

Original Article

Parents' Perspectives on Factors Affecting the Reading Comprehension of Frustration-Level Learners: A Phenomenological Analysis

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Article History:

Date received: May 10, 2026

Date revised: June 17, 2026

Date accepted: June 26, 2026

Recommended citation:

Duazo, S., Dumagan, M., Dalumpines, L.C., Ducot, P., & Bejona, A. (2026). Parents' perspectives on factors affecting the reading comprehension of frustration-level learners: A phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 4(7), 306-315. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2026.250>

Abstract. This study explored the lived experiences of parents regarding the factors influencing the reading comprehension of frustration-level learners using a qualitative phenomenological approach. Ten (10) parents from selected public elementary schools in Davao del Sur were purposively selected and participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews. Findings reveal that reading comprehension difficulties among frustration-level learners are shaped by an interplay of motivational disengagement, digitally mediated distractions, and constrained home literacy environments with limited structured reading routines. Parents reported declining intrinsic motivation toward reading, as children increasingly preferred gadget-based activities, thereby reducing reading exposure and comprehension practice. Home-related conditions such as noise, sibling interference, and lack of structured learning spaces further hindered concentration and reading engagement. Despite these challenges, parents demonstrated adaptive mediation strategies, including translation, guided explanation, close monitoring, and reinforcement of reading tasks. However, they emphasized the need for stronger school-based literacy support, particularly individualized reading interventions, structured reading programs, and clearer instructional materials. Overall, the study shows that frustration-level readers experience not only academic difficulties but also reading challenges shaped by fragmented and resource-constrained home learning environments, which limit consistent reading support. This highlights the important role of parental adaptive practices in low-resource contexts and extends the understanding of home literacy environments in shaping reading outcomes. The study is limited by its small sample size and localized scope. Future research may include larger, multi-regional samples and incorporate teacher-learner triangulation to enhance depth of interpretation and broader applicability.

Keywords: *Reading comprehension; Frustration-level learners; Parental perspectives; Phenomenological study; Home literacy environment.*

Reading comprehension is a foundational academic competency that enables learners to construct meaning, interpret texts, and engage critically with written information. In contemporary digital learning environments, reading has become increasingly complex due to the interplay between traditional literacy practices and technology-mediated exposure to information. International literature consistently emphasizes the critical role of the home literacy environment in shaping reading development. Niklas et al. (2020) highlight that parental attitudes toward shared reading significantly influence children's language development. Lau and Richards (2021) further argue that variations in home literacy exposure contribute to differences in literacy achievement, while Gan (2020) underscores learner motivation as a key factor influencing engagement with academic tasks. Collectively, these studies suggest that reading development is not only an individual cognitive process but is also strongly shaped by parental involvement, home practices, and motivational factors. Therefore, literacy outcomes must be understood within the broader context of home-based learning environments and learner engagement dynamics.

In the Philippine setting, reading comprehension challenges remain persistent across grade levels. Jomocan and Legaspi (2020) report continuing difficulties among learners in achieving expected comprehension standards. Calica (2020) further identifies socioeconomic disparities and limited home resources as significant predictors of reading performance, highlighting the impact of structural inequality on literacy development. These findings indicate that reading difficulties in the Philippines are not isolated academic issues but are closely linked to unequal access to learning resources and variations in home support systems. Therefore, improving literacy outcomes requires attention not only to instructional strategies but also to broader social and household conditions influencing learning.

At the regional level, studies in the Davao Region further reveal systemic constraints affecting reading development. Tagose et al. (2024) point to challenges in reading programs, including limited parental engagement and resource scarcity in schools and homes. In addition, Into and Cajala (2024) report post-pandemic declines in foundational literacy skills, emphasizing the lingering effects of disrupted learning environments. Taken together, these studies highlight that reading difficulties in the region are intensified by both institutional limitations and weakened home-school support systems. Therefore, there is a need to further examine how these contextual factors are experienced at the household level, particularly from the perspective of parents.

While existing literature recognizes the influence of home, school, and contextual factors on reading development, there remains limited qualitative evidence that captures parents' lived experiences, emotional labor, and adaptive strategies for supporting frustration-level readers. Specifically, little is known about how parents interpret persistent reading difficulties in constrained, digitally influenced home environments. This study addresses this gap by reframing reading comprehension difficulties not merely as cognitive deficits, but as ecological and relational experiences shaped by household dynamics, digital distractions, and parental mediation practices. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how parents navigate and respond to reading challenges in low-resource contexts.

This study was anchored on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes that multiple interacting environmental systems shape a child's development. This is complemented by Sénéchal and LeFevre's (2014) Home Literacy Model, which explains how home-based literacy activities such as shared reading and parental involvement directly influence reading development. Together, these frameworks provide a lens for understanding reading comprehension as a product of both environmental systems and structured literacy interactions within the home.

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of parents regarding the home and environmental factors that affect the reading comprehension of frustration-level learners. Specifically, it sought to answer the research question: How do parents describe and make sense of the home and environmental factors that influence the reading comprehension of frustration-level learners?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore and provide an in-depth understanding of real-world literacy-related issues (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). It was anchored in a phenomenological approach, specifically a descriptive phenomenological orientation based on Husserlian principles, which aims to describe

the essence of lived experiences as perceived and expressed by participants. In this approach, the researcher practiced bracketing by consciously setting aside prior assumptions and personal experiences to minimize bias and focus on participants' authentic accounts.

Phenomenology was considered appropriate because it focuses on how individuals make meaning of their lived experiences within their natural contexts (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). In this study, it was used to uncover how parents perceived, interpreted, and navigated the challenges of supporting frustration-level learners in reading comprehension at home. The study specifically aimed to identify and interpret themes that reflect how home and environmental factors influence reading comprehension among frustration-level learners. It focused on parents from selected public elementary schools in Davao del Sur to understand conditions shaping learners' reading performance and to generate insights that may inform home-based and school-based literacy interventions. Data were gathered through individual in-depth interviews only to maintain consistency with phenomenological inquiry and to ensure rich and personal accounts of lived experience.

Participants and Sampling Technique

This study involved 10 parents of frustration-level learners from selected public elementary schools in Davao del Sur, selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used because it allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals with direct and meaningful experience of the phenomenon under study, ensuring they can provide rich and relevant data (Patton, 2015). The participants were parents or primary caregivers who regularly assisted their children with reading activities at home, enabling them to describe home literacy practices, environmental conditions, and challenges that influence reading comprehension.

Frustration-level learners were identified based on school reading assessment practices, such as Phil-IRI results, and school-based reading diagnostic tools used in literacy programs. These assessments classify learners as frustration-level readers when they demonstrate very limited comprehension, frequent reading errors, and difficulty understanding grade-level texts, even with guidance or assistance. Only parents of learners officially classified at this level were included in the study to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the data. The study included parents of children in Grades 1 to 6 who had been experiencing reading difficulties for at least one school year and were actively involved in supporting reading at home. Parents whose children were not officially classified as frustration-level readers or who had minimal involvement in home reading support were excluded from the study to maintain data reliability and depth of experience.

The sample size of 10 participants was considered appropriate for phenomenological research because such designs prioritize depth over breadth of information. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that phenomenological studies typically involve between five and twenty-five participants to allow for detailed exploration of lived experiences. Guest et al. (2005) also note that thematic saturation often emerges in the early stages of qualitative interviews, while Malterud et al. (2016) emphasize that information power increases when participants share rich, specific experiences directly aligned with the research aim. Since the participants shared a similar lived experience as parents of frustration-level learners, the sample size was sufficient to yield meaningful, saturated themes.

Research Instrument

The primary data for this study were gathered through a semi-structured interview guide designed to capture the lived experiences of parents in supporting frustration-level learners in reading comprehension. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for participants to express their experiences freely while ensuring that all essential topics related to the research objectives were covered (Ballena, 2021).

The interview guide included open-ended questions that explored home reading practices, environmental conditions affecting reading, children's reading behaviors, parental support strategies, and perceived challenges and needs. These questions were arranged in a logical flow from general experiences to more specific descriptions of challenges and coping strategies. Examples of guiding questions included asking parents to describe their child's reading experience at home, to explain the challenges they encounter during reading activities, and to share how they assist their child when difficulties arise. Follow-up prompts such as asking for examples, clarifications, and descriptions of reactions, were used to deepen responses and obtain richer data.

The interview guide underwent expert validation before data collection. The research adviser reviewed the initial draft, and revisions were made based on comments and suggestions. The revised instrument was then evaluated

by three experts in qualitative research: a master teacher, an English research coordinator, and a school principal. Their feedback was incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. The interview guide was also pilot-tested with one parent who met the inclusion criteria to assess its clarity and flow, and minor revisions were made before the full data-gathering process.

Meanwhile, the researchers acknowledge that personal experiences and professional exposure in education may influence the interpretation of the data. In recognition of this, reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process by keeping reflective notes and consistently practicing bracketing to minimize the influence of personal beliefs and assumptions. This process ensured that the findings were grounded in the actual experiences and perspectives of the participants rather than the researchers' prior knowledge or expectations.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, permission was secured from the school authorities, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The purpose of the study, along with its procedures and ethical considerations, was clearly explained to participants to ensure voluntary participation. Interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient for the participants to ensure comfort and openness during sharing. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes and was audio-recorded with permission to ensure accurate transcription of responses. To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was employed by allowing participants to review their transcribed responses for accuracy and completeness. Field notes were also maintained during and after each interview to capture nonverbal cues, emotional expressions, and contextual details that supported deeper interpretation of the data.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Colaizzi's thematic analysis method, which is appropriate for descriptive phenomenological studies. The analysis began with repeated reading of all interview transcripts to achieve a full understanding of the participants' narratives. Significant statements relevant to the research problem were identified and extracted from the transcripts. These statements were then used to formulate meanings that captured the essence of the participants' experiences.

The formulated meanings were grouped into clusters that reflected emerging patterns, which were then organized into themes representing shared experiences among participants. These themes were developed into a comprehensive description of how parents experience and respond to reading difficulties among frustration-level learners. Throughout the process, responses in Cebuano and Filipino were translated into English while preserving the original meaning. A constant comparative approach was used to continuously refine themes and ensure consistency across data.

All data were manually coded and organized to trace relationships between home conditions, environmental influences, parental strategies, and children's reading behaviors. This systematic process allowed the researcher to construct a rich and coherent description of parents' lived experiences while maintaining rigor and depth in the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Permission was obtained from the school authorities prior to data collection, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by assigning pseudonyms to all participants and removing any identifying information from the data. All collected data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. After transcription, participants were given copies of their responses for verification to ensure accuracy and transparency. The study adhered to ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and confidentiality, ensuring that participants were protected from harm throughout the research process, as emphasized by Resnik (2020).

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study address the research question of how parents describe and make sense of home and environmental factors influencing the reading comprehension of frustration-level learners. The emergent themes provide an ecological understanding of reading difficulties as shaped by interactions within the home learning environment and the school system. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory and the Home Literacy Model of Sénéchal and LeFevre (2014), the results highlight how microsystem processes, such as home routines, parental mediation, and environmental conditions, interact with mesosystem influences, such as home-school collaboration, to shape children's reading experiences.

Through thematic analysis, parents' narratives revealed two major dimensions: fragmented literacy engagement within the home learning ecology and parental adaptive mediation with institutional dependency. These themes were consistently observed across participants, indicating shared patterns in how learners at the frustration level experience reading difficulties in home-based contexts. Table 1 summarizes the emergent themes, sub-themes, and core ideas derived from participants' responses.

Emergent Themes on Parental Perspective on Home and Environmental Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension of Frustration-Level Learners

The findings of this study revealed that parents perceive reading comprehension difficulties among frustration-level learners as being shaped by complex interactions between home-based learning environments and school-related support systems. Through thematic analysis, parents' narratives emphasized how fragmented literacy engagement, environmental distractions, and varying levels of parental mediation influence children's ability to develop and sustain reading comprehension skills. While many parents observed low motivation and difficulty maintaining focus during reading activities, they also underscored the importance of consistent guidance, structured support, and stronger collaboration between home and school in addressing these challenges. The emergent themes were categorized into two major dimensions: (1) *Fragmented Literacy Engagement within the Home Learning Ecology* and (2) *Parental Adaptive Mediation and Institutional Dependency*. These themes reflect the lived realities of parents managing reading difficulties at home and also express expectations for more responsive school-based interventions.

Table 1 presents the emergent themes, sub-themes, and core ideas derived from the thematic analysis of parental responses, highlighting the key home and environmental factors influencing the reading comprehension of frustration-level learners.

Emergent Themes	Sub-themes	Core Ideas
Fragmented Literacy Engagement within the Home Learning Ecology	Digital displacement of reading motivation	Some children show little interest in reading and prefer playing, gadgets, or other leisure activities instead.
	Household sensory overload and attentional disruption	Cellphones, online games, television, noisy surroundings, and siblings negatively affect concentration and reading time.
	Irregular and compliance-driven reading routines	Reading commonly happens after dinner or only during school-related tasks using teacher-provided modules and materials.
Parental Adaptive Mediation and Institutional Dependency	Translational and explanatory scaffolding practices	Parents encourage reading by giving reminders, translating unfamiliar words, explaining lessons, and monitoring comprehension difficulties.
	Need for school-based reading support	Parents believe schools should provide more reading activities, one-on-one interventions, books, and clearer explanations of lessons.
	Demand for structured teacher-parent literacy collaboration	Regular communication, updates, and shared efforts between parents and

Fragmented Literacy Engagement within the Home Learning Ecology

The findings of the study suggest that reading habits and home environments may influence the development of reading comprehension in frustration-level learners. Parents described how children's reading behaviors are shaped by their interests, routines, and home conditions. The narratives revealed that children's engagement in reading is often affected by distractions, limited motivation to read, and reliance on school-related tasks. At the same time, parents highlighted how home routines and available learning materials may influence children's opportunities to practice reading. These findings indicate that the home environment may either support or limit the reading development of frustration-level learners.

Digital Displacement of Reading Motivation

Parents consistently reported that learners showed low intrinsic motivation to read and often preferred digital entertainment, such as mobile games, television, and online content. This suggests a shift from text-based engagement toward stimulus-rich digital activities that offer immediate gratification. While some parents viewed gadgets as purely distracting, others indirectly acknowledged that digital exposure sometimes supported familiarity with vocabulary, indicating a more complex relationship between technology and literacy engagement.

The participants explained that children often read only when required by school tasks, showing reliance on extrinsic motivation rather than sustained intrinsic interest. This pattern reflects self-determined motivational processes, in which autonomy and the perceived value of reading may be underdeveloped, leading to reading being viewed as an obligation rather than a meaningful activity. Gan (2020) emphasizes that motivation significantly influences engagement in learning tasks, supporting the interpretation that reading behavior is highly contingent on external reinforcement in this context.

The participants explained:

"He is not interested in reading; he just wants to play." (P1)

"When the teacher gives assignments, modules, or activities, he reads or studies. But if there are none, then he doesn't read." (P10)

These responses suggest that learners' reading engagement may rely heavily on external motivation and school-related requirements. The findings are consistent with the study by Gintautas Silinskas et al. (2020), which found that home literacy activities, such as shared reading and teaching reading at home, were associated with children's independent reading and literacy engagement. Similarly, Jan Lenhart et al. (2021) reported that shared-reading experiences and home literacy environments may contribute to children's emergent literacy development. Similarly, Niklas et al. (2020) suggested that positive parental attitudes toward shared reading may support children's language-related outcomes. These findings suggest that learners may become more engaged in reading when parents and teachers provide regular encouragement and meaningful literacy experiences at home and at school.

Household Sensory Overload and Attentional Disruption

Parents described home environments characterized by noise, interruptions, and multiple digital distractions that reduce children's ability to focus during reading activities. These include television, mobile phones, online games, and sibling interactions, all of which contribute to attentional fragmentation.

The participants stated:

"Online games and excessive use of gadgets and TV are major distractions to his study time." (P4)

"At home, we are too noisy." (P9)

These findings suggest that reading difficulties are not solely cognitive but also environmental, as sustained comprehension requires focused attention that is disrupted by competing stimuli. From a broader ecological

perspective, these disruptions reflect limitations in the home microsystem that constrain effective literacy engagement. While gadgets are often viewed negatively, this finding should be interpreted with nuance, as digital tools may also serve educational purposes when used for guided literacy activities. However, in most cases described by parents, technology use was associated with passive consumption rather than structured learning.

The findings are related to the study by Amber Garbe et al. (2020), who found that parents experienced difficulties with learner motivation, accessibility, and balancing learning responsibilities during home-based learning. Similarly, Shelina Bhamani et al. (2020) reported that parents had to adapt home routines and strategies to support children's learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Gan (2020) explained that learners' motivation and learning experiences may influence how they engage with learning tasks and feedback processes. These findings imply that minimizing distractions and establishing structured reading environments at home may help learners participate more consistently in reading activities.

Irregular and Compliance-Driven Reading Routines

The findings further revealed that reading activities are often shaped by external requirements rather than consistent home literacy routines. Reading commonly occurs in the evening or when school modules must be completed, suggesting that literacy practice is largely compliance-driven rather than habit-forming.

The participants stated:

"After dinner, every day." (P2)

"Modules and printed reading materials sent by the teacher." (P5)

These responses indicate that reading opportunities for frustration-level learners often depend on family schedules and school-provided materials. The findings align with Gintautas Silinskas et al. (2020), who emphasized that home literacy activities and shared reading practices were associated with children's independent reading behaviors. Likewise, Jan Lenhart et al. (2021) highlighted that frequent shared reading may contribute to the development of emergent literacy skills. In the Philippine context, Tatel-Suatengco and Florida (2020) found that families engaged in literacy-related practices such as storytelling and shared reading as part of children's learning experiences at home. These findings imply that establishing regular reading schedules and ensuring access to reading materials may provide frustration-level learners with more opportunities to practice reading and comprehension skills.

Parental Adaptive Mediation and Institutional Dependency

The second major theme highlights how parents actively mediate reading difficulties while simultaneously depending on institutional support from schools. This reflects mesosystemic interaction within Bronfenbrenner's framework, in which the home and school systems jointly influence learning outcomes. Across participants, parents described both active engagement in scaffolding reading and a strong expectation for structured school-based interventions.

Translational and Explanatory Scaffolding Practices

Parents commonly described assisting their children through reminders, translating unfamiliar words, explaining difficult lessons, and monitoring for comprehension difficulties. These forms of support reflect parents' efforts to help children improve their understanding despite challenges related to time and household responsibilities.

The participants explained:

"I translate or explain to him what he is reading." (P3)

"I always monitor the parts he struggles with so I can guide him." (P7)

These responses suggest that parents attempt to provide instructional support at home. The findings are consistent with Shelina Bhamani et al. (2020), who explained that parents adapted strategies and routines to support children's learning during home-based education. Similarly, Gintautas Silinskas et al. (2020) emphasized that home literacy activities may contribute to children's reading engagement and independent reading practices. In

the Philippine setting, Calica (2020) reported that parental education and home learning resources were associated with students' reading performance based on PISA 2018 data. These findings suggest that parental guidance and encouragement may help learners experiencing frustration become more engaged in literacy-related activities.

Need for School-Based Reading Support

Parents consistently expressed the need for stronger school interventions such as one-on-one reading sessions, clearer instructional materials, and more accessible reading resources. Importantly, "clearer explanations" refer not only to verbal instruction but also to simplified language in modules, guided reading instructions, and visual learning supports for use at home.

One participant stated:

"In my own opinion, ma'am, one-on-one reading activity." (P1)

Another participant explained:

"More reading activities and explanations of unfamiliar words." (P8)

These findings indicate that parents expect schools to provide structured reading support for frustration-level learners. The findings are related to the work of Melinda de Haan (2021), who emphasized the importance of evidence-based reading interventions and multi-tiered literacy support for struggling readers. Likewise, Merece Reynolds et al. (2021) reported that structured reading interventions, such as MiniLit, improved phonemic awareness, word reading, and spelling among struggling readers. In the Philippine context, Suson et al. (2020) emphasized that learners have diverse learning needs and may benefit from differentiated instructional approaches. These findings imply that schools may help frustration-level learners through reading interventions, individualized support, and appropriate instructional strategies.

Demand for Structured Teacher-Parent Literacy Collaboration

The findings also highlight parents' strong expectations for sustained collaboration with teachers to support reading development. This includes regular communication, feedback on learner progress, and shared responsibility in reinforcing reading activities at home.

One parent shared:

"The teacher must have a regular meeting... so that teachers and parents have collaboration." (P2)

Another participant noted:

"Teachers regularly sending reading materials or modules for home practice helps ensure that children continue learning even when they're not in school." (P4)

These findings suggest that parents consider communication and collaboration with teachers important in monitoring learners' progress and strengthening reading support at home. The findings align with those of Amber Garbe et al. (2020), who noted that parents valued school support and communication during remote learning. Similarly, Shelina Bhamani et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of support systems between schools and families in facilitating home learning experiences. In Davao Region, Tagose et al. (2024) reported that limited parental involvement and resource constraints were among the challenges experienced in implementing school reading programs. These findings imply that collaborative partnerships between parents and teachers may contribute to more consistent reading support and monitoring of learners' reading comprehension development.

Conclusion

This study concludes that reading comprehension difficulties among frustration-level learners emerge from a complex ecological disruption involving motivational decline, environmental fragmentation, and institutional dependency. Learners' reduced engagement in reading is shaped not only by low intrinsic motivation but also by

digitally mediated distractions and unstable home learning conditions, which limit the development of sustained comprehension. Despite these constraints, parents actively engage in adaptive mediation practices such as explanation, translation, and monitoring, highlighting their essential yet often underrecognized role in supporting literacy development within the home environment.

This research makes several important contributions to the understanding of reading comprehension among frustration-level learners in a low-resource Philippine context. First, it makes an empirical contribution by offering a rich qualitative account of parents' lived experiences supporting struggling readers, particularly within fragmented, resource-constrained home environments. Second, it advances a theoretical contribution by extending ecological systems theory and home literacy perspectives, conceptualizing home literacy not as a stable setting but as a fragmented, negotiated space shaped by digital exposure, environmental constraints, and ongoing parental adaptation. Third, it offers a practical contribution by identifying concrete directions for school-based interventions, including structured reading support, improved instructional clarity, and strengthened home-school collaboration systems. Collectively, these contributions highlight reading development as a shared ecological responsibility rather than an isolated instructional outcome.

The findings suggest that reading intervention efforts cannot be fully effective unless both home ecological conditions and school-based instructional systems are addressed simultaneously. There is a need to institutionalize structured home-reading partnership programs that strengthen communication between teachers and parents and provide accessible guidance for home reading support. In addition, schools may implement parental literacy mediation training to equip caregivers with effective strategies for assisting frustration-level learners. Individualized reading intervention systems should also be strengthened, particularly for learners who consistently struggle with comprehension. These initiatives may be implemented in phases, beginning with low-cost interventions such as structured communication tools and parent guidance materials before progressing toward more resource-intensive individualized programs.

This study is limited by its small sample size of 10 participants and its focus on selected public elementary schools in Davao del Sur, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other contexts. In addition, the study relied solely on parental self-reports, without direct perspectives from learners or teachers, and did not include observational data on actual home reading practices. Future research may address these limitations by conducting multi-site studies, incorporating teacher-learner-parent triangulation, and employing mixed methods or longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of home-school literacy interventions on reading comprehension outcomes.

The study underscores that supporting frustration-level readers requires more than isolated classroom remediation. It demands an integrated ecological response that values parental engagement, strengthens home learning environments, and enhances institutional support systems. Reading development, therefore, should be understood as a shared responsibility that requires sustained collaboration between families and schools to ensure that struggling learners are not left behind.

Contributions of Authors

All authors contributed to the design of the study, performed the statistical analysis, developed the protocol, and prepared the first draft of the manuscript. They were involved in managing the analyses and conducting the literature searches. They read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

None

Conflict of Interests

No conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

The researchers sincerely express their heartfelt gratitude to the parents who willingly participated in this study and generously shared their experiences and insights, which were essential to the completion of this research. The authors also acknowledge the use of large language models and digital writing tools, including ChatGPT for assisting in drafting, organizing, and refining the discussion and conclusions, Grammarly for grammar correction and language clarity improvement, and QuillBot for paraphrasing and enhancing sentence structure while maintaining the original meaning.

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