

Effect of project D.E.A.R. on the reading comprehension of Alibog elementary pupils

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the effect of project D.E.A.R. on the reading comprehension of Alibog elementary pupils using a descriptive comparative design. This was used to determine the significant difference between the respondents' reading level (oral reading comprehension) based on the pre-test and post-test of the Phil-Iri package. Moreover, it further determined the relationship between the effectiveness of the project DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) and the reading comprehension of the 199 pupils. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, and t-tests were used to identify significant relationships and differences between individual reading levels (oral reading comprehension) and the Phil-Iri package post-test in terms of the project DEAR's effectiveness. The findings reveal that Project DEAR has been highly effective in improving the reading capabilities of its participants. Also, the mean equivalent of the pretest is 2.48, while the posttest has a mean equivalent of 2.89, indicating an increase in reading ability. The study rejects the null hypothesis of no significant difference in pretest and posttest scores for the Phil-Iri package components, indicating a significant improvement in oral reading comprehension. Lastly, there is indeed a significant relationship between the pupils' reading level (as measured by oral reading comprehension) based on the Phil-Iri package's posttest and the level of effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. for Alibog Elementary School pupils. Thus, Project DEAR has achieved the goal of improving the reading skills of its participants, as all categories received a highly effective rating. This project is recommended to help pupils engage with reading and maximize comprehension.

Keywords: Project D.E.A.R, reading ability, reading comprehension, reading level, Phil-Iri package

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1. Introduction

In support of the K–12 Basic Education Program, the Department of Education consistently aims to create responsible and productive individuals who possess the necessary skills and competencies to be lifelong learners (Descartin et al., 2023). All schools across the country are tasked with helping students improve their reading abilities to make every student a proficient reader. On November 22, 2019, the DepEd mandated DepEd Memorandum No. 173 s. 2019, entitled “Hamon, Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs Initiative)” to attain the ECARP, or Every Child A Reader Program. On January 10, 2024, the department, in its effort to develop reading fluency in every learner, mandated DepEd Memorandum No. 001, s: 2024, or the Implementation of Catch-up Fridays. Article 4 of this memorandum states that it aims to implement Catch-up Fridays, starting January 12, 2024, across elementary and secondary schools, as well as community learning centers (CLCs) nationwide. All Fridays in January 2024 will be set for the "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR) activity and field officials' orientation (Caga, 2019). It shall also be used as an avenue to gather feedback from field implementers on the guidelines of Catch-up Fridays. The researcher believes that this program will stop the ongoing decline in learner performance, based on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-Iri) results from October 2023. This initiative also helps the department with the issue of the recent Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, where the Philippines is five to six years behind in learning competencies. Moreover, unfortunately, for the second time, the Philippines landed in the bottom 10 out of 81 countries in reading comprehension, mathematics, and science (Servillos, 2023; Misanes & Pascual, 2023).

The overall results of the national assessments reveal the following: there are still many early-grade learners struggling to meet the learning standards in early language, literacy, and numeracy; low achievement levels in English, math, and science appear to be caused by gaps in learners' reading comprehension (Dorado & Medina, 2022). This means that many low-performing learners cannot comprehend math and science word problems written in English (Abbas, 2016). Hence, they were unable to demonstrate their knowledge in these content areas. Elementary and high school learners are still deficient in literacy skills, both in language and content areas, particularly in reading. To address the aforementioned gaps, there is a need to strengthen the reading proficiency of every learner and nurture a culture of reading, a requisite skill in all content areas (DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019). In the same manner, the result of the pretest of the Phil-IRI Group Screening Test in Filipino at Alibog Elementary School showed that only 51 out of 199 pupils passed it! 13 out of 64 pupils from grade 3, 19 out of 44 pupils from grade 4, 19 out of 55 pupils from grade 5, and 0 out of 39 pupils from grade 6. The result clearly showed that the pupils had difficulty in reading comprehension. To address the problem, the researcher conducted this study using the project D.E.A.R. of the Department of Education. Likewise, the researcher investigated the effects of the said project.

Statement of the Problem - This paper aimed to determine the relationship between the effectiveness of the project D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything And Read) and the reading comprehension of Alibog Elementary School. Specifically, this answered the following questions: (1) What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and grade level? (2) What are the respondents' reading levels (oral reading comprehension) based on their pretest of the Phil-IRI package and posttest of the Phil-Iri package? (3) What is the level of effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. to Alibog Elementary pupils in terms of reading ability, reading comprehension, and reading level? (4) Is there a significant difference between the respondents' Individual Reading Levels (Oral Reading Comprehension) based on the pretest and posttest of the Phil-Iri package? (5) Is there a significant relationship between the respondent's Individual Reading Level (Oral Reading Comprehension) based on the Phil-Iri package's posttest and the level of effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. to Alibog Elementary School Pupils? (6) What action plan could be developed to enhance the respondents' reading ability, reading comprehension, and

reading level?

Significance of the Study - The findings of this study were expected to be beneficial to the following: first, to the pupils. This study will be significant for them because they have the chance to contribute to research that could help improve reading instruction and support their reading development. This study would benefit pupils by providing evidence-based interventions tailored to their needs and guiding them on the road to becoming proficient readers. Second, to the teachers, this work establishes evidence-based research into the effectiveness of a reading-based intervention program. It also provides insight into the best approaches and classroom practices suitable for enhancing reading comprehension among elementary school pupils. For parents, the results of this study will help them learn about the advantages and disadvantages of Project D.E.A.R. and how to effectively implement it at home to improve their child's reading skills. For school heads and master teachers, this study can help them learn about the effectiveness of this program in improving reading skills. Such findings can inform instruction and policy for improving reading achievement. For education supervisors, this study aims to provide evidence-based insights into how effective Project D.E.A.R. is in helping pupils improve their reading comprehension skills. For school administrators, studies will help them decide whether to implement similar reading programs or make adjustments to existing ones, thereby better supporting students in developing their reading skills. To DepEd OcciMin, this study aims to provide DepEd OcciMin with evidence-based insights into the effect of Project D.E.A.R. in assisting students in improving their reading comprehension abilities. Also, to the local government unit, as one of the stakeholders that benefits from education, this study is beneficial in helping students in the community become more proficient readers. Lastly, for future researchers, the study will provide valuable insights, as it serves as a model for designing and implementing a theoretically effective reading program, which can improve reading comprehension skills among elementary school pupils. It can be the foundation for further studies to determine the effectiveness of similar programs implemented in other schools and regions.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study - This study focused on determining the effect of the D.E.A.R. project on reading comprehension. The study considered the collection of data on individual reading level (oral reading comprehension) pre-test and post-test as the basis for the level of effectiveness of project D.E.A.R. Because of the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the researcher was not required to include the names or lists of respondents when displaying the precise ratings of pre-test and post-test results to protect their privacy. The respondents in this study were students in grades 3 to 6 enrolled in the 2023-2024 school year. Each respondent was asked to complete the researcher-made questionnaire to determine the level of effectiveness of the D.E.A.R. project on reading comprehension. The researcher recorded the progress of implementing catch-up Fridays, which helped to conclude the program. The respondents in this study were 199 pupils in grades 3 to 6 at Alibog Elementary School, Magsaysay District, Occidental Mindoro Division. Moreover, the respondents were purposely selected based on the scope of the Phil-Iri Package implementation. Since the Phil-Iri Package is in Filipino and intended for pupils in Grades 3 to 6. In addition, the participants were chosen based on the results of a group screening test administered during the first quarter of the school year, which revealed that these students struggled with reading comprehension. However, the pre-test and post-test were not given to the students who passed the group screening test. To determine the effect of Project DEAR on the respondents' reading comprehension, the researcher used a descriptive comparative approach.

2. Methodology

Research Design - The success of Project D.E.A.R. was assessed quantitatively in this study using a questionnaire that measured reading ability, reading comprehension, and reading level. This research is non-experimental. It was ascertained using correlational coefficients to determine the relationship between the effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. and the reading comprehension of Alibog Elementary School's pupils. Moreover, the researcher used a descriptive comparative design to determine the significant difference in the respondents' reading level (oral reading comprehension) based on the pre-test and post-test results of the Phil-Iri package. Correlational coefficients were used to determine the relationship between the effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. for Alibog Elementary pupils and the respondents' reading levels (oral reading comprehension) as measured by the

Phil-Iri package post-test.

Respondents of the Study - The respondents of the study were pupils in grades 3 to 6 of Alibog Elementary School for the school year 2023-2024. Since the Phil-Iri group screening test is in Filipino, intended for them, all students were invited to answer the questionnaire. There were 199 students who participated in the study, representing the entire enrollment of students in grades 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Research Instrument - This study used the adopted Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-Iri) (2018) instrument. This is an original instrument used to assess the pre-test and post-test of the respondents. Specifically, this adopted the Phil-Iri Group Screening Test (GST), using a Phil-IRI reading passage in Filipino, specifically set A for pre-tests and post-tests. A researcher-made questionnaire was also used as an instrument in this study. The first part of the questionnaire is for the effectiveness of Project DEAR in terms of reading ability. On the other hand, the second part of the questionnaire is for the effectiveness of Project DEAR in terms of reading comprehension. Lastly, the third part of the questionnaire is about the effectiveness of Project DEAR in terms of reading level. The questionnaire underwent validation through the assistance of experts at the Divine Word College of San Jose graduate school. The researcher crafted a questionnaire based on the reading abilities, reading comprehension, and reading level of the respondents. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final draft of the questionnaire. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is used as a classroom-based assessment tool to measure and describe learners' reading performance in both English and Filipino languages, in oral reading, silent reading, and listening comprehension. Accordingly, the researcher used the original reading passages that the respondents had read. The researcher-made questionnaire was tested for its reliability with 30 pupils as respondents from Tadlok Elementary School, and they were not included in the final administration of the study. The results of the reliability test using the split-half technique based on the equal-length computation of the Spearman-Brown formula are presented as follows:

Table 1

Reliability Analysis Results

Indicators	Items	Reliability Coefficients*	Interpretation
1. Reading Ability	10	0.817	High Reliability
2. Reading Comprehension	10	0.877	High Reliability
3. Reading Level	10	0.812	High Reliability

There is generally high reliability in the three parts of the questionnaire that were tested. This proves that the questionnaire can be used as the instrument of the study and can be distributed to the final group of respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure - To begin, a letter of request to conduct this study was forwarded to the Office of the OIC-Schools Division Superintendent and the Public Schools District Supervisor. Upon approval, permission from the school head of Alibog Elementary School was also obtained before the actual data collection. The researcher conducted an orientation for the respondents about the purpose of the study. The researcher immediately gathered important information from the results of the group screening test to assess their reading comprehension and from the oral reading test to assess the respondents' reading levels. By administering the Phil-IRI group screening test, the raw score provided the researcher with significant input data on the respondents' reading comprehension in three different ranges: 0-7, 8-13, and 14 and above. After determining the level of the respondents based on the results of the Group Screening Test (GST), the researcher continued to collect the oral reading pretest (A) results to determine the respondents' oral reading level. The researcher used the Phil-IRI passages because they were a reliable tool in the Philippines. The researcher also collected the Phil-IRI Graded Passages Post-Tests, which are composed of four parallel sets (SETS A to D) that the test administrator can choose from. However, the researcher selected only the Set A Post-Test as part of the tool in the study to measure the effectiveness of "Drop Everything and Read" (D.E.A.R.). The researcher also identified the respondents' reading level in three levels: frustration, instructional, and independent. After collecting relevant data from the teachers and staff, the researcher administered a questionnaire that they had created to test the effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. To gather the needed data, the survey questionnaire checklist was personally administered, distributed,

and facilitated by the researcher. The respondents were oriented toward the significance of the survey, so they provided honest responses. The researcher also secured the consent and assent of the respondents as part of the study's ethical considerations.

Statistical Treatment of the Data - This study used a descriptive comparative approach; thus, frequency and percentage were used to describe the variables. On the other hand, the ETA correlation was used to correlate variables for the significance of the study. A paired-samples t-test was also used to determine significant differences between the respondents' reading levels based on the pretest and posttest of the Phil-Iri package. To determine the extent of the relationship between the level of effectiveness of the project D.E.A.R. and reading comprehension, multiple regression analysis was used. The outcomes were displayed after the data were processed using WarpPLS version 7.0 statistical software. The index of interpretation for the respondents' responses involved a numerical scale for mean scores and their corresponding verbal descriptions. A weighted mean from 4.50 to 5.00 is interpreted as very highly effective, 3.50 to 4.49 as highly effective, 2.50 to 3.49 as moderately effective, 1.50 to 2.49 as slightly effective, and 1.00 to 1.49 as least effective.

Ethical Considerations - This study adhered to the ethical standards in research. Proper citations were practiced. The permit to conduct the study was sought from the appropriate authorities. The responders' voluntary involvement in the study is highly valued. Furthermore, respondents can withdraw from the study at any point if they wish to do so. The participants would not be harmed or shamed in any way due to their participation. In this regard, consent and assent forms were obtained before conducting the study, and the responses were handled with utmost care, in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Additionally, to preserve respondents' anonymity, this study required that they not provide their names or lists when providing precise evaluations of pre-test and post-test results.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 2

Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of Grade Level, Age, and Sex (n=199)

Grade Level	Pupils' Age (in years)								Total	%
	8	%	9	%	10-11	%	12-13	%		
3	64	32.2							64	32.2
4			44	22.1					44	22.1
5					52	26.1			52	26.1
6							39	19.6	39	19.6
Total	64	32.2	44	22.1	52	26.1	39	19.6	199	100.0

Pupils' Sex						
Grade Level	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
3	36	18.1	28	14.1	64	32.2
4	24	12.0	20	10.1	44	22.1
5	27	13.6	25	12.5	52	26.1
6	21	10.6	18	9.0	39	19.6
Total	108	54.3	91	45.7	199	100.0

Table 2 shows the frequency table of pupils' ages and sex by grade level. The results revealed that the majority of the pupils are in the 3rd grade (32.2%), aged 8 years old, followed by the 5th grade (26.1%), aged 10-11 years old, and the 4th grade (22.1%), aged 9 years old. There is a smaller number of pupils in the 6th

grade (19.6%) who are 10 or 11 years old. The distribution of pupils across these grade levels can be said to correspond to the age distribution of students in a normal school system. To support the findings of this study, Preston (2024) shows that the age of students in the 3rd grade is 8.5 years, the age of students in the 4th grade is 9.5 years, the age of students in the 5th grade is 10.5 years, and the age of students in the 6th grade is 11.5 years. Snyder & Dillow (2015) examined the average ages of 3rd-grade students as 8.6 years, 4th-grade students as 9.6 years, 5th-grade students as 10.6 years, and 6th-grade students as 11.6 years. Based on the findings, the distribution of pupils by grade levels resembles the normal age distribution of students in a school setup, where the largest number of pupils is recorded in the 3rd grade, followed by the 5th and 4th grades, respectively.

The crosstabulation data presented herein display the spread of pupils in each grade as well as students' sex. The table indicates that there are a total of 199 pupils, with a slight majority being male (54.3%) and the remaining 45.7% being female. When examining the grade levels, it is observed that the number of pupils decreases as the grade level increases. For instance, 3rd grade has 64 students, while 4th grade has only 44 students, 5th grade has 52 students, and 6th grade has 39 students. Concerning sex distribution, it is noted that the percentage of males is higher in all grades than in the 5th grade, where the percentages of males and females are nearly equal. In general, the data assist in making a broad coverage of the distribution of pupils by grade levels or forms and by students' sex. The data reveal that student enrollments decrease progressively as the grade levels increase. Such fluctuations may be attributed to various reasons, such as attrition, mobility, and enrollment disparities by grade level. However, the most apparent variation is in the gender enrollment pattern by grade level. Overall, males remain dominant, with their percentage relatively higher across all grades; however, in 5th grade, the gap between males and females is the smallest. Ainscow (2020) presents aspects related to gender in education. This presupposes that culture and tradition have a significant influence on educational decisions as well as the outcomes for boys and girls. Despite the reading challenges at Alibog Elementary School, there is evidence of a growing interest in promoting equity and inclusivity in education.

Table 3

Pupils' Individual Reading Levels in Oral Reading Comprehension Based on Pretest of the Phil-Iri Package

Level in Pretest	Reading Ability		Reading Comprehension		Reading Level	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Independent	51	34.5	24	16.2	22	14.9
Instructional	39	26.3	44	29.7	42	28.3
Frustration	58	39.2	80	54.1	84	56.8
Passed*						
Total	148	100.0	148	100.0	148	100.0

Level in Posttest	Reading Ability		Reading Comprehension		Reading Level	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Independent	93	62.8	95	64.2	78	52.7
Instructional	37	25.0	17	11.5	32	21.6
Frustration	18	12.2	36	24.3	38	25.7
Passed*						
Total	148	100.0	148	100.0	148	100.0

*Passed - Excluded

The results show the reading levels of the pupils from a pre-test on the Phil-Iri Package, focusing on students' oral reading comprehension. The results were categorized into three levels: independent, instructional, and frustration. Under the independent level, 51 students, of wherein 34.5 percent fall into this group. Out of all these students, 24 were capable of reading comprehension at a rate of 16.2%, and 22 students had a reading level of 14.9%. Coming to the instructional level, 39 students fall into this group, which is equivalent to 26.3%. In reading comprehension, 44 students had scores at 29.7%, and 42 students had a reading level of 28.3%. Finally, the frustration level showed the highest percentage of students, with 58 in total, or 39.2%, falling into this group. Additionally, 80 students reached the reading comprehension level, or 54.1%, while 84 students reached the reading level or equivalent, or 56.8%. Altogether, the statistics indicate that a large proportion of pupils fall into the frustration level: they need more input in reading. Idulog et al. (2023) discuss the need for early intervention as a way of addressing reading difficulties. In this light, those who fail to understand what is read have the greatest chances of a final academic failure in later grades. This calls for urgent actions to meet the challenges realized from the pretest data. At the independent level, the following students grasp the meaning of the text very well and can read independently with very minimal support. They often seem not to understand the text, even with this help, suggesting there is a considerable need for intervention. In addition, the results indicate a significantly high percentage of students are at a frustration level, which demands focused support interventions (DaCosta & Gutierrez, 2020). The finding related to reading difficulties has serious implications regarding early intervention, so a supportive learning environment, along with targeted support, is provided. This leads to confident and successful readers by fostering early literacy, resulting in returns on investment in life, including future opportunities and academic achievement.

The data shows the reading levels of students based on a posttest of the Phil-Iri Package, specifically oral reading comprehension. The data indicate that most pupils are at an independent reading level, and a large percentage perform well in reading ability and comprehension. However, there is a very large number of pupils working at a frustration level, so there are glaring areas requiring more support. The results give good general insight into the reading levels and areas of strength and weakness of pupils in general. Pocaan et al. (2022) consistently highlight how early intervention fosters reading success. They show that students who are provided with on-time, appropriate support for reading difficulties better keep up with their peers and reach reading proficiency. This, therefore, calls for moving from a one-size-fits-all reading instruction approach to an individualized intervention that matches the specific weaknesses of each learner. These results suggest that, while a huge percentage of students show signs of excellent oral reading comprehension abilities, a fair percentage of those students do not. Levels of intervention, such as phonemic awareness training, fluency practice, or comprehension strategies, can be deployed to meet the requirements of students who are at the frustration level. Moreover, the results further indicate that some pupils can read while possessing a low reading comprehension score. This indicates that some pupils can decode words but fail to infer meaning from what they read. This is the area where immense focus should be placed on enhancing comprehension skills, in other words, comprehension strategies like summarizing, inferring, or questioning. Indeed, the data presented here serve as a powerful reminder that although overall reading levels may be encouraging, it is also important that some cater to the needs of each student. With all these targeted interventions, educators will empower readers who need it, foster a love of learning, and see that every student has a chance to succeed.

The mean level of effectiveness for Project D.E.A.R. on reading abilities and fluency is quite efficient, as it achieved a composite mean score of 4.22. All the indicators yield weighted mean scores higher than 3.50, which results in the classification of reading ability in the project as highly effective. Although the Project D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything And Read) revealed great importance for reading ability and fluency, this discovery has emerged with a higher composite mean score. All scores, however, are relatively high, which indicates that the project is highly effective in improving reading ability and fluency. The results highly indicate that Project D.E.A.R. is effective in improving reading ability and fluency, as all the indicators reveal high levels of effectiveness. The project was successful as it accomplished the objective of upgrading the reading skills of the participants. It is indicated by a very high mean rating for all the indicators. McBreen & Savage (2024) and Caga

(2019) indicated that continued exposure to reading materials, especially through programs like D.E.A.R., can enhance reading comprehension, fluency, and reading skills.

Table 4

Mean Level of Effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. In Terms of Reading Ability

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I can read the whole sentence.	4.48	Highly Effective
2. I have an expression when reading.	3.96	Highly Effective
3. My clear voice engages my audience.	3.96	Highly Effective
4. My clear voice engages my audience.	4.27	Highly Effective
5. I observe punctuation marks while reading.	4.30	Highly Effective
6. I use visual cues like finger-pointing to aid reading.	4.37	Highly Effective
7. I employ a method of analysis.	4.10	Highly Effective
8. I am confident in my ability to read.	4.46	Highly Effective
9. I am good at reading Filipino text.	4.36	Highly Effective
10. I read aloud.	3.94	Highly Effective
Composite Mean	4.22	Highly Effective

Legend: 4.50-5.00 – Very Highly Effective; 3.50-4.49 – Highly Effective; 2.50-3.49 – Moderately Effective 1.50-2.49 – Least Effective; 1.00-1.49 – Not Effective

The general results of Project D.E.A.R. show that the program was effective in developing reading ability and fluency. The project had been performing well as an enhancement of the students' reading skills since its output aligned well with existing studies that dedicated time for reading is vital, and specific skills need to be cultivated in reading. Such a positive outcome through this program reveals the vast potential of similar projects in developing an affection for reading and equipping the students with the ability to be confident and proficient readers.

Table 5

Mean Level of Effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. In Terms of Reading Comprehension

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I understand what I've read.	4.40	Highly Effective
2. I remember what I've read.	4.08	Highly Effective
3. I understand the main ideas of what I've read.	4.16	Highly Effective
4. I understand the details in what I've read.	4.16	Highly Effective
5. I observe punctuation marks while reading.	4.22	Highly Effective
6. I look for context clues when an unfamiliar word comes up.	4.02	Highly Effective
7. I read books even though there is a lot of text on each page	4.25	Highly Effective
8. I read books.	4.00	Highly Effective
9. I know that reading in Filipino helps me learn new words.	4.57	Very Highly Effective
10. I can answer the questions about the text I've read correctly.	4.15	Highly Effective
Composite Mean	4.20	Highly Effective

Legend: 4.50-5.00 – Very Highly Effective; 3.50-4.49 – Highly Effective; 2.50-3.49 – Moderately Effective 1.50-2.49 – Least Effective; 1.00-1.49 – Not Effective

The result also indicates that Project D.E.A.R. was effective in improving reading comprehension, with a

composite mean of 4.20, showing a highly effective outcome. Each of the indicators measured different aspects of reading skills, including understanding, remembering, and recognizing punctuation marks. The means for each indicator are the results of weighted responses averaged. The minimum mean is for indicator 8, specifically reading books, which is 4.00, indicating that this indicator is less effective compared to others. This means that even though Project D.E.A.R. fosters a love for reading, there may still be a need to prolong exposure to multiple types of texts and genres beyond typical novel reading. From this, the overall composite mean of all measures is 4.20; therefore, the project promotes an understanding and appreciation of reading skills. This finding aligns well with Descartin et al. (2023) and DaCosta & Gutierrez (2020), who found that dedicating time for reading is beneficial for students. However, the program will also require some extra effort to diversify reading material and genres to achieve even greater effectiveness.

Table 6

Mean Level of Effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. In Terms of Reading Level

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I read independently.	4.41	Highly Effective
2. I am willing to help by elders.	4.20	Highly Effective
3. I am comfortable to read while someone is watching.	4.07	Highly Effective
4. I understand what I've read.	4.30	Highly Effective
5. I am confident reading a book with a lot of text on each page.	4.13	Highly Effective
6. I am confident in reading.	4.30	Highly Effective
7. I am confident in understanding new texts.	4.04	Highly Effective
8. I am satisfied with the resources that the teachers provide to help me improve my reading skills.	4.58	Very Highly Effective
9. I go to the library to read a book.	3.88	Highly Effective
10. I read for pleasure.	4.28	Highly Effective
Composite Mean	4.22	Highly Effective

Legend: 4.50-5.00 – Very Highly Effective; 3.50-4.49 – Highly Effective; 2.50-3.49 – Moderately Effective; 1.50-2.49 – Least Effective; 1.00-1.49 – Not Effective

As demonstrated in this table, the outcome is that the mean level of effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. in terms of reading level is highly effective. This was derived from a high composite mean score of 4.22, further reinforced by consistently high marks across all elements of the reading competency assessment. The findings show a significant improvement in reading level. This principle aligns with Project D.E.A.R. because it encourages students to read independently. All the indicators have a mean score of being very effective, where the highest is "I am satisfied with the resources that the teachers provide to help me improve my reading skills" with a score of 4.58, while the lowest is "I go to the library to read a book" with a score of 3.88. These strategies include what students should know to improve their reading comprehension and fluency, along with suggestions. This is entirely consistent with the rationale behind Project D.E.A.R., which aims to make a wide range of reading materials accessible to create an enabling or enriching reading environment (Miolo et al., 2019; Gedik & Akyol, 2022). Moreover, the findings show that Project D.E.A.R. has helped raise the reading level of the participants, as all indicators have a highly effective score. Indeed, the composite mean also scores high enough to support this conclusion. This is a counterbalance to the view that screen time has some negative effects on a person, with the involvement of reading print materials. The results show that Project D.E.A.R. has been effective in raising the reading levels of the participants.

Table 7

Paired Samples T-Test on Individual Reading Levels (Oral Reading Comprehension)

Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	T-Value	P-Value (Sig.)	Interpretation
READING ABILITY						
Pretest	2.48	1.163	-0.412	-9.133	.000	Highly
Posttest	2.89	0.892				Significant
READING COMPREHENSION						
Pretest	2.23	1.226	-0.578	-10.718	.000	Highly
Posttest	2.81	1.017				Significant
READING LEVEL						
Pretest	2.20	1.235	-0.513	-10.742	.000	Highly
Posttest	2.71	1.051				Significant

The Grade 3 to Grade 6 pupils at Alibog Elementary School were given pretests and posttests on the three components of the Phil-Iri package. The scores are based on students' individual reading ability, reading comprehension, and reading level and were coded as 1, 2, and 3, corresponding to independent, instructional, and frustrating levels. With a mean equivalent of 2.48 for the pretest and 2.89 for the posttest in reading ability, the mean difference of -0.412 is considered small, yet significant. Standard deviations of 1.163 and 0.892 indicate moderate deviations from the means, which denote significant dispersion in the test scores. The t-value of -9.133 is large and gives a *p*-value at the 0.000 level. The t-value in general should be greater than +2 and less than -2 to be considered significant.

Regarding the *p*-value at the 0.000 level, it should be noted that the SPSS program displays a *p*-value of 0.000 when the exact computed value is less than 0.005. Solari et al. (2022) analyzed the effectiveness of specific types of instruction for students with reading difficulties. "This work found that interventions around decoding skills and phonological awareness were most effective for improving reading outcomes for students with reading difficulties." This is in line with the study's findings, which show a highly significant improvement in reading ability after the intervention. Similarly, Buckingham et al. (2019) and DaCosta & Gutierrez (2020) found that the explicit and systematic teaching of phonics has dramatically improved pupils' reading skills compared to those taught through traditional reading instruction. This finding supports current study results on students' reading ability, showing a significant improvement post-intervention. Furthermore, the implication assesses the mean equivalent of the pretest is 2.48, while the posttest has a mean equivalent of 2.89, indicating an increase in reading ability. The mean difference of -0.412 is considered small but significant, as it falls outside the general range of +2 to -2 for significance. The standard deviations of 1.163 and 0.892 suggest moderate deviations from the means, indicating significant dispersion in the test scores. The t-value of -9.133 is large and yields a *p*-value of 0.000, which is highly significant. It is important to note that SPSS displays a *p*-value of -000 when the exact computed value is less than 005. Therefore, the results suggest a significant improvement in reading ability from the pretest to the posttest, despite the small mean difference. Considering the result of reading comprehension, the mean difference between the pretest and posttest yielded -0.578. Although this difference appears as a small value, it still registered high significance at the .000 level, with a corresponding large t-value of -10.718. The standard deviations are moderate, with values of 1.226 and 1.017, indicating differences in the pupils' oral reading comprehension levels. Through the findings of this study, it was clear that this specific intervention was effective in strengthening and improving the reading comprehension skills of students at the elementary school level. This raised significant implications for instructors as well as policymakers, as it presented the need to educate students on explicit reading comprehension strategies.

Implementing such an intervention may support educators in teaching students skills that lead to becoming proficient readers, which would eventually help them enhance students' performance and success in school. This is evidenced by the mean scores of 2.20 in the pretest and 2.71 in the posttest, showing a mean difference of -0.513. Moreover, the t -value of -10.742 is highly significant at the .000 level.

The results of this study are consistent with those of Boholst (2024) and Caga (2019), indicating that Project D.E.A.R. was effective in improving pupils' oral reading comprehension. The significant improvement in the mean scores from the pretest to the posttest suggests that the intervention had a positive impact on the pupils' reading skills. Given the results above, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores based on the three components of the Phil-Iri package is rejected. This indicates a significant difference in students' oral reading comprehension during the first and second administrations of the test. It can be inferred that the pupils' performance has significantly improved after the implementation of Project D.E.A.R. Overall, a significant improvement is evident, so it can be said that Project D.E.A.R. was effective in teaching pupils to read in Filipino. The study's implications include the potential for similar interventions to be implemented in other educational settings to improve reading skills. The findings suggest that early and intensive intervention can lead to significant improvements in reading outcomes and that these interventions should be considered best practices in teaching reading.

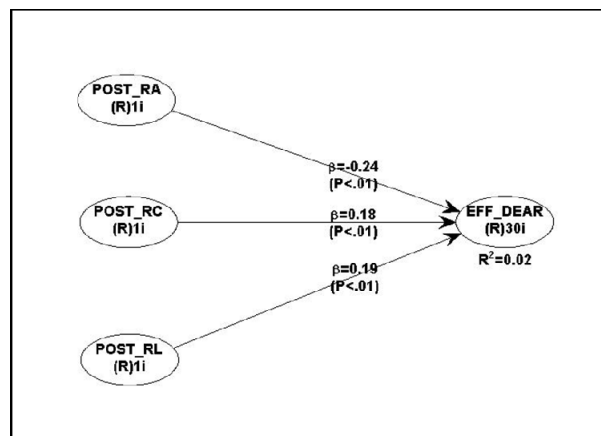


Figure 1: The Structural Model

The results of data processing using WarpPLS version 7.0 are disclosed in Figure 1. The structural model displays the hypothesized relationship between the three components of the Phil-Iri Package — reading ability (POST_RA), reading comprehension (POST_RC), and reading level (the level of effectiveness of the Project D.E.A.R. (EFF_DEAR)). The correlation coefficients, represented by beta values (β) ranging from 0.18 to 0.24, show a direct link, albeit small, between the three variables —reading ability, reading comprehension, and reading level—and the level of effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. The significant links are substantiated by the p-values less than 0.01. Moreover, Kheang et al. (2024) highlighted the crucial role of reading skills in academic success. Strong reading ability, comprehension, and fluency are essential for students to engage with and understand complex texts, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes. Project D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything And Read) is a widely implemented program designed to foster a love of reading and improve reading comprehension (Caga, 2019). The program encourages students to engage in independent reading, promoting reading fluency and comprehension through sustained practice. While the coefficient of determination, R^2 value of 0.02, or 2%, under the dependent variable, makes the effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. appear small, the percentage of variation in effectiveness can still be attributed to the results of the posttest in reading ability, reading comprehension, and reading level. However, a large percentage of variations in the pupils' oral reading comprehension can be attributed to other factors (POST_RL) — and not mentioned in this study

Table 8

Path coefficients, p-values, and Effect size for Hypothesis Testing

Path		Beta Coefficients	(β) <i>p</i> -values*	Effect Size**	Standard Errors	Interpretation
POST_RA	EFF_DEAR	-0.239	<0.001	0.059	0.068	Highly Significant
POST_RC	EFF_DEAR	0.183	0.004	0.038	0.068	Significant
POST_RL	EFF_DEAR	0.189	0.003	0.041	0.068	Significant

*Significant at $p < 0.05$ ** Effect size coefficient: 0.02 – small, 0.15 – medium, 0.30 – large

The results of the hypothesis test yielded small correlation coefficients. Posttest outcomes ($\beta = 0.183$) from the oral reading comprehension of the Phil-Iri Package showed a positive direct effect on the project D.E.A.R.'s level of effectiveness, particularly in reading comprehension ($\beta = 0.183$) and reading level ($\beta = 0.189$). However, a negative beta value of -0.239 is recorded for the connection between reading ability and the effectiveness of the D.E.A.R. project. Notably, it appears that the pupils' reading ability is inversely related to the project's level of effectiveness. The small correlation coefficients suggest that the variables in the hypothesis test have a weak relationship. Despite this, the results indicate that the oral reading and the Phil-Iri Package positively affect the effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R., particularly in terms of reading comprehension and reading level. However, the negative beta value of -0.239 suggests an inverse relationship between reading ability and the effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. This means that as reading ability increases, the project's effectiveness decreases, and vice versa. The high significance level further supports this inverse relationship, indicating that it is statistically significant. Posttests in reading ability, reading comprehension, and reading level contributed a small effect to the project's effectiveness, with effect sizes ranging from 0.038 to 0.059. Still, the significance of the effects of reading ability, reading comprehension, and reading level is confirmed by the *p*-values of less than 0.001, 0.004, and 0.003. This is also supported by the negligible standard error value of 0.068. The abovementioned results lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis. As the findings reveal, there is indeed a significant relationship between the pupils' reading level (as measured by oral reading comprehension) based on the Phil-Iri package's posttest and the level of effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. for Alibog Elementary School pupils.

The rejection of the null hypothesis implies that the findings are statistically significant and not due to random chance. This suggests that there is indeed a meaningful relationship between the pupils' reading levels, as measured by Oral Reading Comprehension, and the effectiveness of Project D.E.A.R. at Alibog Elementary School. Consequently, the results indicate that the Phil-Iri package's posttest is a valid measure for assessing the impact of Project D.E.A.R. on pupils' reading levels. These findings have important implications for educational practices, suggesting that interventions like Project D.E.A.R. can be effectively evaluated using standardized assessments such as the Phil-Iri package.

The study shows that reading comprehension, understanding, and level all influence students' reading skills and fluency. Therefore, the paper focused on production related to creating an action plan for enhancing the student's ability, specifically to read clearly and loudly, to read with expression, to read a variety of texts, to read with comprehension, and to understand several texts and analyses. The creation and implementation of the proposed action plan were done in collaboration with and participation from researchers, students, teachers, and other educational institutions, as well as private donors with government funding. The activities and interventions outlined in the plan target different dimensions of reading, including ability, comprehension, and level. This plan, if successful in practice, will help students read better and more fluently, which holds great promise for improved performance and results. This action plan was based on the study's findings, which suggested that students should be offered various forms of texts and resources to help them understand and relate

to their reading levels. This addresses the low results of the findings, which aim to improve throughout the strategy. This could be through reading centers or libraries, funded by government grants and private donations. This allows teachers to be enlightened on the art of teaching readers practically and how to adopt various teaching methodologies suited to meet the needs of learners. According to Mirasol (2024), students who excel in reading fluency tend to achieve better results in other academic fields, such as mathematics and science. This action plan involves parents in the reading process. Parents and teachers may be motivated to read with children and provide them with opportunities to practice outside of school. The classes or workshops for parents on reading events are feasible and potentially supported by local community groups or businesses.

Table 9

Developed an Action Plan to Enhance the Reading Ability, Reading Comprehension, and Reading Level of Students

Objective	Strategies	Persons Involved	Time Frame	Resources Fund Source		Success Indicator
1. Encourage students to read clearly and aloud using a variety of texts daily, including books, stories, magazines, and journals. This will help them develop their reading skills and gain confidence while reading aloud.	Activate Reading Center Participation in Reading Month Active Reading Techniques Reading Provision Reading Practice Exercises	Pupils Teachers Master Teacher/s School Head/s Other Stakeholders (Ex. SPTA)	August 2023 to June 2024	P3,000	MOOE SEF SPTA	Government funding, educational institutions, or private donors Partnership programs of LGU and teaching personnel. Harmonious relationship of teachers
2. Teach students to read with expression... Active reading strategies such as storytelling, poem recital, and script reading develops students' ability to read with expression.	Activate Reading Center Project SIRE Reading Practice Reading Clubs Theater Group Participation in Reading Month Recollection	Pupils Teachers Master Teacher/s School Head/s Other Stakeholders (Ex. SPTA)	August 2023 to June 2024	P5,000	MOOE SEF SPTA	Government funding, educational institutions, or private donors Partnership programs of LGU and teaching personnel. Harmonious relationship of teachers

3. Encourage students to read books daily, including books, articles, and journals. This will help them develop their reading skills and gain confidence in reading.	Activate Reading Center/Library Bookshelves Active Reading Techniques Reading Provision Reading Practice Exercises	Pupils Teachers Master Teacher/s School Head/s Other Stakeholders (Ex. SPTA)	August 2023 to June 2024	P5,000	MOOE SEF SPTA	Government funding, educational institutions, or private donors Partnership programs of LGU and teaching personnel. Parent-teacher relationship
4. Provide respondents with comprehension questions and passages to read. This will help assess students' understanding and identify areas for improvement.	Reading Level Assessment Reading Comprehension Exercises Resource Provision Activate Reading Center Project SIRE	Teachers Master Teacher/s School Head/s Pupils Other Stakeholders (Ex. SPTA)	August 2023 to June 2024	P2,000	MOOE SEF SPTA	Government funding, educational institutions, or private donors Partnership programs of LGU and teaching personnel. Harmonious relationship of teachers
5. Conduct regular assessments to determine the respondents' reading levels. This will help tailor the reading materials and strategies to students' specific needs.	Trainings and Seminars Active Reading Techniques Reading Level Assessment Reading Practice Recollection	Teachers Master Teacher/s School Head/s Pupils Other Stakeholders	August 2023 to June 2024	P5,000	MOOE SEF SPTA	Government funding, educational institutions, or private donors Partnership programs of LGU and teaching personnel. Harmonious relationship of teachers

Effect of project D.E.A.R. on the reading comprehension of Alibog elementary pupils

6. Offer personalized support and guidance based on students' reading levels and comprehension abilities. This may include one-on-one tutoring, reading groups, or additional resources.	Trainings and Seminars Reading Support and Guidance Reading Practice Reading Clubs Recollection	Teachers Master Teacher/s School Head/s Pupils Parents Other Stakeholders	August 2023 to June 2024	P5,000	MOOE SEF SPTA .	Government funding, educational institutions, or private donors Partnership programs of LGU and teaching personnel. Harmonious relationship among teachers
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4. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the distribution of students by grade level in schools typically mirrors the age distribution, ensuring students are at similar developmental stages academically and socially. Males generally constitute a higher percentage of the student population across most grades, influencing classroom dynamics and educational programs. However, fifth grade exhibits nearly equal gender distribution, potentially fostering a more equitable environment and diverse perspectives. Student enrollments decline with higher grade levels due to factors such as dropouts, movement, and a lack of interest. Additionally, the study found that a high proportion of students are in the frustration category based on the pretest, indicating a need for more support in reading ability, comprehension, and overall reading level. While most students are at an independent reading level and perform well in comprehension, a significant number are reading below their grade level, so they need coaching to address these gaps. Moreover, Project DEAR has proven to be an effective intervention for improving students' reading abilities, aligning with existing studies on the importance of dedicated reading time and the development of specific skills. The project offers a simple yet versatile approach that promotes student involvement, making it easy to implement in most schools. It has been particularly effective in enhancing reading comprehension skills at the elementary school level, as evidenced by significant gains in pupils at Alibog Elementary School. By providing dedicated time for reading and allowing students to choose their material, the program encourages engagement in reading and maximizes comprehension. Overall, Project DEAR helps cultivate better reading habits and approaches, leading to higher proficiency levels and improved scholastic outcomes, with consistent increases in reading scores across all evaluations. Furthermore, the pretest and posttest results of the Phil-Iri package reveal a significant improvement in learners' reading levels, indicating that Project DEAR effectively enhanced pupils' reading skills in Filipino. This significant enhancement suggests that the project was successful in improving reading proficiency among Alibog Elementary students, making the Phil-Iri package's post-test a valid measure for assessing the effectiveness of Project DEAR. To enhance the reading abilities, comprehension, and levels of pupils at Alibog Elementary, an action plan has been proposed, emphasizing collaboration among researchers, educators, and institutions. Supported by government funding and private donations, the plan includes providing diverse texts through new reading centers or libraries and training teachers in effective methodologies. Additionally, it aims to involve parents through workshops and community support to encourage reading at home. By improving reading fluency, the plan seeks to positively impact students' performance in other academic areas, ensuring overall educational success for the pupils.

Recommendations - Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, here are recommendations: The school may prioritize advocating for early registration and ensure teachers diligently identify students of appropriate age for school; teachers may continue to promote equal opportunities among genders, emphasizing

gender inclusivity to attract diverse talent and create a more open and inclusive environment, aligning with the school's mission, vision, and goals; Teachers may improve reading comprehension of the students that will encourage students to continue their education and reduce dropouts and leavers; Also, engaging strategies for pre-test activities are essential for capturing students' interest and preparing them for deeper interaction with the text. These strategies may go beyond mere reading by incorporating dynamic activities that encourage active participation, post-test monitoring and feedback, implementing a system for regular monitoring of students' reading progress, and providing constructive feedback to the teachers. Teachers may use various assessment tools and strategies to track reading abilities over time, allowing them to tailor instruction and interventions to meet individual needs, practice comprehension, and provide teacher support and materials to implement Project DEAR effectively. Emphasize the importance of questioning techniques to enhance understanding and proper reading material. The reading material in Project DEAR may be tailored to match each student's reading ability and interest. This can be achieved through thorough assessments of reading skills, followed by providing a diverse selection of reading materials across various genres and themes. Books can be found everywhere, and schools may enhance Project DEAR by securing adequate funding to ensure its effectiveness. Schools may provide enough space for children to read, develop reading centers, and create library hubs; the study's output may be adopted for implementation to enhance students' reading and comprehension skills. Collaboration with researchers, students, teachers, educational institutions, and private donors, along with government funding, can improve study outcomes. With these recommendations, Alibog Elementary School can strive for even better delivery of Project D.E.A.R. and foster the development of confident readers and proficient students in reading. Toward achieving this goal is the creation of a wholesome approach that promotes love for reading, active participation, and constant support from both students and teachers.

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