

# OGBASA: Practices, Challenges, and Strategies of Reading Teachers Implementing Reading Programs for Ata-Manobo Students

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## ABSTRACT

Reading proficiency is fundamental to learners' academic success and lifelong learning; however, persistent gaps remain, particularly among Indigenous learners in the Philippines. Despite ongoing reading initiatives, limited research has examined how reading teachers implement reading programs within culturally diverse contexts such as that of Ata-Manobo students. This study aimed to explore the practices, challenges, and strategies of reading teachers implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo learners. Anchored in a qualitative case study design within a social constructivist framework, the study involved purposively selected reading coordinators and teachers. Data were generated through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that reading teachers implemented contextualized reading practices, including remedial and enhancement programs, structured procedures, and learner-centered approaches. However, they encountered significant challenges such as weak parental support, low student participation due to socio-economic demands, and limited instructional resources. In response, reading teachers employed adaptive strategies, including interactive and collaborative pedagogies, contextualization or indigenization of materials, principle-based instructional approaches, and personal initiatives such as home visitation and use of self-funded resources. The study underscores the need for culturally responsive and context-sensitive reading programs, strengthened school-community partnerships, and sustained institutional support to address structural and resource-related constraints. These findings contribute to improving reading program implementation for Indigenous learners and inform policy and practice in inclusive education.

**Keywords:** reading programs, reading teachers, practices, challenges, strategies, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental literacy skill that underpins academic achievement, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. It enables learners to access knowledge, engage in meaningful communication, and participate productively in society (ALNehabi, 2023; Labo-Popoola, 2018). Beyond cognitive development, reading also contributes to learners' emotional growth and self-confidence, making it a vital component of basic education.

Despite its recognized importance, concerns regarding reading proficiency persist both globally and nationally. In the Philippines, reading performance remains a critical issue, as evidenced by results from international large-scale assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), where Filipino learners have consistently performed below the global average in reading literacy (Abejuela et al., 2023; Canuto et al., 2024). These findings point to persistent gaps in comprehension and higher-order reading skills across diverse learner groups. Moreover, trends in large-scale assessments suggest that improvements in reading have been slower and less consistent compared to other domains (Marcq & Braeken, 2025). In response, several reading initiatives have been implemented, including the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), Basa Pilipinas, and institutional programs such as the Reading Literacy Extension Program (RELP). These interventions aim to assess and enhance learners' reading abilities across grade levels (Macario & Villocino, 2025; Tomas et al., 2021). Evidence indicates that structured programs, such as Sa Aklat Sisikat, can significantly improve reading engagement and performance (Abeberese et al., 2011, 2014). However, sustaining learners'

motivation to read and strengthening their perceived value of reading beyond initial skill acquisition remain continuing challenges.

Notwithstanding these efforts, a substantial number of learners continue to experience difficulties in reading, particularly in comprehension (Aquino & Tingson, 2021). In Talaingod District, Phil-IRI data revealed that more than 70% of pupils from Grades 3 to 6 fall within the frustration level in word recognition, comprehension, and overall reading ability. This is consistent with studies in other Philippine contexts, where a large proportion of learners have been reported to fall under the frustration level, with some studies indicating rates exceeding 50% to as high as 82% and even 98.7% in certain cases (Gasis, 2025; Misanes & Pascual, 2023). These findings suggest that existing reading programs may not sufficiently address the diverse and context-specific needs of learners, especially in marginalized and indigenous communities.

A key gap in the literature is the limited focus on the implementation of reading programs in indigenous contexts, particularly from the perspective of reading teachers who serve as frontline implementers. Current research predominantly emphasizes learners' performance outcomes or program effectiveness, with insufficient attention to reading teachers' experiences, challenges, and adaptive practices in delivering reading interventions within complex educational settings (Adao et al., 2023; Doronio et al., 2023; Ignacio, 2026; Rillo, 2025; Visuyan, 2024).

Another significant gap is the lack of culturally responsive reading programs that are aligned with the linguistic and cultural realities of Indigenous Peoples (IP) learners. Indigenous learners often come from communities where knowledge transmission is primarily oral, contrasting with the text-based orientation of formal schooling (Abad, 2020; Bibat & Baguio, 2026; Loewen et al., 2017). This mismatch may lead to the misinterpretation of learners' abilities and contribute to their marginalization within mainstream education systems. Moreover, experiences of discrimination and the absence of culturally grounded instructional approaches further hinder their literacy development (Gutierrez et al., 2009).

In IP-dominated areas such as Talaingod, Davao del Norte, Philippines, reading challenges are intensified by contextual constraints, including limited resources, linguistic diversity, and the complexity of implementing standardized reading programs (Bibat & Baguio, 2026; Jugador & Tampus, 2025; Utto & Lumogdang, 2025). Reading teachers frequently encounter difficulties in effectively delivering these programs due to the varied needs of learners and the lack of contextualized instructional support. These conditions underscore the need for more responsive and culturally grounded approaches to literacy development.

In light of these issues, this study examined the experiences of reading teachers in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo learners. Specifically, it aimed to document their instructional practices, identify the challenges they encounter, and determine their strategies in addressing the challenges in implementing reading programs. Ultimately, the study sought to generate context-sensitive insights and practical implications that can inform the design and implementation of culturally responsive reading programs. The findings are intended to support educational agencies, particularly the Philippines' Department of Education, in addressing persistent literacy challenges and improving reading outcomes among indigenous and underserved learners.

## Research Objectives

This study aimed to examine the implementation of reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Describe the practices of reading teachers in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students.
2. Identify the challenges encountered by reading teachers in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students.
3. Determine the strategies utilized by reading teachers in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study was anchored in social constructivism, which views knowledge as socially constructed through individuals' experiences and interactions. Reality is therefore understood as multiple and context-bound (Charreire-Petit & Huault, 2008). In this study, reading teachers' meanings and interpretations of reading program implementation were shaped by their engagement with Ata-Manobo students within their specific classroom and community contexts.

Guided by this perspective, the study employed a qualitative case study design to examine the practices, challenges, and strategies of reading teachers implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. This approach enabled an in-depth and context-sensitive understanding of how reading programs are enacted in real-life educational settings (Chaiklin, 1991).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured guide. This method allowed participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives in detail while providing flexibility to probe emerging insights (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The use of in-depth interviews supported the co-construction of meaning between the researchers and participants and generated rich data for analysis.

### Research Participants

In this case study, the participants were teachers, particularly reading teachers/coordinators, from the Talaingod District, Schools Division Office of Davao del Norte, Philippines. A total of seven (7) participants were involved in the study to provide in-depth and contextually grounded insights into the implementation of reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. The number of participants aligns with qualitative sampling considerations, including small, information-rich samples, and is consistent with the suggested range of 6–10 participants for focused qualitative inquiry (Dornyei, 2007).

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that those included had direct and relevant experience with the phenomenon under study. The inclusion criteria required that participants (a) were designated as reading coordinators, (b) had at least two (2) years of experience in implementing reading programs, and (c) had actual experience working with Ata-Manobo students as recipients of these programs

To further ensure the suitability of participants, a pre-interview was conducted to determine the extent of their involvement in reading program implementation. This process helped confirm that the selected participants could provide rich, relevant, and experience-based data necessary for a comprehensive case analysis. Table 1 illustrates the profile of the study's participants.

Table 1 Participants of the Study

Participant	Gender	Reading Teacher Experience	Grade Level
Participant A	Female	2 years	Kinder
Participant B	Female	2 years	Grade 6
Participant C	Female	4 years	Grade 3
Participant D	Female	6 years	Grade 5
Participant E	Female	2 years	Kinder/Grade 1
Participant F	Female	3 years	Grade 6
Participant G	Male	2 years	Grade 10

## **Data Gathering Procedure**

Prior to data collection, the researchers secured formal permission from the Schools Division Superintendent, the District Supervisor, and the respective school principals. These steps ensured compliance with institutional and ethical requirements.

A semi-structured interview guide was then developed based on the study objectives, focusing on reading teachers' practices, challenges, and strategies in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. The instrument was subjected to expert validation using the criteria of trustworthiness by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Revisions were made based on the experts' feedback.

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the selected participants. The researchers coordinated interview schedules, secured informed consent, and ensured confidentiality and voluntary participation. Interviews were conducted using the validated guide, with probing questions to elicit detailed responses. With permission, all interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to preserve participants' responses. To ensure credibility, the transcriptions were returned to the participants for member checking, allowing them to review, verify, and clarify their statements. Necessary revisions were incorporated based on their feedback.

## **Research Instrument**

The study used a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide aligned with the study objectives. It consisted of three (3) primary questions with probing questions to elicit detailed responses. The first question on reading teachers' practices included seven (7) probing questions with follow-up probes as needed. The second question on challenges had two (2) probing questions, while the third question on strategies included four (4) probing questions. These covered program implementation, rationale, effectiveness, procedures, challenges, and strategies.

The instrument underwent expert validation. A pilot test was conducted with similar participants to assess clarity and flow, and revisions were made accordingly. These processes ensured the instrument's clarity, consistency, and alignment with the study's qualitative case study design.

## **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, consistent with the study's qualitative case study design. This approach identified patterns and themes from participants' narratives to provide a contextualized understanding of the phenomenon.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and, when necessary, translated. The researchers applied bracketing to minimize bias during analysis. Transcripts were read repeatedly, and significant statements were coded while irrelevant and repetitive data were excluded. Codes were grouped into meaning units, then clustered into categories and developed into themes reflecting reading teachers' practices, challenges, and strategies. Findings were presented through concise narrative descriptions supported by participants' responses.

To ensure trustworthiness, member checking and peer debriefing were conducted. Credibility was established through in-depth engagement and validation of data. Dependability and confirmability were ensured through an audit trail and reflective documentation, while transferability was achieved through thick description.

## **Ethical Considerations**

This study adhered to established ethical standards and underwent ethics review prior to data collection. The principles of the Belmont Report guided the conduct of the study (Zucker, 2014).

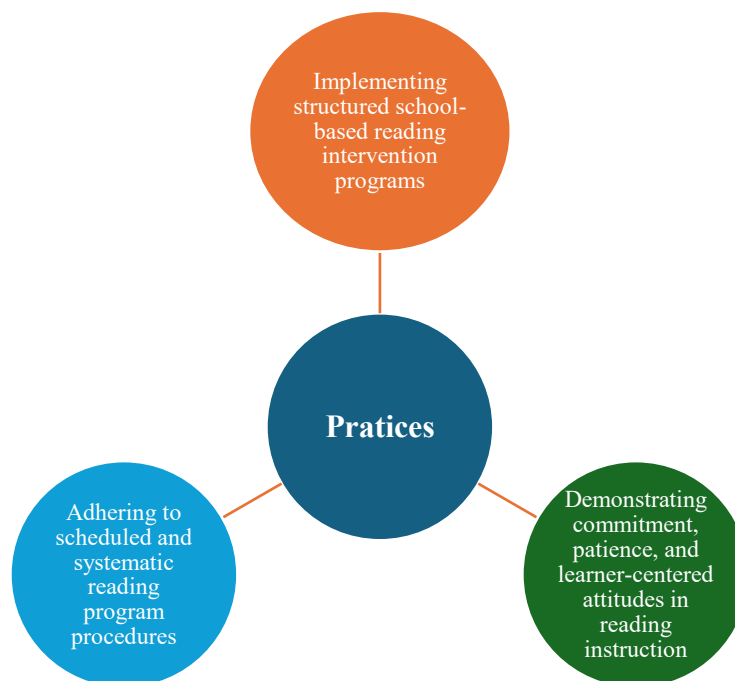
Voluntary participation and informed consent were ensured, with participants fully informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time. They were also given the opportunity to review and validate their interview transcripts. Risks were minimized by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying information. No deception was involved at any stage of the study, and all data were securely stored and accessed only by the researchers. Participant selection was conducted fairly based on the study's criteria, ensuring that no group was unduly burdened or excluded. Finally, the researchers shared the study findings with the participants to provide insights that may support and improve their practices in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Practices of Reading Teachers in Implementing Reading Programs for Ata-Manobo Students

The analysis revealed several key practices of reading teachers in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. These include implementing structured reading enhancement and remedial programs, adhering to systematic and consistent procedures in conducting reading activities, and demonstrating essential teacher qualities such as patience, dedication, and learner-centeredness in facilitating reading instruction. Figure 1 illustrates the practices of reading teachers in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students.

**Figure 1.** *Practices of Reading Teachers in Implementing Reading Programs*



### Theme 1. Implementing Structured School-Based Reading Intervention Programs

Reading teachers practiced implementing structured reading enhancement and remedial programs to address the varied literacy needs of Ata-Manobo students. This included providing remedial instruction for non-readers and struggling learners through pull-out sessions and reading clinics, allowing for focused and individualized support. At the same time, reading teachers facilitated reading enhancement activities for learners with emerging skills, reflecting a differentiated approach to instruction.

Reading teachers also practiced designing contextualized, school-based reading programs while aligning these with mandated initiatives such as E-CARP and STRIKERS. These programs served as structured frameworks guiding the implementation of reading interventions while allowing flexibility to address local needs. The integration of remediation and enhancement highlights reading teachers' responsiveness to persistent literacy challenges. Remedial reading remains essential in supporting struggling learners and expanding their learning

opportunities. Moreover, extending instruction beyond regular class time demonstrates reading teachers' commitment to improving reading outcomes.

These practices are supported by literature emphasizing reading as a key means of developing vocabulary and comprehension. While incidental learning through reading is valuable, effective instruction also requires structured and explicit support. These practices demonstrate reading teachers' efforts to implement structured, responsive, and context-sensitive reading programs that address diverse learner needs.

From a theoretical perspective, these practices are strongly supported by social constructivist theory, which posits that learning is facilitated through guided interaction and structured support. As emphasized by Vygotsky (1978), learners develop higher-order skills when instruction is aligned with their Zone of Proximal Development, where reading teachers provide appropriate scaffolding to bridge learning gaps. The use of remedial and enhancement programs reflects this principle by ensuring that instruction is responsive to learners' varying levels of reading competence. Furthermore, the structured yet flexible nature of school-based reading programs aligns with Bruner's (1978) concept of scaffolding, where support is gradually adjusted to promote learner independence. The contextualization of reading interventions also resonates with Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, which underscores the importance of embedding learning within meaningful cultural and social contexts. Collectively, these theories highlight that effective reading instruction requires not only structured intervention but also responsive, context-sensitive approaches that support learners' active construction of meaning.

## **Theme 2. Adhering to Scheduled and Systematic Reading Program Procedures**

Reading teachers practiced adhering to consistent and standard procedures in the implementation of reading programs as guided by mandates from higher authorities. This included the systematic use of assessment tools, prescribed reading materials, and recommended instructional strategies. Structured time schedules were also followed to ensure that learners, particularly those needing additional support, were given sufficient time for reading instruction.

The consistent implementation of these procedures reflects reading teachers' commitment to maintaining program fidelity while addressing learners' reading needs. Despite variations in school contexts, reading teachers ensured that core standards were followed to support the attainment of expected reading competencies. Such consistency contributed to more organized and effective program delivery and helped address common reading challenges encountered in schools. Moreover, structured practices such as scheduled remedial sessions and the use of pull-out strategies allowed reading teachers to provide focused support to struggling readers. The effectiveness of such approaches is supported by research indicating that pull-out systems can enhance reading instruction when implemented appropriately. Adhering to standard procedures enabled reading teachers to implement reading programs in a systematic, consistent, and goal-oriented manner, thereby strengthening efforts to improve learners' reading proficiency.

From a theoretical perspective, these practices align with behaviorist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of structured instruction, repetition, and reinforcement in skill acquisition. As posited by Skinner (1957), consistent exposure to guided practice and feedback strengthens learning outcomes, particularly in foundational skills such as reading. The adherence to standard procedures, scheduled interventions, and systematic assessments reflects this principle by ensuring that learning is reinforced through organized and repeated instructional routines. Additionally, these practices are supported by Tyler's (1949) rationale for curriculum development, which highlights the importance of clearly defined objectives, aligned instructional activities, and systematic evaluation. The structured implementation of reading programs demonstrates how clearly established procedures contribute to achieving desired learning outcomes. Collectively, these theories suggest that consistency, structure, and alignment in instructional practices are essential in promoting effective and measurable improvements in learners' reading proficiency.

## **Theme 3. Demonstrating Commitment, Patience, and Learner-Centered Attitudes in Reading Instruction**

Reading teachers practiced demonstrating essential qualities and characteristics that support the effective implementation of reading programs. These included patience, dedication, persistence, empathy, and a strong

sense of responsibility toward learners. Such qualities influenced how reading teachers engaged with students, particularly those struggling with reading, and contributed to a more supportive and responsive learning environment. The practice of showing patience and understanding was especially important in working with learners who required more time and guidance in developing reading skills. Reading teachers also demonstrated commitment and determination in conducting reading classes, ensuring that learners were continuously supported despite challenges. Their ability to empathize with students' situations, including cultural and contextual factors, further strengthened the effectiveness of reading instruction.

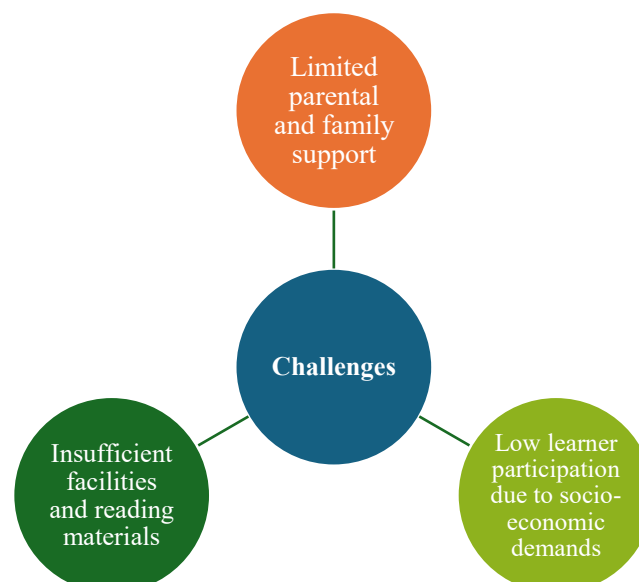
These teacher qualities are critical, as they directly influence learner engagement and motivation. Reading teachers serve as key agents in shaping students' attitudes toward reading, and their positive dispositions can enhance participation and learning outcomes. Literature supports the importance of teacher quality in improving student achievement, particularly among learners from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds. High-quality teaching, characterized by effective practices and positive teacher attributes, contributes significantly to closing achievement gaps and improving overall learning outcomes. The demonstration of commitment, patience, and learner-centered attitudes reflects reading teachers' active role in sustaining reading programs and fostering a conducive environment for literacy development.

From a theoretical perspective, these practices are aligned with humanistic learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of addressing learners' emotional and psychological needs in the learning process. As proposed by Rogers (1969), effective learning occurs in environments where reading teachers demonstrate empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard, allowing learners to feel valued and supported. The patience and empathy shown by reading teachers reflect these principles, fostering a safe and motivating learning environment. Additionally, these practices are supported by self-determination theory, as explained by Deci and Ryan (1985), which highlights the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in promoting intrinsic motivation. Reading teachers' supportive and learner-centered attitudes help build students' sense of competence and belonging, thereby enhancing their motivation to engage in reading. Collectively, these theories underscore that effective reading instruction is not only cognitive but also relational, where teacher dispositions play a crucial role in sustaining learner engagement and promoting meaningful literacy development.

### Challenges of Reading Teachers in Implementing Reading Programs for Ata-Manobo Students

Reading teachers encountered several challenges in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. These include weak parental and family support, low learner participation, and limited facilities and reading materials. These challenges stem from various contextual and systemic factors that affect the effective delivery of reading interventions. The following table presents the challenges experienced by reading teachers in implementing reading programs. Figure 2 shows the challenges of reading teachers in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students.

**Figure 2.** *Challenges of Reading Teachers in Implementing Reading Programs*



## Theme 1. Limited and Family Support

Limited parental and family support emerged as a significant challenge in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. Many parents were unable to assist or monitor their children's reading due to livelihood demands and limited literacy skills. These conditions reduced opportunities for reinforcement of reading skills at home. The lack of strong home support affects program effectiveness, as literacy development requires shared responsibility between school and family. In this context, the home-school partnership was weak, limiting sustained engagement beyond the classroom.

This finding aligns with literature highlighting **Parental** the role of parental involvement in reading development. Strategies such as guided reading, reading logs, and parent participation in school activities can enhance literacy outcomes. Similarly, family support is a key factor in reading achievement, while its absence, often linked to economic constraints, can hinder progress. Limited parental and family support underscores the need for context-responsive strategies that strengthen home-school collaboration.

From a theoretical perspective, this challenge can be explained through ecological systems theory, which emphasizes that learning is influenced by multiple environmental systems. As proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the microsystem (e.g., family) and mesosystem (e.g., home-school relationships) play crucial roles in a child's development. The limited involvement of parents reflects a disruption within these systems, particularly in the connection between home and school, which is essential for reinforcing learning. Additionally, this situation can be viewed through the lens of social capital theory, as discussed by Coleman (1988), which highlights the importance of relationships and support networks in facilitating educational success. The absence of strong parental engagement reduces the social capital available to learners, thereby limiting their opportunities for literacy development. These theoretical perspectives imply that improving reading outcomes requires not only school-based interventions but also strengthened family engagement and community support systems.

## Theme 2. Low Learner Participation Due to Socio-Economic Demands

Low learner participation due to socio-economic demands was a key challenge in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. Frequent absenteeism limited learners' engagement, as many were required to work, assist in household responsibilities, or address basic needs such as food. This situation disrupted the continuity of instruction, making it difficult for reading teachers to sustain learners' progress. Students who missed sessions often regressed and required reteaching. Consistent with this, chronic absenteeism has been shown to significantly affect academic performance.

Participation was also influenced by learners' socio-cultural backgrounds, which shaped their engagement in formal reading activities. This highlights the need for context-responsive strategies and support systems. Strengthening partnerships with caregivers and adapting instruction to learners' contexts can help improve participation and reading outcomes. Low learner participation underscores the need for flexible and inclusive approaches that address both socio-economic and cultural factors.

From a theoretical perspective, this challenge can be explained through ecological systems theory, which posits that learners' development is shaped by interacting environmental systems. As emphasized by Bronfenbrenner (1979), factors within the exosystem and macrosystem, such as poverty, community conditions, and cultural practices, directly influence learners' ability to participate in school. The socio-economic demands experienced by Ata-Manobo learners reflect constraints beyond the classroom that hinder consistent engagement in reading programs. Furthermore, this situation can be understood through Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which suggests that basic physiological and safety needs must be met before higher-order learning can occur (Maslow, 1943). When learners face issues such as food insecurity and economic pressure, their capacity to engage in academic tasks like reading is significantly reduced. These theoretical perspectives imply that improving learner participation requires not only instructional adjustments but also broader socio-economic support and flexible, context-sensitive educational approaches.

### Theme 3. Insufficient Facilities and Reading Materials

Insufficient facilities and reading materials posed a significant challenge in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. Reading teachers reported limited or unavailable resources, including reading materials and designated spaces such as reading clinics, which are essential for effective program delivery. The lack of adequate resources constrained the full implementation of reading interventions and required reading teachers to rely on improvisation and resourcefulness. This challenge extends beyond reading programs and reflects broader issues in public education, where limited infrastructure and instructional materials affect the teaching-learning process.

Literature supports these findings, emphasizing that the availability of updated reading materials, adequate facilities, and conducive learning environments is critical for effective literacy instruction. Similarly, constraints in funding, infrastructure, and access to learning resources continue to hinder educational programs and innovations. Delays and shortages in instructional materials further illustrate persistent resource gaps in schools. Insufficient facilities and reading materials highlight the need for improved resource provision and support systems to ensure the effective implementation of reading programs.

From a theoretical perspective, this challenge can be explained through ecological systems theory, which underscores the influence of environmental conditions on learning. As emphasized by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the exosystem and macrosystem, including institutional resources, policies, and socio-economic structures, shape the quality of educational experiences. Limited facilities and materials reflect systemic constraints that directly affect learners' opportunities for literacy development. Additionally, this situation aligns with opportunity to learn theory, which posits that students' academic success is dependent on their access to adequate learning resources and conditions (Carroll, 1963). When essential materials and facilities are lacking, learners are deprived of meaningful opportunities to engage with reading tasks. These theoretical perspectives imply that improving reading outcomes requires not only effective instructional strategies but also equitable provision of resources and supportive learning environments.

### Strategies of Reading Teachers in Implementing Reading Programs for Ata-Manobo Students

Reading teachers employed various strategies to effectively implement reading programs for Ata-Manobo students in response to the challenges encountered in practice. These strategies reflect their efforts to adapt instruction, address learners' diverse needs, and sustain engagement in reading activities within their specific contexts. Figure 3 presents the strategies of reading teachers in implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students.

Figure 3 Strategies of Reading Teachers in Implementing Reading Programs



## **Theme 1. Using Interactive and Differentiated Reading Pedagogies**

Reading teachers used interactive and differentiated reading pedagogies to improve learner engagement and participation. Play-based activities, music, and games were integrated to make reading enjoyable and meaningful, recognizing that interest supports learning.

Collaborative strategies such as group activities and peer tutoring were also applied to build confidence and encourage participation. These approaches allowed learners to interact and support one another, which enhances comprehension and engagement. In addition, reading teachers employed individualized instruction, particularly through one-on-one sessions, to address the needs of struggling readers. This provided focused support and created a more comfortable learning environment. Individualized interventions have been shown to improve reading outcomes. These practices align with initiatives that promote interactive reading activities to strengthen learner interest and participation. Using interactive and differentiated pedagogies enabled reading teachers to create engaging and responsive reading instruction.

From a theoretical perspective, these strategies are strongly grounded in social constructivist theory, which emphasizes learning through interaction and collaboration. As proposed by Vygotsky (1978), learners construct knowledge through social engagement, and strategies such as peer tutoring and group activities provide opportunities for shared meaning-making within the Zone of Proximal Development. The use of individualized instruction further reflects the role of scaffolding, where reading teachers provide targeted support to address learners' specific needs. Additionally, these practices are supported by multiple intelligences theory, which recognizes that learners have diverse strengths and ways of learning (Gardner, 1983). The integration of music, play, and varied activities caters to different learning styles, enhancing engagement and comprehension. These strategies also align with self-determination theory, as explained by Deci and Ryan (1985), which highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation. By creating interactive, supportive, and engaging learning environments, reading teachers enhance learners' motivation to participate in reading activities. Collectively, these theories suggest that effective reading instruction should be interactive, differentiated, and responsive to learners' diverse needs and motivations.

## **Theme 2. Applying Motivational and Assessment-Based Instructional Strategies**

Reading teachers applied motivational and assessment-based instructional strategies to support effective reading program implementation. These included the use of rewards and incentives to increase learners' interest, participation, and confidence in reading activities. By integrating motivational techniques, reading teachers were able to encourage engagement, particularly among learners who showed low participation.

Assessment was also a key strategy, with reading teachers conducting regular evaluations to identify learners' reading levels and monitor progress. These assessments guided instructional decisions and ensured that reading interventions were aligned with learners' needs. In addition, reading teachers incorporated activities that activated prior knowledge and connected lessons to learners' experiences, making reading more meaningful and relevant. These practices reflect the importance of grounding instruction in established teaching and learning principles. Effective reading instruction requires the integration of motivation, assessment, and appropriate classroom strategies to support learner development. As emphasized in the literature, reading teachers must continuously reflect on their instructional approaches and align them with sound principles of reading instruction to enhance learning outcomes. Applying motivational and assessment-based strategies enabled reading teachers to address learner needs, improve participation, and support the effective implementation of reading programs.

From a theoretical perspective, these strategies are supported by self-determination theory, which emphasizes the role of motivation in learning. As proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), learners are more engaged when their needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are supported. The use of rewards and incentives can enhance motivation, particularly when they reinforce learners' sense of achievement and participation. Additionally, the systematic use of assessment aligns with principles of formative assessment theory, which highlights the importance of continuous evaluation to inform instruction and improve learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998). By regularly assessing learners' reading levels, reading teachers are able to adjust instruction to better meet individual needs. Furthermore, the activation of prior knowledge reflects Ausubel's (1968) theory of

meaningful learning, which posits that new knowledge is best acquired when connected to learners' existing cognitive structures. Collectively, these theories underscore the importance of integrating motivation, assessment, and meaningful learning experiences to enhance reading instruction and learner engagement.

### **Theme 3. Contextualizing Instruction through Indigenized and Localized Materials**

Reading teachers contextualized instruction through the use of indigenized and localized reading materials to make learning more relevant for Ata-Manobo students. They utilized available resources from the community and transformed these into meaningful instructional materials that learners could easily relate to. This approach helped bridge learners' prior experiences with reading tasks, supporting better comprehension and engagement (Rayon, 2017).

The use of familiar objects and culturally grounded materials allowed learners to connect reading with their everyday environment, making the learning process more concrete and accessible. By aligning materials with learners' cultural context and level of understanding, reading teachers facilitated more effective acquisition of reading skills. This strategy is supported by literature emphasizing the value of culturally responsive materials in education. Developing instructional resources rooted in learners' culture strengthens identity and enhances learning. Similarly, the use of culturally relevant materials has been shown to support reading achievement while maintaining learner engagement. Contextualizing instruction through indigenized and localized materials enabled reading teachers to address both resource limitations and cultural relevance, thereby improving the effectiveness of reading program implementation.

From a theoretical perspective, this strategy is grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of aligning instruction with learners' cultural backgrounds. As proposed by Ladson-Billings (1995), teaching that incorporates learners' cultural knowledge and experiences enhances engagement, understanding, and academic success. The use of localized and indigenized materials reflects this principle by making reading instruction meaningful and relevant to Ata-Manobo learners. This is further supported by Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which highlights the role of culture and social context in shaping learning. By integrating familiar cultural elements into reading instruction, reading teachers enable learners to construct meaning based on their lived experiences. Additionally, this approach aligns with Funds of Knowledge theory, as discussed by Moll et al. (1992), which recognizes that learners bring valuable cultural knowledge from their communities that can be used as a foundation for learning. Collectively, these theories suggest that culturally grounded and context-sensitive instructional materials are essential in promoting meaningful learning and improving reading outcomes among diverse learners.

### **Theme 4. Extending Support through Personal Initiative and Community Engagement**

Reading teachers extended support through personal initiative and community engagement to sustain the implementation of reading programs despite limited resources. They utilized personal funds, devices, and time to provide instructional materials, conduct activities, and support learners beyond regular class hours. Home visitation was also practiced to strengthen communication with families and encourage learner participation.

These efforts reflect reading teachers' resourcefulness and commitment to addressing gaps in materials and support systems. By going beyond institutional provisions, reading teachers were able to maintain program continuity and respond to learners' needs more effectively. This practice aligns with studies showing that reading teachers often integrate personal resources and technology to support instruction, particularly in resource-constrained settings. Extending support through personal initiative and community engagement highlights reading teachers' proactive role in overcoming resource limitations and strengthening reading program implementation.

From a theoretical perspective, this practice can be explained through ecological systems theory, which underscores the interconnectedness of school, family, and community in supporting learner development. As proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), strengthening linkages within the mesosystem, particularly between home and school, enhances educational outcomes. Home visitation and community engagement exemplify efforts to reinforce these connections, thereby supporting learners' reading development. Additionally, this practice aligns

with social capital theory, as discussed by Coleman (1988), which highlights the value of relationships and networks in facilitating educational success. By engaging families and investing personal effort, reading teachers help build supportive networks that contribute to learners' academic progress. Furthermore, these initiatives reflect principles of teacher agency, which emphasize reading teachers' capacity to act purposefully and make decisions that address contextual challenges (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015). Collectively, these theories suggest that effective reading program implementation extends beyond the classroom and requires active teacher involvement, strong community linkages, and sustained support systems to address contextual constraints.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the practices, challenges, and strategies of reading teachers implementing reading programs for Ata-Manobo students. Findings revealed that reading teachers consistently implement structured reading practices, including remedial and enhancement programs, adherence to standard procedures, and the demonstration of learner-centered qualities. However, these practices are constrained by key challenges, particularly limited parental and family support, low learner participation due to socio-economic demands, and insufficient facilities and reading materials. In response, reading teachers employ adaptive strategies such as interactive and differentiated pedagogies, motivational and assessment-based approaches, contextualized and indigenized materials, and personal initiatives to sustain program implementation.

These findings affirm that while reading teachers are able to enact effective and context-responsive practices, the success of reading programs is shaped by both instructional and contextual factors. The alignment between identified practices and strategies demonstrates reading teachers' capacity to address implementation challenges; however, persistent structural and socio-cultural barriers continue to limit program effectiveness.

The implications of the study highlight the need to strengthen support systems for reading program implementation. Educational leaders and policymakers should prioritize the provision of adequate facilities and learning materials, develop culture-based and context-sensitive reading programs, and enhance parental and community engagement. Professional development initiatives should also equip reading teachers with strategies that are responsive to indigenous learners' needs. Addressing socio-economic constraints that affect learner participation remains essential to improving reading outcomes. Furthermore, effective practices identified in this study may be sustained and replicated, while strategies employed by reading teachers can inform the development of more inclusive and responsive literacy interventions. These efforts contribute to improving reading competence and supporting the broader goals of basic education.

This study is limited to selected public elementary schools in the Division of Davao del Norte and reflects the perspectives of reading teachers. Future research may include other stakeholders such as students, parents, and school leaders, and may explore different contexts to validate and extend these findings. Additional studies may also examine the long-term impact of reading programs and the development of culturally grounded literacy interventions. Ultimately, achieving effective reading program implementation for Ata-Manobo students requires the alignment of sound teaching practices, responsive strategies, and strengthened institutional and community support systems to ensure meaningful and inclusive literacy development.

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## Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was submitted for ethics review and received appropriate clearance from the designated ethics review board prior to data collection. All research procedures were conducted in accordance with established ethical standards to ensure the protection and well-being of the participants.

## Data Availability Statement

The interview transcripts collected and analyzed in this study are available from the researcher upon reasonable request, subject to ethical considerations and confidentiality agreements. Interested individuals may contact the corresponding author through the official email address for access.

## Conflicts of Interest

The researchers declare that there are no conflicts of interest in relation to this study.

## AI Use Declaration

This study made limited use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support the research and writing process. Specifically, ChatGPT 4.0 was utilized for language enhancement, including grammar checking, sentence restructuring, and clarity improvement, as well as for formatting assistance in accordance with APA 7th edition guidelines. All substantive components of the study, including the research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and conclusions, were conceptualized, conducted, and validated by the researchers. The use of AI did not replace critical thinking, scholarly judgment, or ethical responsibility in any stage of the research process. The researchers assume full accountability for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the work presented in this study.

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