START (Struggling Today, A Reader Tomorrow) Through Our Eyes: A Phenomenology

Cayzelle Maglantay – Quirino

Carlos Hilado Memorial State University Talisay City, Negros Occidental, Philippines

ABSTRACT: START (Struggling Today, A Reader Tomorrow): A Reading Intervention Program was conceptualized to bridge the literacy gap as one of the DepEd learning recovery plans after a two-year modular approach to education. This study explored the experiences of reading remediation teachers and Grade 7 non-readers with the START Program in one public high school in Bacolod City. Conversational interviews were conducted with five teachers and five student participants involved in the program. Clarke and Braun's Thematic Analysis Method was used to determine the themes. Reliability and validity were accomplished through audio recording, triangulation, bracketing, and member checking. Results identified three major themes related to the teachers' experiences: the challenges, coping strategies, and insights gained from the experience. Three major themes were also identified from the non-readers' experiences, including the positive learning environment, the hurdles, and overcoming the barriers. Findings reveal that the START program was a challenging yet fulfilling undertaking for reading remediation teachers, and the START program was an enjoyable and helpful reading activity for students. Reading remediation teachers should consider adopting Project Reach & Teach to enhance the START program, address the needs better, and deliver meaningful reading remediation to non-readers.

KEYWORDS: START, Reading Intervention Program, Lived Experiences, Reading Remediation

INTRODUCTION

In the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, the Philippines ranked the lowest in Reading, Science, and Mathematics among the participating countries. In this case, 80% of Filipino students still needed to reach the required reading proficiency. Globally, many students need help to achieve that goal fully.

The Department of Education acknowledges the pressing need to address and rectify difficulties and disparities in achieving the quality of primary education in the Philippines, thus launching Sulong Edukalidad (Briones, 2019). This program aims to implement aggressive reforms in key areas of education. This initiative is in response to the fast-changing learning environment and to globalize the quality of basic education in the Philippines (Department of Education, 2019). Furthermore, the Department of Education issued memorandum no. 173 s. of 2019 on the implementation of the 3Bs Initiative (Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumasa) to help intensify the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), which primarily aims to tailor learners with reading skills to make them proficient and independent readers in their grade level (Department of Education, 2019).

In response to DepEd's 3Bs Initiative, the Bacolod City Division conducted a literacy assessment to measure the reading ability level of junior high school students. Struggling and non-readers were identified based on the same evaluation. 48 out of 156 Grade 7 students, 39 out of 168 Grade 8 students, 40 out of 93 Grade 9 students, and 7 out of 146 Grade 10 students are struggling readers. Moreover, 24 out of 156 Grade 7 students, 6 out of 168 Grade 8 students, 3 out of 93 Grade 9 students, and 0 out of 146 Grade 10 students are non-readers. This totals 134 struggling readers and 33 non-readers. One hundred sixty-seven students, or 29.66% of the 563 assessed, are considered to have problems with either one or more, if not all, of the Big Six of Reading.

Gatchalian (2022) emphasized that enhancing reading skills is crucial for developing young individuals. The assessment results challenged the English teachers at one public high school in Bacolod City. The results are alarming, and an intervention strategy must be innovated to assist struggling readers and non-readers. Duterte (2022) noted that one of the domains that need attention in the aftermath of the pandemic-induced learning deficit is literacy, hence necessitating a resurgence in engagement with reading. START (Struggling Today, A Reader Tomorrow): A Reading Remediation Program was conceptualized in this light. This program aims to address the current challenge after a two-year modular approach to education; it is also in response to the Department of Education's drive to bridge the literacy gap as one of the learning recovery plans. START (Struggling Today, A Reader Tomorrow): A Reading Remediation Program was implemented from November 2022 to May 2023, focusing on the identified struggling and non-reading populations. These students are at a frustrating reading level, for these individuals lack both

the inclination and the capacity to comprehend (Bermejo, 2020). Moreover, Bantolo (2022) noted that by enhancing our collective consciousness, we may effectively mitigate the global learning problem and avert the potential tragedy of inadequate education across generations through prompt and decisive measures.

Therefore, it was considered beneficial to conduct this study to explore the experiences of reading remediation teachers and Grade 7 non-readers with the START Program. The lived experiences, in toto, were the center of interest of this study.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative design utilizing a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach used in this qualitative research allowed for a description of the experiences and an exploration of the participants' meanings from their experiences. The main object of development was to describe a phenomenon as precisely as possible (Delve & Limpaecher, 2022). Interviews were purposive conversations between the researcher and the interviewee designed to elicit the participants' experiences, understandings, opinions, or motivations (Creswell, J.W., 2018). In this study, the data were thematically analyzed using Clarke and Braun's (2006) Thematic Analysis method, as cited in Claufield (2022). Clarke and Braun's (2006) Thematic Analysis method sought to progress from familiarizing the data to generating initial codes to searching for themes to reviewing, defining, and naming themes.

The data of this study were obtained from the reading remediation teachers and Grade 7 non-readers who made expressions of their involvement in the START Program. As they shared their lived experiences, they brought the picture of the conduct of the program through their eyes. The participants of this study were five reading remediation teachers and five Grade 7 non-readers in one public high school in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental. The participants were identified through purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling, or judgment sampling, entailed the researcher selecting the most helpful sample. It is frequently used in qualitative research. The researcher wishes to gain detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon rather than making statistical inferences or when the population is tiny and precise (McCombes, 2021).

The researcher, through the permission granted by the gatekeeper, chose the students participants through these enforced criteria: (1) must be enrolled in the Department of Education Learner Information System (LIS) for Academic Year 2022-2023; (2) must be on the list of non-readers in the START Program; (3) should be at Grade 7; (4) were in face-to-face classes; (5) must be in the frustration level and had retained the level or must be in the frustration level and had moved to instructional level. For the teacher participants, these were the enforced criteria: (1) must be in a permanent position; (2) must be an English teacher where the study was conducted; (3) must have at least three years of teaching experience; and (4) must be handling remediation classes in the START Program.

For confidentiality purposes, this study did not use the participants' real names. The researcher used pseudonyms.

A conversational interview protocol was used to gather data on the participants' lived experiences with the START Program. The instrument comprised an introduction, the interview proper, and the closing. One overarching question was asked to elicit from the participants an elaboration of shared experiences. Researchers use conversational interviewing to elicit verbal data by having a real, less-structured conversation with the participants about predetermined themes (Given, 2018). An interview protocol through a conversational interview method was used as instrumentation. The ten participants were interviewed personally. The interview questions of the teacher participants were answered in English. The student participants chose to answer in their mother tongue, Hiligaynon. The collected audio data was transcribed into verbatim written form. Brislin's back translation method was used as the systematic translation process. The transcribed data were translated simultaneously by three independent translators. The forward translations were compared and merged into one by an independent translator. Two English language experts and a psychologist reviewed and validated the data. The consolidated data of student participants and the transcribed data of teacher participants were analyzed thematically using Clarke and Braun's Thematic Analysis Method. The researcher undertook significant measures and procedures to ensure the data's validity and that the analyses accurately reflected the central category of this study. The research endeavors were conducted by the principles of credibility and rigor in qualitative research, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba, as cited in Korstjens & Moser (2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Lived Experiences of Reading Remediation Teachers in the START Program

The data shared by the participants in the conversational interview were explicated utilizing thematic analysis. Three major themes were yielded from the lived experiences of teacher participants. These themes included (1) Challenges in Conducting Remedial Classes, (2) Coping with the Challenges in Conducting Remedial Classes, and (3) Insights into Teaching.

Theme 1: Challenges in Conducting Remedial Classes

Drawn from the data explication, the teacher participants have faced various challenges. Subthemes derived from the data about the challenges encountered by the teacher participants included extended work hours, time constraints, attendance, lack of motivation and engagement among non-readers, and parental non-involvement. Within these subthemes are the categories by which the challenges are evident.

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Extended Work Hours

DepEd Memoranandom No. 291, s. Two thousand eight states that schoolteachers shall render at most six hours of teaching daily. This circumstance brought challenges to the reading remediation teachers. The participants expressed their exhaustion after having six regular classes and having to gather the non-readers for their reading remediation classes.

Schedules ought to prioritize educational goals and exhibit flexibility, enabling educators to effectively cater to the individual needs of their students rather than rigidly adhering to unsubstantiated assumptions, such as the notion that children are more receptive to learning in the morning or that small group instruction consistently outperforms whole-class instruction (Shanahan, 2023). Furthermore, integration across subject areas can potentially create a multiplier impact to lessen the load on the reading remediation teachers. While most teachers like their jobs, many experts agree that teaching is demanding (Howard & Johnson, 2020). All efforts must be made to select a time preferable for all. Campbell (2020) expressed that a successful plan involves thinking about various issues.

Time Constraint in Program Objective Completion

Amidst the effort exerted on non-readers, six months of conducting reading remediation classes were needed to make them proficient readers in their grade level. The participants shared that students could not master all the reading skills quickly.

Bringing a reading remediation program to success requires the teachers to juggle responsibilities and challenges. The time limitation is a significant challenge due to the finite nature of time as a resource (Stefania, 2020). The acquisition of reading skills and the development of reading comprehension abilities in learners are multifaceted undertakings that include several components, such as the reader, the text materials utilized, and other associated elements that might influence the reading process (Abril et al., 2022). According to the study by Gabejan et al. (2021), it is suggested in the field of remediation that an extended period be allocated for remedial reading. Contrary to popular belief, alternative viewpoints (Damadzic et al., 2022) contend that limitations might boost creativity by narrowing the issue field. Limiting the issue area eliminates standard solutions and compels individuals engaged in a creative assignment to conduct a thorough search within a limited range of effective remedies.

Commitment to Attendance

Attendance of the non-readers is crucial in the conduct of the reading remediation classes. Students are the sole reason why the START Program was implemented. Reading remediation teachers claimed attendance was a significant challenge during reading remediation classes. The participants expressed that those students rarely attended the reading remediation classes, and some had absenteeism problems in their regular classes.

According to Kleib et al. (2022), chronic absenteeism significantly contributes to subpar academic performance in reading and basic abilities throughout the initial stages of students' educational progression. Other studies, such as the study of (Tan et al., 2021), contend that factors such as teacher quality and socioeconomic background play significant roles in determining kids' academic performance throughout these formative years. School districts and institutions must ascertain the underlying issues contributing to students' difficulties in reading requirements. Furthermore, if absenteeism impacts student's academic performance, it becomes crucial to explore potential strategies for mitigating its effects (Santibañez & Guarino, 2021).

Lack of Motivation and Engagement among Non-readers

Reading motivation and engagement are significant factors that positively impact reading success, regardless of grade level or cultural background. However, it is disheartening to observe that many pupils have limited exposure to these crucial elements (Barber, 2020). They concluded that non-readers were not interested in participating in the program because of their attendance.

Motivation is a multifaceted psychological process that starts, directs, and sustains goal-directed activities (Cherry, 2020). Numerous elements might exert an influence on the aptitude and inclination of kids toward reading. According to Adapon et al. (2020), participants in the reading program will have the chance to rekindle their passion for reading. Teachers need to understand what inspires students to inspire them themselves. Hence, educators must understand their students' backgrounds in terms of reading (Rosenberg, 2023).

Parental Non-involvement

The active participation of parents in the educational development, completion of homework assignments, and general academic achievement of their children has been found to have positive effects on the learners themselves, as well as on instructors, schools, and the broader society. Ramirez, Lytle, and Kuhl (2020) provided more empirical evidence supporting that children are more likely to achieve academic success when their family actively engages in their educational pursuits. Family support is another factor in the success of this program.

Parents are crucial in augmenting their children's literacy development from an early age. The convergence of children and parents in collaborative activities, including work, play, reading, and learning, can have favorable consequences for language acquisition, literacy skills, emotional maturation, and cognitive advancement (Bendanillo, 2021). Bendanillo asserted that to attain proficient reading skills, children require substantial direction and support from their educators and parents since both play crucial roles in fostering their success as readers. The reading comprehension scores of children who lack parental presence were notably lower compared to those of those who have parents who are actively involved in their lives. These children faced difficulties comprehending several aspects of reading, including understanding the structure of chapters, discerning the author's aims, analyzing

writing techniques, evaluating content, and developing an appreciation for literature (Xiafeng et al., 2018). Despite the widespread perception that parental participation is essential for children's academic performance, there are some concerns about parental involvement. The disagreement surrounding data about parental participation and its relationship with student academic progress is likely the most disturbing (McNeal, 2021). Studies have identified favorable, unfavorable, and no associations between parental participation and student success (Fan & Chen, 2020). Thus, the involvement of a parent or guardian in their child's reading journey can have a significant impact.

Theme 2: Coping with the Challenges in Conducting Reading Remedial Classes

Numerous obstacles manifested throughout the START implementation, and educators continued to adapt to the program. Consequently, reading remediation instructors utilized coping methods to address their challenges. Subthemes derived from the data about the coping strategies on the challenges faced by the teacher participants included embracing the schedule, sustaining the START, building commitment to attendance, instilling the value of reading through various activities, and stakeholder support for the program's success. Within these subthemes are the categories by which coping strategies were established.

Embracing the Schedule

The study by Pokhrel and Chetri (2021) suggested that teachers must adapt when few or nonexistent alternatives are available. Furthermore, educators frequently have the dilemma of efficiently organizing their timetables while engaging in the crucial endeavor of facilitating reading intervention. However, educators must maintain records of their students' growth and closely observe their academic advancement (Agayon et al., 2022).

The reading remediation classes were conducted every Tuesday and Thursday from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM was allotted for practices, remediation classes, and other non-curricular activities in school. The environment and the conflicting schedule of student activities became a challenge to the reading remediation teachers. The participants suggested a makeup session if there were disruptions in classes. To compensate for the instructional time lost during school closures, educators may opt to provide additional tasks or homework to students, as suggested by Briones (2017). Even the schedule of reading remediation classes obliged the teachers to devote another hour aside from their six-hour teaching hours; Sir Nestor empowered himself with his vocal.

Using novel approaches designed to motivate individuals who exhibit low levels of reading engagement to actively participate in reading remediation courses is crucial for optimizing the program's effectiveness. Using efficient planning and time management tactics is vital in this environment. Like high school students, the implementation of efficient time management involves the development of a meticulously organized schedule and thoroughly covering the curriculum during the academic year while avoiding hasty completion of the subject (Easer, 2023).

Sustaining the START

According to Diamond (2016), an effective reading program is one that fosters reading proficiency among all children and is grounded in established methodologies, as supported by the Department of Education (DepEd, 2021). They suggested that the continuity of the program because there are still students who need help.

Angela (2023) emphasized the significance of the reading curriculum while also highlighting the importance of adaptability in modifying the curriculum to cater to the requirements of both faculty and students. The recognition that various demands necessitate the adaptation and development of thinking and practice is crucial, as it highlights the inadequacy of a one-size-fits-all approach. START Program must adhere to the needs of the reading remediation teachers and non-readers.

Building Commitment to Attendance

The significance of attendance lies in its ability to provide students access to contextual information, resources, and connections that have a favorable influence on their knowledge acquisition (Clotilda, 2022). The participants expressed that fetching the students from their classrooms helped increase attendance.

It is imperative for educational institutions, particularly instructors specializing in reading remediation, to adopt a proactive methodology aimed at enhancing the attendance rates of students who struggle with reading proficiency. By engaging in this practice, the positive impact on the social-emotional and academic well-being of those who do not possess reading skills is evident (Keenze, 2022).

Instilling the Value of Reading Through Activities

The act of reading is an essential component of the learning process, so fostering a passion for reading throughout the early stages of development serves as the pivotal factor in facilitating continuous and enduring knowledge acquisition (St. George, 2019). The participants tried different strategies to motivate students for the reading remediation classes.

A dynamic and stimulating reading culture not only fosters proficient and dedicated readers but also enhances overall well-being, promotes social cohesion, and improves academic achievements among students (Hawthorne, 2021). Moreover, in the study of Kueng (2022), a greater emphasis is now being placed on how reading habits affect academic success in K–12 environments. The data overwhelmingly imply that adolescents who read for enjoyment outside of school perform better in school.

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Stakeholder Support in the Success of the Program

To enhance children's reading skills, it is imperative for teachers to cultivate a collaborative relationship with parents, therefore garnering their support. Optimal practice includes engaging parents in classroom conferences and providing them with regular updates on their child's academic progress. The entire community has the potential to participate as well (Capulso et al., 2021). The participants suggested that the school, particularly the reading remediation teachers encourage the stakeholders to support the program by being involved and engaged since the beginning of the school year.

The involvement of parents in promoting reading as a shared family activity is crucial since it has been observed that students tend to experience a decline in the retention of knowledge acquired during reading sessions. Ramirez et al. (2022) posited that a prevalent notion among parents is that their position as learning facilitators is characterized by its demanding nature. Parents had difficulties effectively facilitating their children's learning in the home environment. Ho (2020) discovered, however, that parent-child conversations at home had the highest favorable link with academic attainment. Moreover, given that parents are obligated to provide for their family's necessities, they must allocate time to aid their children's educational development. Maria shared her childhood experiences and the reason she could not read.

Theme 3: Insights into Teaching

The reading remediation teachers reflected on their experiences with the START Program and gained insights. Subthemes derived from the data included that high school non-readers are real, stricter implementation of the START Program, shared responsibility, and the calling and the mission of teaching.

High school non-readers are real!

According to Albano (2019), there are still individuals who lack reading skills, including those in Grades 7 and 8, as well as readers who have significant difficulties in comprehension at the later stages of their education. The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) has confirmed the state of Philippine education. Diosdado San Antonio, the Education Undersecretary for Curriculum and Instruction, has stated that the Department of Education (DepEd) has knowledge regarding the existence of individuals who lack reading skills in high school (Dumlao, 2019). The participants expressed that there were students who reached junior high school and still could not read, which also contributed to the absenteeism of students.

It is imperative to prevent sending individuals who lack basic reading skills to high school, and it is essential for primary schools that do this to have stringent monitoring and supervision measures. Despite the absence of consequences, it is imperative for the Department of Education (DepEd) to enhance the strength of its signals to discourage bad practices (PIDS, 2019).

Stricter Implementation of START

The study of Rivera and Aggabao (2020) emphasized the importance for educators to identify students who are encountering difficulties in reading and develop suitable reading remediation strategies. This entails the need for teachers to devise solutions once they have identified the specific reading weaknesses of their students. The participants stated that there is room for improvement in the initial year of implementing the START Program. They emphasized the significance of early intervention and thorough assistance for those experiencing difficulties in reading. Timely detection and focused intervention can substantially impact reading achievements (Ball et al., 2022).

Page and Cinquini (2021) state that not all interventions are ideal or successful. Not all interventions work for all students. It is critical to determine which treatments work best for specific pupils. The significance placed on equity and prevention aligns with research that underscores the enduring impact of reading difficulties on academic achievement, as noted by Toste et al. (2020). Implementing a well-organized reading remediation program, together with its rigorous enforcement, has the potential to enhance literacy skills and foster overall academic achievement among students facing difficulties.

The Shared Responsibility

Improving students' reading competence is a pursuit that extends beyond the confines of the educational setting, according to the study conducted by Sabrina et al. (2020). They emphasized that improving students' reading skills is a shared responsibility of the stakeholders, the school, and the students.

Most students with difficulty reading often require substantial support and direction from their parents to achieve proficiency in reading. According to House Bill 5243, it is mandated that the Department of Education (DepEd) execute the "Nanay-Teacher Parenting Program." The results support Caliskan and Ulas's (2022) claim that parents significantly impact their children's learning and overall development and play a crucial role in their education. To attain proficient reading skills, youngsters want substantial direction and support from their educators and parents since their joint involvement is crucial for fostering effective reading abilities. Additionally, the study of Mahinay (2021) observed that the responsibility of teaching reading cannot be solely attributed to educators.

"Vocare and Missiō"

According to Svider and Frasyniuk (2020), there is an ongoing debate on the concept of patience, primarily due to its commonly seen characteristics. A teacher's patience may be defined as the ability of educators to maintain their composure and resilience during their instructional duties, their capacity to tolerate unforeseen circumstances that may arise, and their determination to persist until the desired educational objectives are achieved. Patience is demonstrated when educators maintain a composed mind

and exhibit restrained conduct when navigating challenging situations. The study mentioned above provides empirical support for the notion posited by Wu, Zhang, and Dixon (2021) that patience encompasses the ability of educators to handle challenging or unsatisfactory circumstances and tolerate delayed outcomes in a composed manner. Gokcen et al. (2020) posited that the virtue of patience can mediate between an individual's ongoing activities and their unattained objectives by effectively reducing adverse emotional states and motivating proactive behavior. Therefore, teacher patience should be acknowledged in the context of assessment implementation.

The capacity of teachers to effectively utilize educational technology to support and enhance students' learning is of great importance (Backfisch et al., 2020). This highlights the fundamental nature of teaching as a profession driven by love, care, and a commitment to positively influencing students' lives. The statement underscores the notion that the act of teaching extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge, encompassing empowering individuals via education, fostering the development of enduring abilities, and cultivating a sense of self-assurance. The inventive educator generates novel creations that yield value to many stakeholders, including students, fellow teachers, and the educational institution. According to Mazur and Duchlinski (2020), innovation is most prominently shown by developing tools, tangible benefits, or assistance that effectively address an issue or provide a competitive edge.

Eidetic Insight

Drawn from the data explication, three significant themes were yielded from the lived experiences of teacher participants. These themes included (1) Challenges in Conducting Remedial Classes, (2) Coping with the Challenges in Conducting Remedial Classes, and (3) Insights into Teaching. Subthemes were generated from each major theme.

The START program was a challenging yet fulfilling undertaking for reading remediation teachers.

During the initial year of program implementation, reading remediation teachers encountered a multitude of problems. The teachers admitted that the program necessitated them to allocate more time beyond their regular teaching hours. Furthermore, the six months dedicated to implementing reading remediation programs were insufficient in enhancing the proficiency levels of the individuals lacking reading abilities. The absence of commitment among non-readers and their lack of enthusiasm to participate in reading rehabilitation sessions posed significant challenges for them. Finally, the lack of parental participation has an impact on the level of engagement of non-readers in their attendance of classes.

Nevertheless, the teachers devised strategies to navigate the difficulties they faced. Teachers were required to adopt and adhere to the assigned timetable. Furthermore, the teachers recommended the sustained implementation of the program. To ensure the continued participation of those who do not engage in reading, it is important to cultivate a sense of the importance of reading through collaborative efforts, including relevant stakeholders.

Educators derived valuable lessons from their encounters with the START Program. It was observed that non-readers among junior high school students were acknowledged. The resolution of this issue can be achieved by the execution of a more stringent program and the establishment of a systematic monitoring process. Additionally, it is imperative for the many stakeholders, including the educational institution and the students, to collaborate to accomplish the program's primary goal. The educators are driven by their goal and vision, which ignites their fervor to assist those who struggle with reading proficiency.

Thus, the START program was a formidable yet rewarding endeavor for teachers specializing in reading remediation.

The Lived Experiences of Grade 7 Non-readers in the START Program

The data shared by the participants in the conversational interview were explicated utilizing thematic analysis. Three major themes were also yielded from the lived experiences of student participants. These themes included: (1) Positive Learning Environment, (2) Challenges of the Non-readers, and (3) Overcoming Barriers.

Theme 1: Positive Learning Environment

Drawn from the data explication, the student participants had experienced a positive learning environment. Subthemes derived from the data about the challenges encountered by the student participants included the supportive mentors and the impact of the blue room venue as a conducive learning space. Within these subthemes is the overview in which the challenges are evident.

Supportive Mentors

Reading remediation teachers are essential in delivering specialized teaching and assistance to students with reading difficulties (Inding, 2020). One key factor contributing to the effectiveness of reading remediation teachers is their aptitude for cultivating strong relationships with their students. According to the study by Saraspe and Abocejo (2020), intervention programs can be implemented individually to address the specific requirements of learners who encounter challenges or problems in reading. By utilizing this approach, the growth of learners may be assessed, enabling the acquisition of reading abilities to be measured. They said that the reading remediation teachers were kind and helpful.

The teacher's involvement is vital in motivating students to participate in reading lessons. This encouragement entails a compassionate approach: not demanding beyond the students' capacities, not overcorrecting, and appreciating what has been done successfully. Only in this way can the teacher assist the students in overcoming their troubles and fears. A well-prepared and motivated teacher may create a better atmosphere and more successful classroom teaching by recognizing the students' needs and

being interested in their challenges. Furthermore, if more appealing activities such as role plays, individual work, and group work are introduced into the classroom, students will be more inclined to engage and learn (Yilmaz, 2019). On the other hand, teachers are regularly exposed to various sorts of student misconduct and, as a result, build powerful negative feelings that lead to emotional weariness and burnout (Levy & Khoury-Kassabri, 2021).

The Blue Room: A Conducive Learning Space

Cognitive Evaluation Theory, a sub-theory derived from self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), offers insights into probable factors within the classroom environment that may contribute to the decline in intrinsic motivation for reading. Based on the theoretical framework, both external events and intra- and interpersonal circumstances have the potential to either improve or reduce inherent motivation. This outcome depends on whether these factors promote or hinder a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to the study by Hawrot and Zhou (2023), establishing a classroom learning environment that caters to the needs of students may mitigate the decrease in intrinsic motivation toward reading. The venue had a positive impact on non-readers. They tagged the blue room as the chance to get help from the reading remediation teachers. The participants felt excited every time they went to the venue.

Theme 2: Challenges of the Non-readers

The widespread adoption of modular distance learning has significantly exacerbated educational disparities, particularly among individuals lacking basic reading skills or having difficulty reading. The program's execution could have been improved by several problems and confusion about reading literacy among non-readers, slow readers, and struggling readers (Salamuddin, 2021). One of the challenges the learners face, as identified by Bagolong et al. (2021), is comprehending the content they read and effectively deciphering symbolic representations. Furthermore, the markers for compelling reading encompassed reading practice, content, and learning environments (Palma & Madrigal, 2021).

Drawn from the data explication, the student participants have faced various challenges. Subthemes derived from the data pertaining to the challenges encountered by the student participants included the reading remediation teachers as a contributing factor and the impact of the blue room venue. Within the subtheme is the overview in which the challenges are evident.

Personal Struggle with the Letter Sounds

The English writing system functions as a symbolic representation, wherein individual letters and combinations of letters represent specific sounds. To acquire reading proficiency, children must develop the skill of deciphering this system, also called decoding. While proficient reading encompasses several variables, decoding ability is its fundamental basis. It is essential to comprehend the words to effectively focus on extracting meaning from the text (Meltzer, 2020). Moreover, in the study of Haile (2022), phonological awareness is a crucial element in the reading acquisition process, as it pertains to children's capacity to recognize and manipulate sound segments. Contrary, Milankov et al. (2021) claimed that while phonological awareness is essential in reading acquisition, it is not the only deciding factor and that other factors, such as vocabulary growth and comprehension abilities, also play a substantial part in a child's reading competency. This skill is widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of learning to read, and it also serves as a significant indicator of future reading abilities. Non-readers needed help with the phonological component of reading. They confessed that she had difficulty in sounding out words.

Reading difficulties might result from a variety of underlying factors. Phonological abilities, which entail hearing and manipulating spoken language sounds (e.g., phonemes, syllables), are required for developing practical word-reading skills. Phonological skills assist students in understanding how letters and letter patterns work together to represent language in print. Problems with establishing phonological awareness can contribute to difficulty with fluent word reading, which can lead to comprehension issues. Possible primary reasons for phonological challenges include a lack of explicit education and practice in phonological and phonemic awareness and a core fault in the language's phonological processing system. Many students who struggle with phonological abilities did not receive appropriate teaching or practice opportunities. Solid core instruction can avoid These phonological skill issues (Moats & Tolman, 2019).

Theme 3: Overcoming Barriers

Reading is crucial in determining the level of achievement a kid attains. In certain instances, children encountering challenges in reading may face obstacles that impede their inclination to engage in reading activities. These barriers may persist without adequate direction and hinder their surmounting ability (Gabejan et al., 2021). According to the study of Buis (2020), by emphasizing intrinsic reading motivation, educators can effectively address their students' reading difficulties and transform individuals who lack the inclination to read into individuals who engage in reading throughout their lives. In contrast to Buis's (2020) emphasis on inner reading motivation, (Wang et al., 2020) claim that external incentives, such as awards or contests, can successfully solve kids' reading issues and foster a lifelong love of reading. Numerous obstacles manifest throughout the START implementation, and non-readers continue adapting to the program.

Subthemes derived from the data about the coping strategies for the challenges faced by the participants include practice as the key to progress and the essence of scaffolding. Within these subthemes is the overview by which coping strategies were established.

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Practice as Key to Progress

According to the study by Paul and Karmarkar (2022), consistent practice is the fundamental element of achieving fluency in any program. On the one hand, the observed variations in brain development could indicate a causal limitation on the acquisition of reading skills. Conversely, children who exhibit superior reading abilities may demonstrate experience-induced alterations in brain development. Increased exposure to and practice in reading could lead to enhanced myelination within the neural circuits responsible for reading (Snowling & Hulme, 2021). They expressed that she practiced reading at home to improve her reading skills.

It is critical to make parents aware of the services available to their children. Stakeholders may help students succeed in remedial classes by assisting them outside the classroom. Teachers may keep track of their students even after class hours if parents are involved in their child's learning experience (Bordia, 2022).

The Essence of Scaffolding

Children learn better when they adjust their culture through scaffolding as part of mediation and classroom instruction to encourage them to transform well (Pramerta, 2022). Furthermore, another critical feature of the scaffolding approach is the transitory aspect. It completes the element of direction. The scaffolding given gradually fades as their talents improve (Li, 2021). As a result, the purpose of using scaffolding as a teaching approach is to develop an autonomous and self-regulating learner and problem solver (Abdala & Hamdan, 2021). The participants stated that the reading remediation teachers greatly assisted her reading.

According to James (2022), scaffolds are temporary supports we all need as our abilities develop. To become excellent readers, children require much instruction and aid, not just from their instructors but also from their parents. While instruction and support from teachers and parents are essential in a child's reading development, Maes, 2021) emphasizes that some children can become excellent readers with little or no external assistance, relying primarily on intrinsic motivation and self-guided learning. Furthermore, to inspire and encourage their children to do well in school, parents should assist their children's academics, notably by creating a supportive atmosphere at home. Reading instruction is more than just the job of educators. Parents must also supplement and reinforce what is taught in school (Bendanillo, 2021).

Eidetic Insight

Drawn from the data explication, three significant themes were yielded from the lived experiences of teacher participants. These themes included (1) a Positive Learning Environment, (2) Challenges of the Non-readers, and (3) Overcoming Barriers. Subthemes were generated from each significant theme.

The START program was an enjoyable and helpful reading activity for students.

The Grade 7 students who struggled with reading were encouraged to participate in reading remediation sessions due to their teachers' supportive and compassionate nature. The individuals identified the venue as a resource for enhancing their reading abilities, prompting them to return often.

Students who do not possess proficient reading abilities demonstrate a deficiency in their phonological skills, which is the basis for developing other reading-related competencies. This particular skill impeded their ability to acquire other reading skills fully. Despite the inherent challenges, students have realized that consistent practice is the fundamental factor in enhancing their reading skills. Furthermore, they successfully enhanced their reading abilities through collaboration with stakeholders and the school.

Thus, The START program proved to be a beneficial and engaging reading initiative for non-readers.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

The reading remediation teachers held the belief that the implementation of the START program was a demanding yet rewarding endeavor. The program provides an ideal venue for students to improve their reading abilities. The program's schedule was rated as unpleasant and physically exhausting. Despite time restrictions and low attendance, reading remediation teachers encountered difficulty promoting regular attendance and incorporating reading comprehension tasks into English lessons. Furthermore, it was posited that fostering a passion for reading among students and comprehending educators' pedagogical responsibilities might enhance students' reading proficiency.

The Grade 7 non-readers found the START program pleasurable and beneficial reading intervention. The participants derived satisfaction from actively participating in the program. The teachers in the START program were perceived as kind and supportive by the participants. Additionally, the participants expressed positive sentiment towards the program's organization, including the allocated timetable and chosen location, despite encountering challenges in articulating sounds and correctly pronouncing and segmenting words into syllables. The individuals successfully addressed these challenges by participating in reading remediation courses and engaging in regular reading exercises at home with their family members.

The obstacles, coping techniques, and insights were crucial to the program's overall success.

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