipino students' academic performance, while Yang et al. confirmed that a supportive home learning environment, bolstered by parental involvement, had a positive correlation with reading comprehension outcomes.

The present study reaffirmed this by showing that the lack of parental engagement and literacy support directly contributed to students’ reading difficulties.

For School Factors, school-related challenges were categorized into three areas: school climate, teacher instruction, and insufficient reading materials. Students described poor learning environments—such as noisy surroundings, lack of library resources, and uncomfortable classroom setups—as detrimental to their reading development. In addition, they cited teacher absenteeism, negative attitudes, and minimal reading instruction as further barriers. A lack of reading materials, including textbooks and mobile devices, also hindered access to supplemental learning.

These issues were consistent with findings from Caisip (2023) and Kilag (2023). Caisip emphasized disparities in remote learning, inadequate teacher training, and digital access as causes of declining reading proficiency. Kilag, meanwhile, underlined the importance of school-based reading programs and material accessibility in fostering comprehension skills. The current study provided local evidence for these claims by showing how these barriers manifested within the Sto. Domingo context.

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For Community Factors, participants highlighted environmental distractions, such as class suspensions due to weather, noise pollution, and peer influence as significant impediments to reading comprehension. Others referenced the overuse of video games and social media, which often replaced time for academic reading. Limited infrastructure, such as frequent power outages, further restricted study opportunities.

These findings corresponded with studies by Tojolosa (2023) and Amin (2022). Tojolosa emphasized that poor household learning conditions and social distractions weakened student engagement in reading during the pandemic. Amin’s work explored both the positive and negative impacts of video games on comprehension skills, noting that excessive gaming had a detrimental effect when not integrated meaningfully into instruction. The current research reinforced Amin’s cautionary findings by documenting negative outcomes of excessive digital gaming among students.

The cumulative impact of these four thematic factors—individual, family, school, and community—clearly illustrated that reading comprehension challenges among Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, was multidimensional and systemic. These results supported the broader literature that emphasized the need for contextualized and targeted interventions (Hidayati, 2018; Moneba & Lovitos, 2024). While motivation and attitude were not direct predictors of comprehension, the findings affirmed that interest in reading fostered by relevant, accessible materials could catalyze skill development.

Consistent with Putri et al. (2024), this study further established the urgent need for supplemental and culture-based reading materials. Just as Putri’s research in Indonesia

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demonstrated the inadequacy of generic reading resources, the participants in this study reported a lack of engaging, relatable content in school. The researcher’s development of culture-based reading materials addressed this gap and responded directly to students’ needs.

This present study validated and localized the findings of prior research by demonstrating how diverse, intersecting factors affected reading comprehension development in a rural Philippine context. It underscored the need for holistic, multi-level interventions—including the integration of culturally relevant reading materials—to improve the reading outcomes of Grade 10 learners in Sto. Domingo, Albay.

The Factors Influencing the Grade 10 Students Reading Comprehension Development Based on the Focus Group Discussion Conducted with the Six English Teachers of Four Public Secondary Schools in Sto. Domingo, Albay

Despite the efforts of English language teachers in Sto. Domingo, Albay, Grade 10 students continue to struggle with reading comprehension. Insights gathered from a focus group discussion with six teachers from four public secondary schools revealed that various systemic, instructional, and socio-environmental factors hinder students’ ability to develop strong reading comprehension skills. These challenges persist despite existing reading initiatives, highlighting the need for more targeted, collaborative, and contextually relevant interventions.

This study gained valuable insights from a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving six language teachers from four schools in the Sto. Domingo district, namely Sto. Domingo

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National High School, Bical National High School, San Fernando National High School, and Alimsog Integrated School. Held at Sto. Domingo National High School, the discussion provided a platform for the teachers to share their expertise and ultimately identify factors that influence the reading comprehension development of Grade 10 students.

Individual Factors

1. Finances

According to Participant 2:

“Sa grade 7 students ko, I observe na ang study habit or reading habit ninda bako develop. Na dapat kuta developed kan elementary pa sinda. Pero, sa hiling ko ang suporta kan magurang marayray ki diit sa aki ta madali turuan ta nagsusunod saka garo may takot pa sa parents.” (“I observed that my Grade 7 students lack developed study and reading habits, typically established in elementary school. However, parental support significantly enhances their receptiveness to instruction.”)

Participant 6 added:

“...sa hiling ko ang pagtius kan mga aki ay saro sa mga reasons kung nata hirap kitang teachers na madevelop ang reading literacy ninda. Ang identified non-readers ko pirme absent ta wara daw siya pamasaha. Hale pa kaya sa Fidel. So iba nagatatabang daa sa pag uma kan ama. Ang iba nag babantay kan mga sadit na tugang ta so ina da daa naglalabada.”

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“One factor hindering my students' reading literacy development is their irregular attendance. Identified non-readers frequently miss classes, citing lack of transportation fare. Others engage in family responsibilities, such as helping with farming or caring for younger siblings, while their mothers work.”)

Participant 6 was supported by Participant 5. She stated:

“Totoo po. Sunod ay ang kahirapan din. Kahit madami ng government subsidies ang natatangap nila pero kulang pa din. May mga dai naglalaog sa klase ta nagtatabang maghanap buhay sa mga magurang.” (“Poverty persists despite government aid. Students miss classes to work and support their families.”)

Participant 1 agreed:

“Iyu po, sako ngani may nagpaaram na ma modular na asana daa siya ta nagtatrabaho daa siya sa Primex . Inadvisan ko na mag ALS ka na lang nyako...” (“I recall a student who opted for modular learning, citing work commitments at Primex. I advised him to consider Alternative Learning System (ALS) instead.”)

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Also, Participant 2 stated:

“Ayyy mam...pagtius po. Kadaklan kan mga students mi pagsira o pag tanom ang hanapbuhay. Siyempre ano asahan mo diyan...ang importante tatao sinda magkwenta saka magbasa na dai sinda maloko. Pero kung uyan na magbasa ki long stories,dai man iyan nagbabarasa.” (“Unfortunately, many students struggle due to family financial constraints. While basic literacy skills are achieved, comprehension of lengthy texts remains challenging.”)

2. Gadgets (cellphones, social media, mobile games)

According to Participant 1:

“In San Fernando National High School po mam, ang pangunahing factor ay gadgets, mobile games and social media. Ito ang kalaban ng mga teachers when it comes to attention. Medyo challenging na ang pagturo kasi wala silang focus kaya mababa talaga ang reading literacy level.” (“San Fernando National High School's biggest challenge is students' obsession with gadgets, games, and social media. It's tough to teach when they're distracted, affecting their

Participant 3 added:

“Ang isa nakikita niya na talagang nakaka-apekto sa pagkatuto ng mga bata lalo na sa pagbabasa ay ang mga gadgets, mobile games, video games lalo na yang ML na yan. Wala na yung interest nila sa pag-aaral because occupied ang kanilang mga isip with those games on ther celphones. On their free times, sa halip na mag-aral, ano ang ginagawa? Eh di mag celphones, so yun talaga.” (“The pervasive use of gadgets, mobile games (notably ML), and video games significantly impedes children's learning, particularly reading. Their interest in academics wanes as their minds are preoccupied with cellphone games during free time.”)

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Participant 5 agreed:

“Agree Sir, even the girls nagkakawat ML. Idagdag mo pa ining pagtitik-tok ng mga bata. Busy sila sa paonood ng mg videos sa tiktok.” (Even girls play ML. Plus, they're hooked on TikTok videos, diverting their focus from studies.)

According to Participant 4:

“Honestly, it is cellphones, gadgets, mobile games in general. Hook ang mga bata sa gadget nila. imbes na mag-aral on free time, naku... ng ML mga boys. They are so busy for nonsense things. Hanggang hindi ipinagbabawal ang cellphones sa mga minors, mahihirapan tayo na ma achieve ang good result sa PISA.” (Honestly, cellphones, gadgets and mobile games are detrimental. Children are hooked, spending free time playing games like ML instead of studying. Until cellphone usage among minors is regulated, achieving satisfactory PISA results will remain challenging.)

Family Factors

1. Parental Support

Participant 3 stated:

“Aw sus, iyu daw. Iba talaga ang performance kan aki sa school lalo sa pag adal kung suportado kan magurang. Parents attendance to PTA meetings to follow up their children’s school performance helps them compared with those who did not attend. Dai mo lamang ma inform kan performace kana ki ninda.” (‘Indeed, students' academic performance significantly improves when parents are supportive. Active participation in PTA meetings enables parents to monitor progress, fostering better outcomes compared to non-

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School Factors

1. Inadequate Learning Environment

According to Participant 5:

In lower sections like my classes, there are lot of factors influencing students' reading literacy, hehe. Minsan, mapagal na kung pano mo i-handle or kung anong strategy ang pwede i-apply para makuha mo attention ninda. Saro sa na-obseve ko sa sarong klase ko ay mga learners kita palan na with learning disabilities pero andito sila nakahalo sa regular students. Hindi naman nakakasabay. Na-observe ko din may mga classroom na madiklom, mainit ta kulang sa electric fans or wara talagang electric fans, warang focus lugod ag aki mag adal.” (In lower-grade levels, numerous factors impede students' reading literacy. Managing these challenges requires innovative strategies. In one class, I observed learners with disabilities struggling alongside regular students, hindering their progress. Additionally, inadequate classroom conditions, such as insufficient lighting, heat and lack of electric fans, detract from students' focus and learning.)

Participant 6 continued:

“Totoo yan mam. Pag mauran ngani pigbabaha ang ibang classroom. So, maski ako man ang estudyante, mawawalan ako ng gana pumasok sa learning environment na igwa ang ibang classrooms digdi sa baba. And I think, students shifting schedule affects. Imagine, 6am dapat nasa school kana, lalo na itong mga Grades 7 and 8 students. Sigurado ang iba diyan, have not taken their breakfast pa, so...how will you learn well kung gutom ka in the morning tapos uuwi ka ng 12:30.” (“That’s true, ma’am. When it rains, some classrooms get flooded. So, if I were a student, I’d also lose the motivation to attend classes in that kind of learning environment, especially with the condition of some classrooms downstairs. And I think the shifting class schedule also has an impact. Imagine, students are expected to be in school by 6 a.m., especially those in Grades 7 and 8. I’m sure some of them haven’t even had breakfast yet, so... how can you expect them to learn well when they’re hungry in the morning and won’t go home until 12:30?”)

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Participant 3 agreed:

“I agree. Hindi talaga mama-maximize ang learning opportunity sa limited time na tinao sainda. 45 minutes for each subject area, kulangon na maray. Mabuti doon sa madaling maka-catch up, it is worst to struggling learners.” (“I agree, the 45-minute class duration per subject area is insufficient, hindering optimal learning. This time constraint particularly disadvantages struggling learners, while benefiting only those who quickly grasp concepts.”)

Participant 2 supported Participant 3:

“That is so true ma'am. Imagine...the learners will attend 8 learning areas from 6 am to 12:30. Grabe yan! Dapat ang learning luway luway lang bakong pigpaparahidali, ahahaha...” (“That is so true, ma'am. Imagine...the learners will attend 8 learning areas from 6 am to 12:30. Learning should be smooth and relaxed, not hurried.”)

Community Factors

1. Insufficient Government Support

According to Participant 3:

“Dai kaya nakaka-provide ang gobyerno kan mga pangangaipo kan mga aki na ini sa eskwelahan. Mala, rulumaon na baga mga modules and textbooks.” (“The government fails to provide adequate resources for these students, evident in outdated textbooks and modules.”)

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The findings from the focus group discussion with six English teachers from four public secondary schools in Sto. Domingo and Albay revealed a multifaceted set of factors that negatively influence the reading comprehension development of Grade 10 students. These factors fall into four categories: financial constraints, excessive gadget use, limited parental involvement, and school-related challenges. Each of these areas presents significant literacy barriers, reflecting systemic and personal limitations that hinder students' academic success.

Financial hardships emerged as a key concern, with teachers reporting that students from economically disadvantaged families often prioritize work over academics, lack access to reading materials, and develop poor study habits. This aligns with Meron's (2018) findings that poverty and the scarcity of academic resources limit Filipino students' reading development. Similarly, the rampant use of digital gadgets, particularly for non-educational purposes such as mobile gaming and social media, was cited as a distraction, echoing Amin's (2022) study, which confirmed the negative cognitive impact of excessive gadget use on students' reading engagement and comprehension.

Family dynamics, especially the degree of parental involvement, were also found to affect reading comprehension outcomes significantly. Teachers observed that students whose parents actively participated in school activities and monitored academic progress were more motivated and performed better. These observations reinforce the findings of Yang et al. (2020), who emphasized the role of parental support and home literacy environments in enhancing children's reading abilities.

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School-based issues further exacerbate the reading comprehension gap. Teachers highlighted inadequate classroom environments, such as poor lighting, frequent flooding, and a lack of updated instructional materials. These concerns mirror Caisip's (2023) assertion that low-quality learning environments and insufficient resources impede effective instruction. Kilag (2023) also underscored the necessity of engaging in reading programs and resource availability in cultivating reading habits.

To address these multifaceted barriers, the study proposes developing and integrating culture-based reading materials tailored to the lived experiences and cultural backgrounds of the students in Sto. Domingo, Albay. The literature supports this intervention: Zakaria et al. (2023), Nambiar et al. (2020), and Sianturi et al. (2021) all affirm that culture-based materials not only improve reading comprehension but also promote engagement and cultural pride. Putri et al. (2024) and Cayanong (2025) demonstrated that supplemental materials designed with contextual relevance led to deeper understanding and improved literacy outcomes. Furthermore, Abad's (2020) emphasis on culturally responsive teaching, particularly for marginalized groups, supports the argument that learning materials grounded in local culture can create more meaningful and inclusive educational experiences. Aquino and De Vera (2018) also highlighted that culturally aligned content enhances students' comprehension and motivation.

The teacher participants' perspectives, supported by existing literature, confirmed the complex interplay of financial, technological, familial, and institutional factors affecting students' reading comprehension. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic strategy,

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including the design of localized, culturally relevant reading materials alongside improved instructional support, strengthened parental engagement, and better school infrastructure. Through these targeted efforts, the reading comprehension gap among Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, can be effectively narrowed.

The body of literature reviewed provides compelling evidence for the development of culture-based reading materials that are responsive to students' unique contexts and learning needs. This aligns directly with the core objective of the present study—to improve the reading comprehension of Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, through culturally relevant interventions. Across multiple studies, a consistent theme emerges: Students' reading difficulties are often rooted in disengaging, generic, and culturally disconnected materials. These limitations hinder motivation and comprehension, underscoring the urgent need for instructional content reflecting learners' experiences and cultural backgrounds.

Zakaria et al. (2023), for instance, highlighted the low reading motivation among Indonesian students, attributing this to a lack of culturally aligned reading materials. Their call for culturally integrated resources to stimulate interest parallels the challenges observed in Sto. Domingo, where many students lack engagement due to irrelevant or unfamiliar content. Although their research focused on elementary learners, the underlying principle—that culture-based materials increase relevance and comprehension—remains highly applicable to high school students.

Supporting this, Nambiar et al. (2020) found that embedding local cultural elements into English reading materials increased participation, vocabulary retention, and improved

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comprehension skills among secondary students. This finding is particularly significant for rural learners like those in Sto. Domingo, Albay, where mainstream reading materials may fail to reflect local realities and values.

Further reinforcing this perspective, Sianturi et al. (2021) and Putri et al. (2024) demonstrated the positive impact of culturally adapted and supplementary reading materials in promoting motivation, comprehension, and learner confidence. These studies revealed that culture-based reading materials, especially visually engaging and contextually meaningful, help bridge conceptual gaps and make reading more accessible and enjoyable. Such outcomes are vital for addressing the comprehension issues identified among Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay.

In the Philippine context, Abad (2020) showed that contextualized and culturally grounded reading materials significantly improved the reading comprehension of Indigenous learners in Camarines Norte. This mirrored the current study's intent to support students in under-resourced and culturally distinct communities like Sto. Domingo, Albay, through relevant, inclusive learning tools. Likewise, Aquino and De Vera (2018) stressed the importance of understanding student reading profiles to develop differentiated and compelling materials—an approach this study integrates by creating culturally responsive resources tailored to Grade 10 learners' specific needs.

Finally, Cayanong (2025) emphasized the importance of continually enhancing material design and teacher competence to maintain relevance and effectiveness. Her insights support

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the current initiative to create pedagogically sound, engaging, and locally relevant reading materials that adapt to learners' evolving needs.

The studies mentioned above collectively validated the necessity of developing culture-based reading materials that will align with students' sociocultural contexts and promote deeper engagement and understanding. Teachers can better address comprehension gaps by embedding familiar cultural references, values, and themes into reading content while fostering students' identity and appreciation for their heritage. These findings supported the development of culture-based reading materials for Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, offering a strategic and evidence-based solution to the persistent challenges in reading comprehension. By drawing from local insights and a robust body of literature, the study underscored that culturally relevant materials foster greater engagement and motivation and enhance students' understanding of texts. The alignment between the challenges identified through focus group discussions and those documented in previous studies validated the need for localized content that resonates with learners' experiences and cultural backgrounds. Thus, creating culture-based reading materials emerged as a timely and impactful intervention to address the specific literacy needs of students in Sto. Domingo.

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CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data gathered, analyzed, and interpreted, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The reading comprehension levels of Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, was found to be critically low. The Revised Phil-IRI Pre-Test revealed that only sixty students demonstrated independent reading skills, while the remaining five hundred eighty-five students fell within the instructional and frustration levels. This highlighted an urgent need for targeted reading interventions. Subsequent assessments provided a more in-depth view of students' comprehension abilities, reinforcing the necessity of developing and integrating culture-based reading materials to support and enhance their learning.
2. The focus group discussions with Grade 10 students revealed that multiple interrelated factors significantly influenced their reading comprehension development. These included individual challenges like language barriers and lack of reading interest, family-related issues like limited parental support and financial hardship, school-based concerns like inadequate resources and unengaging instruction, and community factors like environmental distractions. Addressing these barriers holistically is essential for fostering reading growth.
3. Input from language teachers further confirmed the multifaceted nature of the problem. Teachers emphasized the impact of socioeconomic constraints, excessive use of digital devices, inconsistent parental involvement, and school-related limitations as key obstacles to reading comprehension. These findings confirmed the importance of implementing a comprehensive and collaborative approach to intervention.

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4. Developing and using culture-based reading materials emerged as a promising and contextually relevant solution. By incorporating familiar local themes, settings, and experiences, these materials have the potential to increase student engagement, deepen comprehension, and promote independent reading. Their alignment with the learners' cultural background makes them a powerful tool for closing the reading gap among Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are proposed based on the findings and conclusions of the study.

1. In light of the critically low reading comprehension levels among Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay, as revealed by the Revised Phil-IRI Pre-Test, it is strongly recommended that schools and educational stakeholders implement targeted, data-driven reading interventions. These interventions should focus on identifying the specific reading needs of students at both the instructional and frustration levels. Formative assessment tools like the Phil-IRI should guide them. Moreover, developing and integrating culture-based reading materials into the English curriculum is imperative. These materials should reflect the students' local culture, traditions, values, and everyday experiences to make reading more relatable and engaging. Teachers must be trained to use these culturally relevant materials effectively to foster reading comprehension skills. Additionally, differentiated instruction strategies should be employed in classrooms to cater to the varying proficiency levels of students. Support programs such as

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remedial reading classes, peer tutoring, and parent engagement activities should be established to reinforce students' learning at home and in school. The Department of Education and local government units should also provide funding and resources to support the development, reproduction, and distribution of localized reading materials. Ultimately, a collaborative and sustained effort among educators, parents, and community leaders is essential to address the reading comprehension crisis and to empower students to become competent and independent readers.

2. Based on the findings from the focus group discussions with Grade 10 students, it is recommended that a holistic, multi-level approach be adopted to address the interrelated factors influencing their reading comprehension development. At the individual level, schools should implement reading motivation programs such as reading clubs, peer reading sessions, and incentive-based activities to cultivate a genuine interest in reading. To overcome language barriers, vocabulary-building exercises, and contextualized reading support must be incorporated into daily instruction. At the family level, schools should foster parental involvement through regular communication, literacy workshops, and community outreach programs that emphasize the value of reading at home. To support economically disadvantaged families, local government units and school administrators should explore providing financial assistance or forming partnerships with NGOs to ensure access to essential educational resources. At the school level, upgrading reading materials, enhancing library facilities, and equipping classrooms with adequate instructional tools are necessary steps. Teachers should also be trained in differentiated and culturally responsive reading strategies

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to engage diverse learners effectively. At the community level, efforts should focus on reducing environmental distractions by establishing after-school reading centers or safe study spaces while encouraging collaboration among schools, barangay councils, and local organizations to build a literacy-rich environment. By addressing these factors, stakeholders can significantly improve the reading comprehension skills of Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay.

3. Based on the input from language teachers, it is recommended that a comprehensive and collaborative intervention strategy be adopted to address the diverse challenges affecting reading comprehension among Grade 10 students. Schools should partner with parents, local government units, and community organizations to alleviate socioeconomic barriers by providing support such as school-based feeding programs, learning materials, and access to digital tools. To address the excessive use of digital devices, digital literacy education should be incorporated into the curriculum to promote responsible technology use and encourage a healthy balance between screen time and reading. Strengthening parental involvement through literacy workshops, home reading programs, and regular communication between parents and teachers is crucial in supporting students' reading development. Furthermore, teacher training must focus on delivering inclusive, engaging, and culturally responsive instruction tailored to the student's needs. A coordinated effort among educators, families, and community stakeholders is essential to create a supportive environment fostering improved reading comprehension and a stronger literacy culture in Sto. Domingo, Albay.

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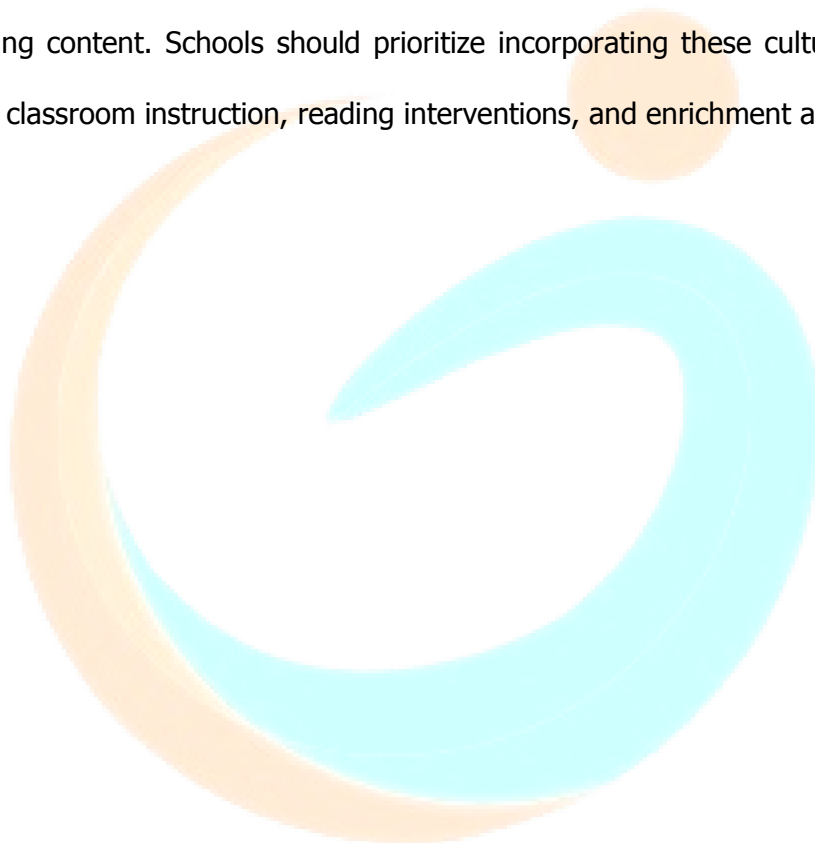
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4. Culture-based reading materials will be integrated, and systematically utilized within the reading curriculum of Grade 10 students in Sto. Domingo, Albay. These materials should feature familiar local themes, settings, and cultural experiences to make reading more relatable and engaging for learners. By reflecting on the students' environment and heritage, such texts can enhance motivation, improve comprehension, and foster a deeper connection with the reading content. Schools should prioritize incorporating these culturally grounded resources into classroom instruction, reading interventions, and enrichment activities.



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