



**READING COMPREHENSION LEVEL AMONG
GRADE 7 LEARNERS OF GENERAL SANTOS CITY
NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL: BASIS FOR A
PROPOSED INTERVENTION PROGRAM**

Charity B. Laroza¹ⁱ,

Analiza T. Amada²

¹Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges Graduate School,
General Santos City,

Philippines

²EdD, LPT,

Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges Graduate School,
General Santos City,

Philippines

Abstract:

This study aimed to determine the relationship between the demographic profile and the level of reading comprehension students of the Grade 7 students at General Santos City National High School and the intervention program that can be drawn based on its results. The respondents were taken from the Grade 7 level and selected randomly from all the sections under the basic education curriculum and its special programs. The demographic profiles of the respondents were gathered in the observation of the needed ethical standards of confidentiality and consensus to make sure that they are protected. The analysis revealed in this study that age does not serve as a contributory factor to the reading comprehension of the respondents, as there are varied results that do significantly prove its connection. Sex and socioeconomic status, however, were deemed to be a determinant in the level of reading comprehension among students in Grade 7. Additionally, the finding suggested that the student's ages were significantly related to their reading comprehension levels, also, there was no statistically significant relationship between gender and reading comprehension and family income levels significantly impacted student's reading abilities.

Keywords: educational management, demography, reading comprehension level, intervention program, Philippines

ⁱ Correspondence: giediolarodriguez@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is a necessary skill for academic achievement, but it can be affected by several global issues. Many students lack access to quality education due to poverty, conflict, and a lack of resources. Additionally, language barriers can present a significant challenge for learners who do not have strong proficiency in the language of instruction. Inadequate teaching and a lack of reading materials can also negatively impact reading comprehension levels. Overall, these global issues highlight the need for increased support and resources to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to develop strong reading comprehension skills (Banditvilai, 2020; Ghaith & El-Sanyoura, 2019; Subaidi & Aziz, 2020).

Additionally, for acquiring and continuously developing information. This process involves the dynamic interaction between the reader and the text, aiming to identify, interpret, and evaluate ideas. Without proficient reading skills, students cannot expect success, as reading entails interactive processes where knowledge is utilized to build meaning (Ditona & Rico, 2021).

On the other hand, reading comprehension involves decoding and understanding written words (Arnold, 2020; Tadesse, 2017; Yusmalinda & Astuti, 2020). Readers not only absorb information from the text, but they also contribute their own experiences and prior knowledge to help interpret it. Reading goes beyond word decoding; comprehension is about understanding and grasping the written text's meaning.

Similarly, PISA results indicate that the Philippines ranks lowest in reading comprehension among 79 participating countries, signifying challenges for Filipino students. Also, the DepEd report demonstrates weaknesses in interpreting literal meanings, identifying primary themes, and connecting nearby information elements (DepEd, 2019).

Given the current "New Normal" in education, characterized by modular distance learning and widespread modular instance learning (MDL), mastering reading comprehension is crucial for effective SLM/SSLM response. Unawareness of the methodology risks missing essential points in the text.

Moreover, identified Grade 7 learners at General Santos City National High School struggle with poor reading comprehension, impacting academic performance, understanding of texts, grades, and eroding confidence. Reading comprehension issues impede critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, both of which are necessary for success in higher education and the workforce.

Within this context, the researcher aims to gauge Grade 7 students' reading comprehension levels at General Santos City National High School concerning their demographic profiles. The drawn results will serve as the foundation for a tailored intervention program beneficial in the coming years.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study drew its foundation from Gaffney and Anderson's (2000) Schema Theory, a seminal influence on reading models and research, particularly in the realms of reading comprehension and learning. According to the notion, text comprehension is an interactive process that involves both the reader's prior knowledge and the text. Kitao (1990) concurs, describing schema theory as an interaction between the reader's knowledge and the text, resulting in comprehension. It signifies a mental structure of preconceived ideas, representing facets of the world, or a system organizing and perceiving new information.

Furthermore, it encompasses a model explaining processes during language production and comprehension, elucidating how the mind processes related ideas, particularly semantic or verbal concepts. This model's merit lies in capturing both knowledge representation and processing. The study employs variables related to respondent demographics, exploring their impact on learning or reading levels through a schematic connection resembling schema theory, serving as the study's primary model. Additionally, support is derived from LaBerge & Samuels' (1974) Theory of Reading Comprehension, which underscores the development of automatic and fluent reading skills as a primary educational objective for elementary students. Fluent reading, involving speed, accuracy, and expression, contributes to better comprehension, with effective word-recognition abilities forming the foundation for reading fluency and text comprehension.

Moreover, the Bottom-Up Model proposed by Gough (1972) posits that reading is a process yielding meaning, emphasizing the written or printed text and progressing sequentially from letter to sound to word to meaning. This model highlights the importance of decoding in the reading process.

Similarly, the Top-Down Model by Goodman & Smith (1967) contends that reading is motivated by meaning and moves from whole to part. It stresses the reader's role in providing meaning to the text by emphasizing the selection of key clues based on prior experiences and linguistic competence.

Readers are not limited to the letters in front of them as their sole source of information under this model.

3. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. It was represented by the two boxes. The upper box provides the demographic profile of Grade 7 Students and introduces a set of crucial demographic attributes typically examined concerning Grade 7 students, including their age distribution, gender composition, and the economic backgrounds of their families based on monthly income. Moreover, the diamond shape unveils the proposed intervention program meticulously designed in response to the

study's findings. Reading intervention programs will act as the linchpin for nurturing proficient young readers (Baba & Affendi, 2020)

Additionally, the lower box provided a valuable snapshot of Grade 7 learners' reading comprehension progression, offering insights into their evolving abilities. This multifaceted process of comprehension not only equips them with the skills to interpret written material but also serves as the gateway to a world of knowledge and understanding this multifaceted process of comprehension not only equips them with the skills to interpret written material but also serves as the gateway to a world of knowledge and understanding. As these young learners advance through the frustration, instructional, and independent stages, they not only master language but also develop the tools to unlock the boundless opportunities that literacy affords, ensuring they are well-prepared to communicate effectively, think critically, and contribute to the collective pool of human wisdom (Accardo & Finnegan, 2019).

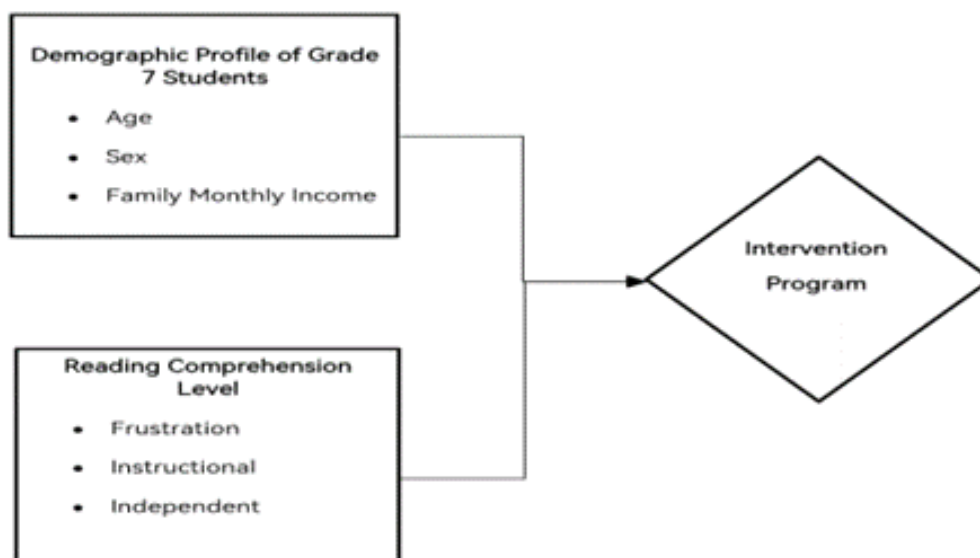


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

4. Research Objectives

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the significance of the relationship between the demographic profile and reading comprehension levels of the Grade 7 students at General Santos City National High School which were used as a basis for an intervention program in the school year 2021-2022.

Specifically, the researcher sought answers to the following objectives:

- 1) To determine the demographic profile of students:
 - 1.1 age,
 - 1.2 sex,
 - 1.3 family monthly income.
- 2) To determine the level of reading comprehension of Grade 7 Students in terms of:
 - 2.1 frustration,

2.2 instructional,

2.3 independent.

- 3) To determine the significant relationship between the demographic profile and the reading comprehension levels of Grade 7 students.
- 4) To determine the reading intervention program that can be proposed based on the findings of the study.

4.1 Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the demographic profile and reading comprehension levels of Grade 7 students.

5. Method

This study utilized a quantitative research approach employing a descriptive-correlation research design. The quantitative research design seeks to provide static snapshots of situations and establish relationships between variables, with a particular emphasis on the demographic profile and reading comprehension level in this study (McBurney & White, 2019). As articulated by the authors, this approach involves systematically investigating social phenomena using statistical or numerical data.

Additionally, McBurney and White (2019) emphasized the significance of quantitative research methods, highlighting their precision and measurability. They underscored the foundational role of statistical analysis in revealing patterns, trends, and associations within the data. Renowned scholars like Creswell (2014) and Bryman (2016) have further stressed the versatility of quantitative approaches in generating empirical evidence and contributing to a deeper understanding of complex phenomena.

Quantitative research methods, among the oldest scientific techniques, trace their roots to ancient Greek philosophers who observed and sought to explain the world qualitatively. This approach involves a variety of techniques for the systematic investigation of social phenomena using statistical or numerical data. Quantitative research relies on measurement, assuming that the studied phenomena can be quantified, to examine data for patterns, connections, and validating measurements (Watson, 2015).

Conversely, a correlational study examines relationships between two or more variables without experimental intervention. This non-experimental research method measures variables and evaluates their statistical relationship without external interference (Seeram, 2019).

Moreover, the use of a descriptive-correlation research design aligns with the methodology suggested by Creswell & Plano Clark (2017), advocating for a comprehensive exploration of relationships and patterns through a combination of descriptive and correlational methods. This combination enables both depicting the current state of affairs and identifying connections between variables.

Thus, the study aimed to determine the reading comprehension of Grade 7 students at General Santos City National High School during the S.Y. 2021-2022 as a basis for formulating a proposed reading intervention program.

This study took place at General Santos City National High School, a prominent public institution in Region 12 situated at Rizal St., Calumpang, General Santos City. This institution has a substantial enrollment of 10,539 students, evenly distributed between 5,064 male and 5,475 female students. The school serves students from junior high to senior high school. It serves a diverse student population from neighboring barangays, fostering an inclusive atmosphere. As a mega or large institution, it is supported and mentored by a dedicated team of 480 faculty and staff committed to delivering quality education.

General Santos City National High School has a distinguished reputation as a center of excellence, emphasizing its effectiveness in education. The overarching vision aims to shape students into God-fearing, globally competitive, and responsible citizens. This vision is administered by competent mentors collaborating with cooperative and peace-loving stakeholders. The classrooms are well-furnished and structured, creating a conducive and comfortable learning environment. The commitment to providing a well-equipped learning space underscores the school's dedication to the holistic development of its students.

5.1 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher collected data based on the book of Igwenagu (2016) entitled "Fundamentals of Research Methodology and Data Collection". The researcher followed the following steps. First, decide what needs to be collected. Second, decide how long data collection will take. Third, decide on the data collection strategy. Fourth, gather data, analyze the data, and then apply the conclusion

Before conducting the study, the researcher asked for permission from the Ethics Research Committee (ERC) to ensure that the studies were conducted ethically. Once the committee approved the study, the researcher asked permission from the Dean and the Schools Division Superintendent, District Supervisor, the principal of General Santos City National High School, and Grade 7 Curriculum Heads to access the respondents, to conduct the study. After obtaining the necessary permissions, the researcher requests participation from individuals willing to participate in the study, providing them with an Informed Consent Form. It was crucial that participants understood the study and voluntarily consented to participate. Once participants have given their approval and consent, the respondents will be given a survey questionnaire. After the respondents answered the comprehension test, the researcher gathered, tabulated, and analyzed it.

5.2 Statistical Tool

The data gathered were presented, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted.

Frequency Count and Percentage Distribution were used to describe the demographic profile and level of reading comprehension of Grade 7 students.

Mean was used to determine the reading comprehension and the demographic profile of the Grade 7 students to answer objectives 1, 2, and 3.

Pearson r was utilized to determine the relationship between reading comprehension and the demographic profile of Grade 7 students. Utilizing this tool was crucial to attain the objective 3 of this study.

A t -test was used to compare the two groups' means. This is frequently used in hypothesis testing to determine whether a process or treatment affects the population of interest. Utilizing this tool was crucial to attain objective 3.

6. Results

Presented in this were the data and analysis of findings based on the data collated from the research instruments used in the study to determine the significance of the relationship between the demographic profile and reading comprehension of Grade 7 students in General Santos City National High School. Interpretations of results were engaged in the following subheadings: demographic profile of Grade 7 students; level of reading comprehension of Grade 7 students; significance of the relationship between the demographic profile and reading comprehension of Grade 7 students; and proposed intervention program.

6.1 Demographic Profile of Grade 7 Students

Table 2 offered a comprehensive insight into the demographic profile of Grade 7 students, shedding light on their age, gender, and family monthly income. Among the students, a significant majority, 63%, were below the age of 12, while 37% were aged 13 and above. This age distribution highlighted the prevalence of younger students within the Grade 7 cohort. The sex distribution among Grade 7 students was slightly skewed, with 57% female and 43% male. This gender disparity was a noteworthy aspect of the demographic composition.

Furthermore, the data revealed the diversity in family monthly income. A substantial proportion of families, 29%, fell within the income range of Php 5,001.00 to 10,000.00, indicating a significant portion of Grade 7 students came from households within this income bracket. Additionally, 20% of students' families had a monthly income below Php 5,000.00, while another 20% fell within the range of Php 10,001.00 to 20,000.00. The income brackets of Php 20,001.00 to 30,000.00 and Php 30,001.00 and above were represented by 22% and 9% of the student population, respectively.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Grade 7 Students

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage
	n=259	
Age		
Below 12 y/o	163	63
13 y/o and Above	96	37
TOTAL	259	100
Sex		
Male	112	43
Female	147	57
TOTAL	259	100
Family Monthly Income		
Below Php 5,000.00	51	20
Php 5,001.00 –10,000.00	75	29
Php 10,001.00 –20,000.00	53	20
Php 20,001.00 –30,000.00	57	22
Php 30,001.00 and Above	23	9
TOTAL	259	100

6.2 The Level of Reading Comprehension of Grade 7 Students

Table 3 provides a thorough overview of Grade 7 students' levels of competence in reading comprehension. The proficiency levels are categorized into three groups: Frustration, Instructional, and Independent. The data illustrates the diverse reading abilities within this student cohort. A majority, comprising 61%, falls into the "Frustration" category, signifying significant challenges in understanding written texts. This highlights the importance of focused interventions to improve their reading abilities and comprehension.

In the "Instructional" category, 24% of students are placed, emphasizing their need for structured guidance and instruction to improve reading comprehension. This group is at a stage where tailored teaching methods can effectively address gaps in their reading skills. Conversely, the "Independent" category comprises 15% of students showcasing a high level of reading proficiency. These students demonstrate the ability to comprehend texts independently, indicating a solid foundation in reading comprehension.

Table 3: Level of Reading Comprehension of Grade 7 Students

Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage
	n=259	
Frustration	157	61
Instructional	63	24
Independent	39	15
TOTAL	259	100

6.3 Significant Relationship in Reading Comprehension Level of Grade 7 Learners when Analyzed According to Their Profile

Table 4 provided an insightful analysis of the relationship between several variables, including Age, Sex, and Family Monthly Income, and their impact on the reading comprehension of Grade 7 students.

Concerning age, the data revealed a significant association. The calculated t-value of 2.73 exceeded the critical tabular value of 1.974 at a significance level of 0.05. This finding suggested that a student's age was significantly related to their reading comprehension levels, indicating that older students had varying reading abilities compared to younger peers. Conversely, the data concerning sex indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between gender and reading comprehension among Grade 7 students. The calculated t-value of 1.127 fell below the critical tabular value of 1.974, signifying that gender did not significantly influence reading comprehension within this group. Lastly, the data illustrated that Family Monthly Income bore a significant relationship with reading comprehension. The calculated t-value of 0.012, although small, was below the critical tabular value of 1.974, indicating that family income levels not significantly impact a student's reading abilities.

Table 4: Significance of the Relationship between Age and Reading Comprehension of Grade 7 Students

Variables	Df	rxy value		Decision	Analysis
		n=259			
		Computed	Tabular		
Age	t 257	2.73	1.974	reject	significant
Sex	t 257	1.127	1.974	accept	not significant
Family Monthly Income	f 10	0.012	0.138	accept	not significant

7. Discussion

7.1 The Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The data provides a comprehensive snapshot of the demographic composition of Grade 7 students. A majority, 63%, are below 12 years old, emphasizing the prevalence of younger students. The gender distribution slightly skews, with 57% female and 43% male. Family monthly income exhibits significant variation, with 29% falling between Php 5,001.00 to 10,000.00, 20% below Php 5,000.00, and another 20% between Php 10,001.00 to 20,000.00. The remaining students span income brackets, with 22% at Php 20,001.00 to 30,000.00 and 9% at Php 30,001.00 and above. This data offers insights into Grade 7 demographics, informing educational planning and interventions.

Education in the Philippines states that students graduating from the elementary level automatically enroll in junior high, which covers four years from grades 7 to 10, ages 12 to 16. This level is now compulsory and free to all students attending public schools. There are two main types of high school: the [general secondary school](#), which enrolls more than 90 percent of all junior high school students, and the vocational secondary school (DO No. 3, s. 2018; Haerazi & Irawan, 2020).

Similarly, there are also science secondary schools for students who have demonstrated a particular gift in science at the primary level as well as special secondary schools and special curricular programs. Admission to public school is automatic for those who have completed six years of elementary school. Some private secondary schools have competitive entrance requirements based on an entrance examination. Entrance to science schools, art schools, and schools with special curricular programs is also by competitive examination sometimes including interviews and auditions.

This assumption parallels the Philippine Statistics Authority (2019), those females outnumbered males in enrollment. In its report in 2017, 26.3 million kids were enrolled in kindergarten, elementary, junior, and senior high schools in public and private schools, state universities and colleges, and local universities and colleges, from which, only 42.7% of them are males, and 57.3% are females. Consequently, enrollees in the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses reached 2.27 million in 2016. Females comprise 53.3% of the total number of enrollees, while male enrollees comprise 46.9% of it.

Additionally, the idea of Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Director-General General Ernesto Pernia (2018) that a family of five would need a Php42,000 monthly income to have a more decent life, at least to live above the poverty line. Furthermore, he added that if two family members are earning Php21,000 each month, then, they are tax-exempt as per the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law.

Further, Examining the influence of socioeconomic status, the research underscores the pivotal role of factors like family income, parental education, and occupation in shaping a student's ability to comprehend written material. The importance of understanding the demographic profile emerges as a critical element in developing targeted interventions aimed at narrowing the achievement gap (August & Shanahan, 2006; Sirin, 2005; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002).

7.2 The Reading Comprehension Level of Grade 7 Learners

The data provided a thorough overview of Grade 7 students' reading comprehension levels, classifying them into three proficiency categories: Frustration, Instructional, and Independent. The majority, constituting 61%, faced significant challenges in understanding written texts, placing them in the "Frustration" category. This highlights the need for targeted interventions to enhance their reading skills. Within the "Instructional" category, 24% of students required structured guidance for improved

comprehension, while 15% fell into the "Independent" category, showcasing a high proficiency in reading and the ability to comprehend texts autonomously.

This observation aligns with O'Connor *et al.*'s (2019) study, emphasizing that reading comprehension can be demanding, especially with unfamiliar, technical, or complex material. Successful reading comprehension involves actively constructing a situation representation model, creating a coherent mental representation of the text. Without comprehension, reading becomes mere repetition of sounds, writing turns into copying, and the essence of formal schooling worldwide lies in making sense of printed words and engaging in shared texts with interpretive, constructive, and critical thinking.

7.3 Significance Relationship in Reading Comprehension Level of Grade 7 Learners when Analyze According to the Profile

The data unveiled a significant correlation between age and reading comprehension, indicating that older students exhibit distinct reading abilities compared to their younger counterparts. Conversely, gender (sex) did not display a statistically significant relationship with reading comprehension within this student cohort. Notably, Family Monthly Income emerged as a significant factor influencing reading abilities, underscoring the impact of economic considerations.

This finding aligns with Banditvilai's (2020) research, illustrating that students tend to enhance their reading comprehension as they progress through their academic years. This improvement is attributed to factors such as increased exposure to diverse texts, the development of a broader vocabulary, and the cultivation of critical thinking and analytical skills. The scaffolding of reading instruction received at higher grade levels also plays a crucial role in fostering reading comprehension growth. Emphasizing equal opportunities for all students, irrespective of gender, becomes pivotal for educators aiming to nurture robust reading skills. Furthermore, the study highlights the challenge posed by lower family income, often linked to restricted access to educational resources, hindering a student's reading development. Conversely, students from higher-income families typically enjoy more support and access to enriching reading experiences.

8. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made: The age of the respondents is not a contributory factor in determining the reading comprehension level of the Grade 7 students at General Santos National High School as they almost have the same reading comprehension level regardless of their age. In this study, some students perform better in reading comprehension, and yet they are still in their pre-teenage years. On the contrary, there are also those who perform better in their teenage years.

However, in this study, their sex and family monthly income were identified as determinants in classifying their reading comprehension level as female respondents do slightly better than their male counterparts. Their family monthly income also matters because the findings of this study reveal that as their parents' monthly income becomes

higher, there is a greater tendency for their reading comprehension level also become higher, especially for those whose monthly income is above the poverty line.

To bridge these gaps and ensure equal opportunities for all students, implementing targeted reading interventions becomes imperative. By providing tailored support and resources, educators can address specific needs related to gender and family income factors, thereby enhancing the overall reading comprehension skills of students. Reading interventions can take various forms, including the proposed program, entitled, I AM A READER PROGRAM, which will cater to the diverse needs and interests of students. This proactive approach can contribute to fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment, ultimately promoting academic success for all students, irrespective of their gender or family income.

9. Recommendations

The study's findings led to the following recommendations:

The Department of Education may consider using this as a basis for potential budget allocation for additional reading materials and exploring the development of a livelihood program to uplift the socio-economic status of families below the poverty line. School Division Superintendent may use the result of the study to plan and implement a reading program that most frustration-level students can access. The findings of this research would be the basis for them to initiate webinars that will improve the teachers' potential, skills, techniques, and strategies for the progress of students' reading comprehension levels. School heads may use the result of this study as a guide for developing a definite program that will help enhance the reading comprehension level of learners.

Furthermore, teachers, parents, and school administrators should collaborate to assist students who struggle with reading comprehension. They should encourage and inspire the students to develop a love of reading. In the way that teachers can incorporate reading in all the subject areas, parents will have remedial reading at home during their free time to enhance the reading skills of the students.

Lastly, similar studies may be conducted in other schools to further validate the reliability of its findings and the sustainability of its implementation.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Charity B. Laroza, Teacher I. Academic Education: Master of Arts in Education major in English. Research interests: teaching and learning.

Analiza T. Amada, EdD, LPT, Dean, College of Teacher Education, Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges, Academic Education: Doctor of Education major in English. Research interests: qualitative studies.

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