

# Efficacy of Peer-Assisted Reading Program in Improving Students' Reading Comprehension Level

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## Abstract

This research investigates the effectiveness of the Peer-Assisted Reading Program (PARP) in improving reading comprehension for seventh-grade students. Initially, a pre-test was administered, and 65.79% of the students were categorized in the “Frustrational” reading level and had an average score of 10.42 (52.11%), unfortunately indicating comprehension difficulty. After the intervention, the post-test results indicated an average of 13.76 (68.82%), with 68.42% at the “Instructional” reading level and 18.42% at the “Independent” comprehension level. A paired sample t-test was conducted and indicated a statistically significant difference ( $t = 6.11$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and indicated a large effect size (0.991). Students provided mixed impressions of the program, where they identified benefits such as improved articulation of analysis and increased motivation levels of reading because of the reading appeal and shortcomings of being too long or misalignment with reading and questions and assessment. This information indicates a necessity for further individualized instructional planning, using greater attention to building individualized and strategic instructional planning for all learners to support reading comprehension.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension, grade 7, PISA, reading program, peer-tutoring

## 1. Introduction

Reading is one of the macro skills that students must develop to achieve a better learning experience. Reading comprehension should not be a problem in high school since learning to read starts in elementary school. However, in the Philippine context, reading comprehension is still considered one of the problems most teachers in the academe face, including in high school. This problem affects the students' teaching and learning process, especially during the individual

or group tasks assigned to them. Teachers in the 21st century provide engaging activities that enhance students' critical thinking skills, wherein reading comprehension is one of the means to a better understanding of the instructions. Thus, students must develop their reading comprehension to improve engagement and participation.

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018 revealed that Filipino students have poor reading comprehension,

ranking the lowest among the 79 participating countries (Aquino & Tingson, 2021). It is noteworthy that reading comprehension affects the student's academic performance. Students with reading comprehension levels below their grade level faced increased risks of academic challenges and possible dropouts (Ocampo, 2023). Furthermore, socioeconomic problems, insufficient access to quality educational resources, and traditional pedagogical practices that do not engage students in the learning process are also seen as problems that affect the development of students' reading comprehension (Idulog et al., 2023). Addressing these problems through a more engaging and new teaching style can help mitigate the problems in reading comprehension.

Over time, many studies have supported the effectiveness of peer-assisted learning strategies in improving students learning. Teachers can apply this strategy to enhance students' reading comprehension levels. Peer-assisted learning strategies promote a cooperative learning environment, which helps one another attain one goal in reading (Fitriani & Tarwana, 2020). The researcher utilized PALS as the primary strategy in the Peer Assisted Reading Program, which was implemented in the school year 2024-2025 in the private secondary school in the Philippines, wherein students are encouraged to take on the role of both tutor and tutee to foster a sense of responsibility which enhances learning engagement (Hasnani & Ismail, 2020). The strategy revealed positive results in improving reading comprehension levels and positive motivation from their peers. In addition, peer-assisted learning strategies also help to quickly identify the students' different learning needs and preferred learning styles; thus, providing them with peers as their tutor can improve their morale in reading (Suson et al., 2020).

The Peer Assisted Reading Program is a program that aims to improve students' reading comprehension levels through a peer-assisted learning strategy. The program was created due to the recent results of the CEM Reading Test for grade 7 students and in the context of one of the private school, the CEM Reading Test Result revealed that 32.88% of students were still classified as challenged readers ranging from very poor reading comprehension level to low average reading comprehension level (Astrero et al., 2024). The result recommends that a reading intervention program must be developed to cater

to the needs of these identified challenged readers.

The Peer Assisted Learning Strategy, which the researcher used as the primary strategy for the program, can be credited with learning theories such as Vygotsky's social development theory, which suggests that learning occurs with the social context and the needs of the students, thus identifying the needs of the tutees can help them learn better (Yawiloeng, 2021). In addition, the peer interaction between the tutee and the tutor helps them to quickly activate schema, which is essential in reading comprehension (Idulog et al., 2023). Furthermore, it is also asserted that when students are engaged in peer scaffolding to identify the answer during the reading program, it enhances their reading comprehension and motivates them to learn (Yigit & Durukan, 2023). Thus, providing learning strategies that support one another, like peer tutoring or peer-assisted learning strategies, shows positive results in increasing engagement in the learning process, which is applicable in improving the reading comprehension levels of the participants.

Recent studies indicate a problem in reading comprehension among Filipino students, which was revealed in the PISA 2018 result and CEM Reading Test. Thus, the results suggest a targeted intervention program to mitigate this problem. While many studies support the effectiveness of peer-assisted learning strategies in improving learning, there is limited research on their implementation in the Philippine context, specifically in improving the reading comprehension level of students. This research gap calls for a further study on the use and effect of peer-assisted learning strategies through peer-assisted reading programs in improving the reading comprehension of the challenged grade 7 readers.

In conclusion, the teachers, administrators, and parents need to look for an intervention strategy to improve the reading comprehension level of the students. Reading comprehension is essential because it will help students learn better, which affects their academic success. The peer-assisted reading program, which was rooted in the peer-assisted learning strategies, is the proposed intervention program to improve the reading comprehension level of grade 7 students. The program allows the students to work collaboratively to answer the reading test, which promotes engagement and understanding of the text being read, that is essential to their academic

success.

### 1.1 Research Questions/Objectives

Thus, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the peer-assisted reading program, which was implemented in the academic year 2024-2025. This study particularly sought to answer the following research questions.

- 1) What was the reading comprehension level of the participants before they participated in the implementation of the Project PARP?
- 2) What was the reading comprehension level of the participants after they had participated in the implementation of Project PARP?
- 3) Is there a significant difference in the participant's reading comprehension level before and after implementing Project PARP?
- 4) What are the participants' perceptions on the strengths and weaknesses of using Project PARP to improve their reading comprehension?

### 1.2 Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>**– There is no significant difference between the participant's scores in the pre-test and post-test of reading comprehension level before and after the implementation of project PARP.

### 1.3 Proposed Intervention, Innovation, or Strategy

Project PARP (Peer-assisted Reading Program) is a targeted reading intervention program that aims to improve the reading comprehension level of the students. This classroom-based reading intervention program used various reading materials and activities, including the reading material from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI), Strategies to Achieve Reading Success (STARS) Series C, and teacher-made reading activities. These materials are used to promote love for reading to the students. The primary strategy utilized in this program is anchored to the plan developed by Hasnani & Ismail (2020), the peer-assisted learning strategy or PALS. This strategy suits the students' needs since most of them are challenged readers and identified to be better readers if they have company. Each student is paired with their trusted classmates inside the classroom to avoid awkwardness and be judgment-free while conducting the reading program.

Furthermore, the program is based on Lev Vygotsky's social development theory, which states that children's cognitive development and learning ability may be influenced and mediated by social interaction. Thus, peer tutoring as a reading intervention strategy can enhance student reading comprehension levels. Engaging students in tasks with their peers can improve their social interaction skills and academic performance.

**Table 1.** Project PARP Phases of Implementation

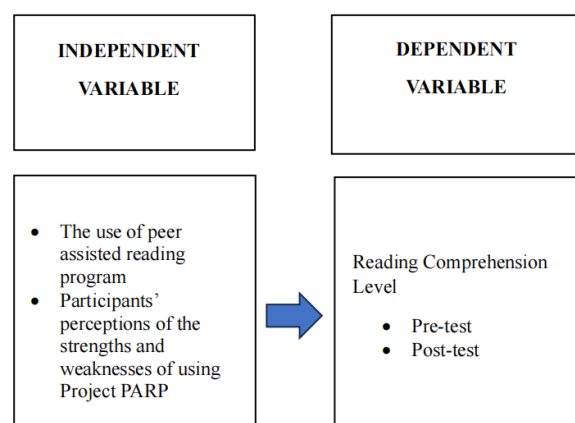
Phases of Implementation	Goals and Objectives	Activities or Strategies	Resources Needed	Time Frame
<b>Phase 1: Diagnostic Test</b>	1. To identify the reading comprehension level of the participants using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The researcher printed the necessary materials for the diagnostic test, including the Phil-IRI Screening Test for Grade 7 and ZipGrade answer sheets.</li> <li>✓ The researcher conducted the diagnostic test inside the classroom.</li> <li>✓ The researcher recorded the data and identified the reading comprehension level of the participants.</li> </ul>	PHIL-IRI Screening Test for Grade 7	July 26, 2024

<b>Phase 2: Orientation</b>	2. To give orientation on the objectives, scope, rationale, and process of conducting Peer-Assisted Reading Program	✓ The teacher/researcher oriented the tutors and tutees on the process, rationale, scope, and objectives of the Peer-Assisted Reading Program.	PHIL-IRI Assessment Questionnaire Answer Sheet Sample	July 26, 2024
<b>Phase 3: Implementation Proper</b> <i>Actual Implementation of Project PARP (Peer Assisted Reading Program)</i>	3. To increase reading comprehension of students through peer tutoring.	✓ The researcher conducted a classroom-based reading program every Friday in their English classes. ✓ The teacher/researcher paired each student in the class with their trusted peers. ✓ The researcher with the lowest scores can choose from the high-scoring students as their peer tutors.	PHIL-IRI Reading Materials Strategies To Achieve Reading Success (STARS) Series C Teacher made reading Materials.	August 14, 2024 – February 21, 2024
<b>Phase 4: Post Implementation</b> <i>Post Test</i>	4. To evaluate the improvement of students reading comprehension.	✓ The teacher-researcher conducted a post-test evaluation to evaluate the participant's progress in the study.	PHIL-IRI Reading Post Test for Grade 7	February 28, 2025
<b>Phase 5: Program Evaluation</b>	5. To evaluate the effectiveness of YEARS-RP	✓ Conduct evaluation through interview to the participants.	Interview Questions Cellphone as recording device.	March 3, 2025

Table 1 shows the phases of the proposed Peer-assisted Reading Program. There are five (5) phases to the program's implementation. Phase 1 is the selection of the target tutees and tutors. In this stage, English teachers conducted a reading diagnostic test to identify the students' reading comprehension in the different content areas. Phase 2 will be the program orientation, which aims to inform the tutors and tutees about the program's objectives. Phase 3 will be the actual implementation of the program; this phase aims to improve the student's reading comprehension. Phase 4, the post-test, this stage will determine whether the students improve their reading comprehension through the peer-assisted reading program. Lastly, in phase 5, the participants involved in the program evaluated the program's effectiveness, strengths, and

weaknesses.

#### 1.4 Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1.** Research Paradigm

This framework illustrates the relationship between the study's independent variable (IV) and the dependent variable (DV). The frameworks suggest a causal relationship between peer-assisted reading programs and improving the participants' reading comprehension levels. In the dependent variable, the researcher will measure the participants' reading comprehension levels through the pre-test and post-test. In addition, the researcher also employs a semi-structured interview questionnaire to evaluate the participants' perception of the strengths and weakness of using Project PARP in improving their reading comprehension level.

## 2. Review of Related Literatures and Studies

This chapter reviews various studies and literatures that supports, defines and gives further information in evaluating the peer-assisted reading program through peer-assisted learning strategies. It will also present different background on the importance of reading comprehension to the academic performance of the learners.

### 2.1 *Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI)*

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is designed by the Department of Education (DepEd) to evaluate the reading proficiency of Filipino students. This material is intended critically to identify who needs to undergo a reading intervention program, which is essential to cater to the student's needs in reading to improve their academic performance. Various studies reveal the effectiveness, application, and educational challenges related to the reading proficiency of Filipino learners.

Phil-IRI is a classroom-based assessment tool that measures the student's reading comprehension level. This classroom-based assessment tool is crafted to provide the teachers with a better understanding of the learners' reading proficiency by facilitating classroom instructions to address the student's needs (Villalva, 2023). In addition, differentiated instruction and differentiated lesson plans are challenging tasks for teachers to cater to the diverse learning styles and the needs of the students; in terms of reading proficiency level, the Phil-IRI assessment tool is proposed to cater to these needs.

The effectiveness of Phil-IRI can be evaluated through the different reading strategies. Bernardo and Mante-Estacio (2023) highlight the correlation between metacognitive strategies and

students' reading proficiency. It is claimed that when students use metacognitive strategies, they will be more engaged in discovering new ideas through reading. Furthermore, metacognitive awareness can significantly improve the student's reading skills, essential in interpreting Phil-IRI results. The relationship of metacognitive awareness in reading proficiency improves comprehension and critical skills in students (Bernardo et al., 2021).

Despite this proposed reading assessment tool, the Department of Education should note that there is still a problem with instructions and resources to improve the reading abilities of Filipino students. Factors that include limited access to quality resources and socioeconomic status affect the literacy development of the students (Idulog et al., 2023). This common problem is supported by different researches, which suggest that there must be a program that promotes early literacy that is incorporated into the different teaching approaches to promote the culture of reading (Librea et al., 2023). This claim is valid with the observation of low reading proficiency in elementary schools across the Philippines, which suggests the creation of a targeted reading intervention that promotes the love for reading at an early age.

Explicit instruction is one of the most important reading strategies in most studies exploring remediation and improving reading proficiency. The study conducted by Gatcho and Hajan (2022) revealed that explicit instruction helps student significantly improve their reading performance. This study is anchored to the main goal of the Phil-IRI, which is to improve students' reading proficiency through instructional intervention.

In conclusion, the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) plays a vital role in improving the reading proficiency of Filipino students; it is also considered a standardized reading assessment to evaluate the students' reading proficiency. Through the review of different studies about reading strategies incorporating Phil-IRI, it is evident that using a different approach, which includes differentiated instruction and explicit instruction, is important in enhancing the reading capabilities of the learners.

### 2.2 *Science Research Associates (SRA) Reading Laboratory*

The Science Research Associates Reading Laboratory is one of the tools available to foster



practical reading skills, particularly for those with difficulty reading. The review of this literature deals with the contribution of the SRA Reading Laboratory as appropriate for different reading strategy frameworks based on modern literature. SRA Reading Laboratory is a structured reading training method that places great importance on different learning strategies. Dhanarattigannon states, as evidence, that including much reading into the SRA materials can significantly improve the ability of struggling learners in reading and later on enhance reading and comprehension (Dhanarattigannon, 2022). It supports the statement made by Sobeck that SRA possesses a leveled reading program based on research on reading comprehension, phonics, vocabulary, and fluency (Sobeck, 2016).

SRA Reading Laboratory contains systematic text with grades in various abilities, allowing the teacher to give appropriate instruction without much preparation time (Sobeck, 2016). The user-friendly nature of SRA materials supports learners and teachers in using the strategy. Texts are partitioned into levels so students can gradually engage with and work through more difficult texts within a support framework (Sobeck, 2016). It integrates a diverse student demographic's linguistic and cognitive need and promotes inclusivity in literacy learning. In addition, the learners can also work and choose to do the activity alone or with peers. The importance of peer assistance is still appropriate, especially for those with questions while reading the passage. However, the SRA reading laboratory is designed to engage the students with different reading materials to increase the reading competency level of the target learners.

In conclusion, the Reading Laboratory is one of the many proper interventions to direct instruction in reading at the various levels of individual development in learners; this can hardly be interpreted to support claims for reading intervention effectiveness. SRA builds the reading environment for student success by combining text idioms with leveled reading selection and varied instructional strategies. Research findings reveal the use of SRA in the remediation of reading problems and in some empirical research that fully describes each particular strategy.

### 2.3 Synthesis

This review of the related literature (RRL) effectively underscores the Philippine Informal

Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and the Science Research Associates (SRA) Reading Laboratory as tools to measure and cultivate reading skill. The Phil-IRI is described as a vital tool in improving Filipino students' reading comprehension level, it is the department of education (DepEd) initiative systemically designed to both identify and provide intervention for reading skill gaps. The literature indicates metacognitive strategies and explicit teaching are key to supporting the Phil-IRI process. The SRA Reading Laboratory is constructed as a systematic process that utilizes leveled reading materials and strategies customized to support readers who struggle. Nevertheless, the review also has critical omissions. Overall, there is an absence of deep analysis of the practical realities of implementing Phil-IRI into practice, aside from the methodological effort and socioeconomic challenges noted. In addition, the review would benefit from reviewing research that more deeply examines the longer-term effects of the SRA Reading Laboratory, and how its use might be modified to fit into the current digital learning era. Thirdly, there is a fair number of limited comparisons between both tools, that reflects their strengths, weaknesses, and fit for learner profiles and educational settings. Lastly, an extended exploration of the tool integration with modern theories around reading and technology-enabled learning would add to the RRL.

## 3. Methodology

This chapter presents the method used in this study. Specifically, the following are included: research design, sampling design, the role of the researcher, data sources, data gathering procedure, instruments, data analysis, ethical considerations.

### 3.1 Research Design

This study is categorized as action research, whose primary aim is to determine the effects of the reading intervention program (Project PARP – Peer-assisted Reading Program) on the reading performance of the grade 7 students in the University of La Salette, Incorporated High School. A quasi-experimental research design was utilized particularly the pre-test and post-test control group designs. The researcher used a quasi-experimental research design to evaluate the intervention's effect on students' reading comprehension. A quasi-experimental research design allows the researcher to determine the

improvement of the pre-test and post-test scores of the participants and assess the effects of the proposed reading intervention program.

Furthermore, the researcher also used qualitative research design, particularly the phenomenological approach. This approach is particularly suited to this study to explore and determine the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants in the strengths and weaknesses of the peer-assisted reading program. Phenomenology is a broad field of study. In this research methodology, the researcher seeks to collect data that reveals how the participants experience and how they feel about it. This concept acknowledges that there is no one objective reality; instead, everyone perceives things differently (5 qualitative research designs and research methods, 2021).

### 3.2 Study Site and Participants

The research was done at a private junior high school in Santiago City. This study involves 37 grade 7 students as the participants. They were chosen because they were new to the institution and had different backgrounds regarding reading comprehension levels. Implementing the peer-assisted reading program is vital to improving their reading comprehension level, most especially based on the pre-test results. Many of them are identified as Frustrated readers. Thus, the program should be tested in this group.

### 3.3 Validation of the Instruments

#### 3.3.1 Pre-test & Post-test Instruments

The researchers utilized the Phil-IRI screening assessment tool to identify the reading comprehension level of the participants. Before implementing the pre-test, the researchers distributed the assessment tool to grade 7 students who did not participate in the program to assess the material's validity and reliability. The researchers used the Kuder & Richardson (KR20) test for internal consistency. Based on the tryout assessment result, the material's internal consistency is 0.71, which is translated as high internal consistency. The result indicated that the assessment tool is suited to the student's level. Furthermore, the grade 7 English teachers also validated the instrument for its face validity and the material's difficulty level.

#### 3.3.2 Semi-Structure Interview Instrument

The researchers crafted semi-structured interview questions to reveal the student's

perception of the program's implementation. They sought three validators to validate the connection of the probe questions to the research question to be answered. Based on the recommendations provided by the validators, the researchers revised the questions. After the validation process, the researchers implemented a tryout run to test the interview questions to see whether they could provide a theme connected to the researcher's objectives.

### 3.4 Instrument

#### 3.4.1 Pre-test/Diagnostic Test

Before beginning the intervention program, the researcher administered a pre-test to determine the participants' starting level of reading comprehension. The pre-test included the grade 7 reading screening exam from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) package. The Phil-IRI is a standardized reading assessment exam used to measure the reading comprehension abilities of Filipino students. The pre-test findings establish a baseline for the participants' reading comprehension ability.

#### 3.4.2 Post-Test

After implementing Project PARP, the researcher administered the post-test to measure the effect of the intervention program on the participant's reading comprehension levels. The post-test administered consisted of the same test administered in the pre-test. The researcher compared the post-test score with the pre-test score to determine the effectiveness of the peer-assisted reading program (Project PARP).

#### 3.4.3 Semi-Structure Interview Questions

The researchers employed semi-structured interview questions to gain the students' insights and personal experiences of the participants during the program. The open-ended interview questions allowed the participants to provide feedback on the reading intervention program's effectiveness, strengths, and weaknesses. The researcher analyzed the responses to the interview questions through thematic analysis to gain insights into the participants' perceptions of the proposed intervention. To ensure the validity of the interview questions, three experts, including the principal, the assistant to the principal, and the English coordinator, validated the semi-structured interview questions to confirm the connection of the interview questions to the research questions. The insights and suggestions provided by the validator were

applied to refine the questions.

### 3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The researchers implemented the data gathering procedure as follows:

#### *Before the Implementation*

- 1) The researchers sought the principal's approval to implement the peer-assisted reading program and conducted a study assessing its effect on the participants' reading comprehension levels.
- 2) The researchers implemented a pre-test to assess the reading comprehension level of the participants. Using the results, the researchers identified the program's tutors and tutees.
- 3) The researchers recorded the data to compare the differences between the pre-test and post-test to check the program's effect.
- 4) The researchers oriented the participants on the objectives and strategies for improving their reading experience.
- 5) The researchers assigned the participants to their most trusted peers to alleviate awkwardness during the program.

#### *Actual Implementation*

- 1) The researchers implemented the designed program for the peer-assisted reading program.
- 2) The researchers used the Strategies to Achieve Reading Success (STARS Series C) that Deborah Adcock and Joan Krensky developed. The program assessed 12 reading lessons, which included finding the main idea, recalling facts and details, understanding sequence, recognizing cause and effect, finding word meaning in context, drawing conclusions and making inferences, distinguishing between fact and opinion, identifying the author's purpose, interpreting figurative language, and distinguishing between real and make-believe.
- 3) During the program's actual implementation, the participants were paired with their most trusted peers to help them with the reading comprehension activity. However, the teacher gradually released the scaffold to develop the student's reading comprehension skills.
- 4) The researchers implemented the peer-assisted reading program procedure in the following stages:

**Table 2.** Stages of Reading Program

Stage 1	Total Peer-assisted Activity	In stage one (1) of the program, the students are engaged with their peers in answering the pre-reading activities, reading the text, and answering the reading comprehension assessment. The students share their answers with their peers and their answers in the reading comprehension test. This stage was applied in lessons one (1) through six (6).
Stage 2	Semi-Independent Reading Practice	Stage two (2) lessens the readers' peer assistance duration. The participants only engage in peer assistance during the pre-reading activities. However, during the formal reading assessments, the participants answer them independently. This stage was applied in lessons seven (7) to nine (9) of the programs.
Stage 3	Independent Reading Practice	The final stage of the reading program implemented the independent reading practice, where the participants independently answered the pre-reading activity and reading assessments. This stage was applied in lessons ten (10) to twelve (12).

- 5) After implementing the program, the researchers conducted a post-test assessment to identify the participants' improvement in reading comprehension.

#### *After the Implementation*

- 1) The researchers verified and recorded the students' scores in the pre-test and post-test.

- The scores were recorded and tabulated using Microsoft Excel and validated through the Jamovi version 2.6.13 application.
- 2) The participants evaluated the program by providing their insights. The researchers used a semi-structured interview question. The researchers transcribed the responses



and identified the themes based on their responses.

- 3) The researchers finalized the paper and ensured its completeness.
- 4) The researchers presented the findings' results and shared them with the community.

### 3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

$$\frac{\text{Number of correct answers}}{\text{Number of questions}} \times 100 = \% \text{ of Reading Comprehension}$$

**Table 3.** Reading Comprehension Level

Comprehension Score	Reading Comprehension Level
80-100%	Independent
59-79%	Instructional
58% and below	Frustrational

The researchers tallied the data using Microsoft Excel, which enabled statistical analysis of the findings. The researchers handled the participants' scores equitably to compute the frequency. This research used a paired sample t-

The researchers identified the participants' reading comprehension levels using the pre-test and post-test. Thus, the participants' scores were converted into percentages; they adopted the Phil-IRI reading comprehension computation and interpretation, as demonstrated below.

Equation 1. Reading Comprehension Formula

test to characterize significant differences between the pre-test and post-test procedures. The researcher used the Jamovi version 2.6.13 program to examine the study's data. To measure the effect of the peer-assisted reading program, the pre-test and post-test scores were compared using the derived t-statistics, p-value, and effect size (Cohen's d).

## 4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the outcome of the quantitative analysis of the research questions answers. The results are presented based on the questionnaire answered by the respondents.

### 4.1 Pre-test Score

**Table 4.** Participants Pre-test Scores and Reading Comprehension Level

Participants ID	Pre-test Score	Percentage	Reading Comprehension Level
17101	11	55	FRUSTRATIONAL
17102	11	55	FRUSTRATIONAL
17103	10	50	FRUSTRATIONAL
17104	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17105	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17106	11	55	FRUSTRATIONAL
17107	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17108	10	50	FRUSTRATIONAL
17109	7	35	FRUSTRATIONAL
17111	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17112	7	35	FRUSTRATIONAL
17113	9	45	FRUSTRATIONAL
17114	10	50	FRUSTRATIONAL
17115	7	35	FRUSTRATIONAL
17116	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17117	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17118	10	50	FRUSTRATIONAL

17119	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17120	9	45	FRUSTRATIONAL
17121	10	50	FRUSTRATIONAL
17123	11	55	FRUSTRATIONAL
17124	5	25	FRUSTRATIONAL
17125	2	10	FRUSTRATIONAL
17126	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17127	8	40	FRUSTRATIONAL
17129	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17130	13	65	INSTRUCTIONAL
17131	9	45	FRUSTRATIONAL
17132	6	30	FRUSTRATIONAL
17133	8	40	FRUSTRATIONAL
17135	10	50	FRUSTRATIONAL
17136	14	70	INSTRUCTIONAL
17138	7	35	FRUSTRATIONAL
17139	17	85	INDEPENDENT
17140	9	45	FRUSTRATIONAL
17141	9	45	FRUSTRATIONAL
17142	14	70	INSTRUCTIONAL
17143	9	45	FRUSTRATIONAL
MEAN	10.42105263	52.10526316	FRUSTRATIONAL

Table 4 shows the pre-test results and related reading comprehension levels of 38 participants identified by ZipGrade IDs. According to the result, several participants had difficulty comprehending the reading content. The pre-test scores, ranging from 2 to 17, are converted into percentages, whereby participants are classified into any of the three levels of reading comprehension, that is, "Frustrational," "Instructional," or "Independent."

The mean score of 10.42, or about 52.11%, corresponds to a majority of the participants with the level of reading comprehension classified as "Frustrational." This indicates that they scored below 60% on the pre-test. Hence, they have significant difficulties in understanding the reading material. Some other participants were at an "Instructional" level, meaning that with some help, they could comprehend the reading content.

Only a few participants achieved scores of 80% or

above: 17105, 17111, 17126, and 17139, indicating the "Independent" level, where they can show excellent skills in reading comprehension. A different approach integrating these language proficiencies can afford students the possibility of overcoming reading-related challenges (Lervag et al., 2017; Clemens et al., 2018). The results of the assessment, therefore, powerfully argue for a specific intervention to improve the reading skills of struggling participants. The overall results make it evident that there is an urgent need for some specific targeted interventions to enhance the reading capabilities of the majority, given that the average score here places these students at a level characterized as "Frustrational," or one in which they struggle to comprehend the texts reasonably (Connor et al., 2018).

#### *4.2 Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Level of Reading Comprehension Level of the Participants Before the Program*

**Table 5.** Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Level of Reading Comprehension Level of the Participants Before the Program

Level of Reading Comprehension Level	Pre-test	
	F	%
Independent	4	10.53
Instructional	9	23.68
Frustration	25	65.79
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

The reading level analysis shows serious concern: 65.79% are at the Frustrational level, indicating significant reading comprehension deficits before any intervention, thus calling for desperate measures. About 10.53% functioned at the independent reading level; Richards-Tutor et al. (2015) found that foundational skills interventions have positive effects, especially for younger students. Of these, only 9 (23.68%) participants demonstrated instructional level mastery, meaning most still needed help. According to Daniel et al. (2021), students below a certain level would be less developed and, hence, need assistance in comprehension. The number of participants categorized as being at the frustrational level suggests an apparent

urgency for structured interventions.

Establishing baseline skill sets is paramount for assessing progress. If they could get such focused intervention, they should improve upon early literacy interventions (Wanzek et al., 2015). Also, the association between the reading levels and the intervention outcomes complements comprehension-based interventions assure long-term gains in reading skills (Suggate's, 2014). The variation in pre-test results indicates their capability and the anticipated effect, if there are any, interventions will strengthen their reading skills over time.

#### 4.3 Post-test Scores

**Table 6.** Participant Post-test Scores and Reading Comprehension Level

Participants ID	Post-test Score	Percentage	Reading Comprehension Level
17101	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17102	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17103	11	55	FRUSTRATIONAL
17104	8	40	FRUSTRATIONAL
17105	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17106	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17107	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17108	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17109	13	65	INSTRUCTIONAL
17111	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17112	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17113	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17114	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17115	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17116	14	70	INSTRUCTIONAL
17117	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17118	14	70	INSTRUCTIONAL

17119	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17120	14	70	INSTRUCTIONAL
17121	11	55	FRUSTRATIONAL
17123	14	70	INSTRUCTIONAL
17124	10	50	FRUSTRATIONAL
17125	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17126	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17127	13	65	INSTRUCTIONAL
17129	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17130	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17131	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17132	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17133	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17135	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17136	14	70	INSTRUCTIONAL
17138	14	70	INSTRUCTIONAL
17139	15	75	INSTRUCTIONAL
17140	16	80	INDEPENDENT
17141	10	50	FRUSTRATIONAL
17142	12	60	INSTRUCTIONAL
17143	14	70	INSTRUCTIONAL
MEAN	13.76315789	68.81578947	INSTRUCTIONAL

Table 6 illustrates the post-test result and reading comprehension performance of 38 participants. The results show a range of scores, which average 13.76 out of 20 and correspond to an average percentage of 68.82%. Most participants are in the instructional level, which indicates that some support is still needed to understand the material. The result revealed that a reasonable number of students exhibit independent reading ability. At the same time, a concerning portion is

classified as Frustrational, and they struggle quite a bit even with assistance of the program. This diverse range of scores reinforces the relevance to specific learners of particular instructional strategies designed to address their needs.

#### *4.4 Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Level of Reading Comprehension Level of the Participants After the Peer-Assisted Reading Program*

**Table 7.** Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Level of Reading Comprehension Level of the Participants After the Peer-assisted Reading Program

Level of Reading Comprehension Level	Post-test	
	F	%
Independent	7	18.42
Instructional	26	68.42
Frustrational	5	13.16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 7 presents the frequency counts and percentages of the participants' reading



comprehension levels after the peer-assisted reading program; 68.42% still require instructional support for improved reading comprehension. While 18.42% of those achieved independent reading comprehension, which offers a ray of hope from the intervention. Still, some students fell to the frustrational level, about 13.16 %; hence, the overwhelming realization that inattentiveness in their comprehension skills continues to exist. The findings imply that although the intervention benefited some students, a vast population still requires another level of support for their reading abilities (Suson et al., 2020; Tomas et al., 2021).

Such results correspond with previous studies linking reading skills with instructional strategies in practice. It has been known that watching over one's progress in a task is very significant, particularly for students moving from Grade 5 to 7 (Edossa et al., 2022). Furthermore, considerable focus on intervention strategies and those who failed at them would depend on the intervention and background

cognitive abilities (Lovett et al., 2021). Thus, more instructive personalized interventions can help with future reading needs (Agao-Agao, 2023; Navarra, 2020).

On top of that, instruction in reading varies greatly depending on how these methodologies are used. Stoics, culturally relative reading material, and differentiated instruction would raise Filipinos' reading proficiency (Idulog et al., 2023; Potot et al., 2023). It stresses the importance of frequently changing instructional methods and the students' constant need for support in their difficulties with reading comprehension (Suson et al., 2020; Okkinga et al., 2021). With the peer-assisted reading program generating a good outcome for some Grade 7 participants, the data concludes the ongoing support requirement aligned with modified instructional approaches to address diversified learners' requirements (Potot et al., 2023).

#### *4.5 Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Level of Reading Comprehension Level of the Participants Before and After the Peer-Assisted Reading Program*

**Table 8.** Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Level of Reading Comprehension Level of the Participants Before and After the Peer-assisted Reading Program

Level of Reading Comprehension Level	Pre-test		Post-test	
	F	%	F	%
Independent	4	10.53	7	18.42
Instructional	9	23.68	26	68.42
Frustrational	25	65.79	5	13.16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

Improvements are interpreted by perceivable definite shifts with the Peer-Assisted Reading Program in the reading comprehension level of seventh-grade learners. The intervention resulted in a percentage increase in the number of students at the instructional level from the pre- to the post-test. At the same time, those identified as Frustrational had a noticeable decline to 13.16%. The data also shows that 65.79% of the participants are categorized as having a Frustrational level as their reading ability, and only 10.53% could read at the independent level. Improvements might be seen at the Instructional level: their percentages had risen from 23.68% to 68.42% during the post-test, while Frustrational readers decreased to 13.16%.

Furthermore, the number of independent readers

also rose to 18.42. Structured peer interaction, especially argumentative, proves a significant prediction of comprehension scores (Muhammad et al., 2024). Collaborative strategies- e.g., peer tutoring- effectively support independent reading and academic progress (Fitriani & Tarwana, 2020; Suhendri, 2022). The success of the Peer-Assisted Reading Program is considerable. Such a program can provide a test into the Philippine educational arrangement since it develops comprehension proficiency and provokes independent reading habits among learners. Such an effort, this assessment, marked the need for collaborative learning practices to close the reading proficiency gap.

#### *4.6 Difference Between the Level of Reading Comprehension of the Participants Before and After*

## the Program

**Table 9.** Difference between the Level of Reading Comprehension of the Participants before and after the Program

Paired Sample t-test	N	MEAN	SD	t-statistics	p-value	Effect Size
Pre-test	38	10.4	3.27	6.11	<.001	0.991
Post-test	38	13.8	2.01			

According to the paired sample t-test, there is a statistically significant improvement in reading comprehension done after the program. Specifically with 38 participants, pre-test reading comprehension scores came at a mean of 10.4 and post-test at 13.8. With a t-statistic of 6.11 and a corresponding p-value of under .001, this difference is extremely unlikely to have occurred by chance and consequently is highly suggestive of a true effect from the program. The very large value of the effect size of 0.991 indicates high practical value, suggesting substantial improvement in reading comprehension. The conclusion that the program actually enhanced the reading comprehension levels of these participants is accordingly supported with strong evidence.

### 4.7 Participant's Perception of the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Peer-Assisted Reading Program to Improve their Reading Comprehension

The participant's perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the peer-assisted reading program were identified by the focus group discussion consisting of a series of open-ended questions that aimed to gather the students' perceptions and experience with the reading intervention. The FGD revealed two themes regarding the program's strengths, including engaging stories and passages, skill development, and the ability to find the answers within the text.

### 4.8 Peer-Assisted Reading Program Strengths

Participants' willingness to engage in the peer-assisted reading program highlights the vital roles of curiosity and intrinsic motivation in facilitating the reading process. A participant from the Focus Group Discussion claimed, *"The best part is the story in the reading program because sometimes the student will be curious about the passage."* The statement suggests that participants were excited and interested in the stories in the peer-assisted reading program. Such findings are consistent with literature that illustrates how children's engagement increases with exposure

to interesting reading material that draws on emotional and cognitive curiosities (Shah et al., 2018; Reichardt et al., 2023). Specifically, research shows that stimulating passages stimulate student curiosity and prompt readers to investigate deeper into the reading experience (Shah et al., 2018; Reichardt et al., 2023). In addition, studies demonstrate that intrinsic motivation, such as curiosity and enjoyment, are key distinctions of reading behavior and are vital for learning success (Hall et al., 2016). All in all, this is illustrative of the educational philosophy that relies on incorporating peer-assisted reading strategies to effectively take advantage of natural student curiosity in literacy learning (Hasnani & Ismail, 2020; Fitriani & Tarwana, 2020).

Moreover, the participants indicated that discussing the readings helped improve their analysis and comprehension skills. As one student stated, *"The best part of the reading program is the stories because it teaches us a lot of skills like how to analyze questions and helps us improve our reading."* The program contributed to developing critical reading skills. This finding aligns with previous literature suggesting peer interaction is a major contributor to increased reading comprehension. Studies illustrate that peer-supported learning approaches foster students' reading ability through collaborative engagement (Al-Dokom & Al-Qeyam, 2024; Hasnani & Ismail, 2020; Robison, 2022; Cooc & Kim, 2017). Beyond collaborating during reading, students helped each other better comprehend what they had read. Additionally, students benefitted from learning in a community that made learning more fun. Examples included collaboration and supportive peer learning, and some students also described a positive atmosphere, making the reading process productive (Fitriani & Tarwana, 2020; Halim et al., 2020).

As stated in various studies, the focus on peer-assisted strategies represents a more extensive

understanding of what works in effective reading methods. The program's approach, where students can talk about the readings, corresponds with studies that show cooperative learning fosters greater academic and social growth (Gámez & Lesaux, 2015; Coll & Durán, 2015). Peer tutoring methods particularly benefit learners, showing that students, regardless of ability, can increase their reading ability with consistent peer support (Yawiloeng, 2021; Chaemsai & Rattanavich, 2016). The qualitative feedback from students showing they enjoyed their learning experiences demonstrates the power of storytelling as a realization, not just of comprehension, but also motivation to read more, which again aligns with the understanding of narrative bringing younger readers toward critical thinking (Roma, 2019; Yawiloeng, 2020). These findings validate that peer-assisted reading strategies support important reading skills while ensuring an active, connected learning environment.

#### 4.9 Peer-Assisted Reading Program Weaknesses

The focus group discussion results revealed that participants identified several significant weaknesses in the peer-assisted reading program. In particular, students noted challenges related to the length and difficulty of the reading material. One participant stated, "*kasi masyado po kasing mahaba [because it is too long.]*," suggesting that the length of the texts may have been daunting and contributed to their difficulty remembering the information. This is consistent with research highlighting that excessive input adds to fatigue and limits students' engagement, negatively impacting their overall learning experience (Räisänen et al., 2020). In addition to length and difficulty, students commented on the lack of coherence between the reading assignment and the assessment questions; one comment noted that "*The weaknesses that the reading program is sometimes the stories are hard to read and sometimes when I am answering a question, wala po doon yung sagot [the answer is not right there.]*" Suggesting that there may be a breakdown between the materials and the comprehension evaluation, making the learning experience more complex (Räisänen et al., 2020).

In addition to concerns about having to read rich data that was long and clear, focus group participants indicated that the material format influenced their ability to remember what they read. For example, one student noted that complex stories are not easily remembered,

saying, "*nakakalimutan kasi masyadong mahaba, pag masyado syang mahaba it will give you a point na nakakalimutan niyo na sya? [I forget because it is too long; when it is too long, it will give you a point that you are forgetting it?]*" (Räisänen et al., 2020). This is a common occurrence in learning and can be understood within cognitive load theory, which describes when learners are overloaded with information that exceeds their processing capacity (Erickson et al., 2020). The point here is important: It is necessary for the material to not only be concise but also appropriately demanding enough to be comprehensible without adding cognitive load.

Lastly, the problems mentioned by students point to the need for reading interventions to be more individualized to improve learning impact. Previous studies indicate that interventions varying in complexity and relevance can engage students more and increase motivation and comprehension (Rosenzweig et al., 2018; Guthrie & Klauda, 2014). The focus group data not only highlighted actionable feedback on areas for improvement with a peer-assisted reading program for students; it also indicated a need for educational methods to be accommodating and supportive of individual differences in learning styles and comprehension levels more broadly. Additionally, using adaptive learning techniques may relieve reading and learning weaknesses indicated by students, making it less challenging to overcome difficulties with the length and coherence of the material while optimizing their learning environment (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014).

#### 4.10 Participants' Suggestions to Improve Peer-assisted Reading Program

The insights gained from the focus group discussions about participants' recommendations for changing direct instruction in the peer-assisted reading program highlight essential aspects for improvement. Participants universally suggested that texts need to be shorter to quickly get answers, meaning they want the portions of the story to be more concise. For example, one student communicated how important the portion length is by stating the following: "*Liitan lang po yung stories ng sakto para po mahanap po agad yung mga sagot. [Shorten the stories appropriately so that the answers can be found quickly.]*" Another participant followed along, suggesting that we should not worry about the length of the story and the "*Liitan po yung story. [Shorten the story.]*" Participants overwhelmingly suggested that the stories needed to be shorter

because they thought the narratives were too long and would impact comprehension and engagement with the material at small group learning. This concern for length aligns with the literature suggesting that shorter reading excerpts can enhance the effectiveness of literacy interventions by making reading material more accessible for students (Abeberse et al., 2011).

Alongside shortening the text, the program participants expected more explicit structural organization in the reading program. Program suggestions included implementing a two-column format—questions in Column A and responses in Column B—for the reading exercise. This could help students directly align responses to each corresponding question (*“maglagay po ng Column A and Column B po. [add Column A and Column B.] like, yung column A po yung mga questions and yung column B po yung mga sagot. [Column A are the questions and column B are the answers.]”*). This suggestion aligns with educational research indicating that organized educational materials promote increased comprehension and academic success (Rondeaux et al., 2023). The request for “keywords” also indicates that students want methods to help them identify key concepts or information directly within the text, which aligns with literacy instructional practices that are based on educational transparency (Abeberese et al., 2011).

Finally, the focus group members discussed the need for improvements in the quality and number of the questions. They called for more modest, understandable questions to correspond with the brief text fragments. Comments like “the questions should be improved, the questions in the strands should be smaller, and the sentences should be shorter” demonstrate a strong desire for simple language and doable tasks. Simplified language in instructional materials may improve learners’ engagement and comprehension (Sørensen et al., 2015). Overall, the focus group findings revealed an overwhelming agreement for changes to the peer-assisted reading program’s clarity, brevity, and structural structure to improve learners’ literacy results.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the whole study with the salient findings surfaced at in answer to the problems posed in Chapter I. Furthermore, the conclusion drawn based on the findings and the recommendation based on the conclusion.

### 5.1 Conclusions

A study into the use of Project PARP (Peer-Assisted Reading Program) reveals essential information about the reading comprehension levels of participants. The results of the pre-test show that participants had a mean reading comprehension score of 10.42, or approximately 52.11%, which placed most student participants at the “Frustrational” functional reading level, meaning they were reading with significant difficulty, as noted in the research by SÖNMEZ & Çetinkaya (2022). It was reported that approximately 65.79% pointed to the Frustrational level, indicating a need for immediate and focused interventions (Librea, 2023). The participants demonstrated very low levels of reading comprehension at baseline; thus, the need to provide deliberate, structured support was imperative, as participants were unable to independently comprehend grade-appropriate texts, which is consistent with previous studies that examined the efficacy and benefits of individualized reading interventions to help struggling readers (Imbaquingo & Cardenas, 2023).

Following Project PARP, the results of the post-test exhibited a positive effect. The mean score of the project participants (average = 13.76 or 68.82%) indicated a shift to the “Instructional” level of reading comprehension among 68.42% of the students (Yulianti & Sukasih, 2023). Although several students reached an “Independent” reading level, an estimated 18.42% did not receive important support, even after the reading intervention. A small percentage of students, 13.16%, remained at the “Frustrational” reading comprehension level. Although the reading intervention had a positive effect, it also suggested that some students continued functioning within the “Frustrational” level (SÖNMEZ & Çetinkaya, 2022).

The paired sample t-test data showed statistically significant differences between pre-and post-test scores (t-statistic = 6.11,  $p < .001$ ) and suggested that the reading intervention benefited participants’ comprehension abilities and supported the usefulness of structured reading interventions. In conclusion, the peer-assisted reading program appeared to promote and improve reading skills among the participants as a structured intervention (Sudiatama et al., 2023).

The participants’ perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of Project PARP further demonstrate the qualitative impact of the initiative. Students mentioned positive



experiences discussing readings and collaboratively working through comprehension challenges, highlighting children's social interaction in reading (Bayani, 2022). They noted that oral engagement with stories sparked curiosity and an intrinsic interest in reading further (Bergen et al., 2022). However, participants also cited specific weaknesses, like the length and difficulty level of the readings, as occasionally daunting, contributing to retention issues that support the relevance of cognitive load theory in educational contexts (Dewi & Sari, 2022).

In summary, the evaluation of data collected from Project PARP reveals a positive shift in reading comprehension levels after the program was implemented while also providing valuable data from students regarding the program's positives and negatives. The data stresses the importance of addressing ongoing support and developing differentiated instructional practices for students, the articulated complexities of literacy, and the importance of targeted interventions for improving reading comprehension (Imbaquingo & Cardenas, 2023; Dewi & Sari, 2022). Future iterations of Project PARP include modifying reading materials to match the students' cognitive capacities, sustaining the positive aspects that promote curiosity, and addressing deficiencies highlighted by participant feedback to support student learning.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the result of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

- 1) The implementation of the peer-assisted reading program. Based on the quantitative data gathered, the program improves the participants reading comprehension level.
- 2) Use students' level appropriate reading text, not age-appropriate reading text. Thus, the researchers recommend the use of the Science Research Association (SRA) reading laboratory to cater students' level of reading comprehension to foster engagement to the material while improving their reading comprehension level.
- 3) The questions and organization of the reading program must be structured; the participants recommend various type of test in the program which includes two-column test format.

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