

Original Article

School-Based Factors Affecting the Reading Performance of the Grade 1 Non-Reader Pupils in Valencia District

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Abstract. This study examined the key school factors affecting the poor reading performance of Grade 1 pupils identified as non-readers in public elementary schools in the Valencia District, Division of Negros Oriental, during the School Year 2018–2019. The study used a descriptive-correlational design and involved purposively selected non-reader pupils and their teachers. Data were collected using researcher-made questionnaires with 5-point Likert-scale items and analyzed using the Spearman Rank correlation coefficient. Results showed that most pupils were six years old, and they generally received appropriate preparatory instruction, had positive social experiences, and developed basic language backgrounds. Teachers reported having a positive classroom environment and applying suitable reading strategies, although some indicated limited reading resources. Common school factors that affected the poor reading performance included mixed-ability classes, lack of instructional materials, and limited time for reading and remedial instruction. This study concludes that while supportive teaching practices are present, gaps in school resources and instructional time continue to affect reading outcomes. These findings recommend more teacher professional development training on how to effectively teach reading, improved classroom materials, better classroom organization such as smaller class size, and strengthened reading programs to support early-grade learners.

Keywords: *Language background; Non-reader pupils; Preparatory instruction; Reading performance; Social sense.*

The ability to read is a basic skill that supports learning and development among children, yet many learners continue to struggle with it. Globally, the problem of poor reading performance remains serious. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2025), an estimated 754 million young people and adults are not able to read or write at a basic level. According to the Leadership in Education Report (2024), only 58% of learners achieve the minimum reading proficiency at the end of primary school. In the Philippines, the World Bank (2022) reported that around 91% of children are not proficient readers by the time they reach late primary school, showing that reading difficulties remain a major concern.

To address this, the Philippine government has implemented programs such as the K to 12 Curriculum and the Kindergarten Education Act (Republic Act 10157), which provide early preparation for learners. Kindergarten education focuses on phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge to prepare children for Grade 1. However, despite these efforts, many pupils still show poor reading performance, which affects their overall academic

achievement.

Several studies have identified factors that affect reading performance. The Programme for International Student Assessment (2022) pointed out that higher levels of poverty influence reading development, while Romeo, Uchida and Christodoulou (2022) emphasized the role of socioeconomic status. In addition, Cheung et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of parental involvement in improving reading skills. These studies show that many factors influence reading performance, but they do not clearly identify which specific school-based factors have the greatest impact, especially among early grade learners. This creates a gap in understanding how school conditions directly affect the reading performance of non-reader pupils.

This study focuses on determining the school-based factors affecting the reading performance of Grade 1 pupils identified as non-readers. It examines factors such as the learning environment, reading resources, programs and policies, reading activities, and teacher competence. The findings of this study are important because they can help teachers and school administrators design effective interventions and improve reading programs to support young learners in developing their reading skills.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a descriptive-correlational survey design, with researcher-developed questionnaires. It uses a quantitative approach to emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, and numerical analyses of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys. Jamovi is used in this study as its statistical tool. It allows the researcher to understand how individuals are doing with their experiences. In this study, the pupil respondents participated in a survey. They were personally asked about the factors that led them to perform less well in reading.

Research Participants

The study was conducted in the Valencia District, Negros Oriental, which is supervised by a District Supervisor and comprises 15 public primary and elementary schools led by principals, head teachers, and teachers-in-charge. Purposive sampling, a nonprobability method, was used to identify participants for the present study based on Oral Reading Verification (ORV) results. Of the 15 schools, 49 pupils and 22 corresponding teachers were non-readers. The 49 pupil respondents were selected from the ORV results, which consistently identified them as non-readers from the first to fourth quarter of the school year 2018-2019. The results were gathered from the District MTB Coordinator to identify the specific non-reader respondents in each school. Most of them were 7 years old (24); 23 were 6 years old; and only 2 were 8 years old or older. Both the non-reader pupil respondents and the teacher respondents helped determine the school-based factors affecting the reading performance of Grade 1 non-reader pupils in the Valencia District.

The district is located 9 kilometers west of Dumaguete and is accessible within 15 minutes by public transportation, including jeepneys, tricycles, and multicabs. Most residents in the area speak Cebuano. The selected schools vary in distance from the town proper, ranging from 1.5 kilometers to 85 kilometers. They are managed by different school heads, including School Principal 1, Head Teachers, and Teachers-in-Charge. Across these schools, parents' common livelihoods include farming, carpentry, livestock raising, housekeeping, and small-business employment. While some schools are located near the town center and are easily accessible, others are situated in remote areas with limited access. Despite these differences, the schools share similar socio-economic backgrounds, where most families rely on agriculture and manual labor for income.

Research Instrument

This study used a survey questionnaire as its primary data collection instrument. It has two sections; the first section of the questionnaire consists of 25-item questions for the pupils. The second section of the questionnaire consists of 35-item questions for the teachers. The said instrument is used to determine the school-based factors affecting the pupils' reading performance.

The questionnaires were reviewed by supervisors and master teachers who checked their appropriateness and suggested using a Likert scale format. Revisions were made in response to expert suggestions. A dry run was then conducted with 30 non-reader pupils and their teachers from North City Elementary School, which was not part

of the actual study, to test reliability. The instrument showed acceptable reliability values (0.721, 0.701, and 0.789), and further modifications were made to improve the questions' validity and reliability.

The researcher used several tools to analyze the data. Percentages were used to show how a part relates to a whole, particularly in presenting the schools' profiles in terms of teachers' length of experience. Weighted mean was used to determine the profile of non-reader pupils and the schools, as well as to identify the common school factors affecting the reading performance of non-reader pupils. For the pupil questionnaire, a 5-point Likert scale was used, where 5 (Always, 4.21–5.00) perceived 81–100%, 4 (Frequent, 3.41–4.20) indicated 61–80%, 3 (Sometimes, 2.61–3.40) indicated 41–60%, 2 (Seldom, 1.81–2.60) indicated 21–40%, and 1 (Never, 1.00–1.80) indicated 1–20% of the time. For the teacher questionnaire, a similar 5-point Likert scale was used. The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (rs) was used to determine the relationship between the non-reader pupils' profiles and the school factors. These tools allowed the researcher to quantify perceptions, identify common factors, and establish significant relationships between pupil profiles and school-based influences on reading performance.

Data Gathering Procedure

After receiving permission from the DepEd officials, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the respondents. This ran from March 11, 2019, to April 2019. The questions for the pupil respondents were written in the local dialect. The researcher thoroughly explained them during the face-to-face administration to ensure full understanding and to avoid confusion. This also ensured the accuracy and validity of the data collected. The researcher marked the columns on the questionnaires according to the pupils' answers. Teachers' questionnaires were completed based on their school experiences. To identify the non-reader pupils, data were obtained from the District Office for the first to fourth quarters of the school year 2018-2019.

Data Analysis Procedure

The pupil questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, which the researcher personally asked during face-to-face interviews. Responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale (5 – Always, 4 – Frequent, 3 – Sometimes, 2 – Seldom, 1 – Never). The pupil questionnaire focused on their profile, including preparatory instruction, social sense, and language background. On the other hand, the teacher questionnaire gathered data on their experiences related to the learning environment, reading resources, school policies and projects, teacher competence, and school factors affecting the reading performance of non-reader pupils. In addition, teachers used the Oral Reading Verification Tool (ORV) to assess pupils' reading performance through comprehension questions, with pupils classified as Independent, Instructional, Frustration, or Non-Reader/Syllabic Reader.

Ethical Considerations

In the conduct of this study, the researcher was guided by the following ethical considerations through the mandate of CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) 15, s.2019, upholding the rights of the participants/respondents:

Informed Consent Process

The respondents' decision was voluntary. Before being handed a questionnaire, the participants were required to sign an Informed Consent Form attesting their willingness to participate in the study if they had understood the directions.

Assent for Minors

Since this study required grade 1 non-reader pupils who are minors, parental consent was obtained from the parents of the pupil respondents. The participation of the respondents was voluntary. They decided whether to participate in this study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity Measures

To protect the respondents' privacy and anonymity, the researcher made sure that no unauthorized access was made to the data. The respondents did not provide any personal information to the researcher except for their age. Because the questionnaires did not include the respondent's name, their privacy was protected when gathering the significant data for the study.

Voluntary Participation

The respondents were free to choose whether to participate in the study. They could withdraw their participation and consent at any moment.

Data Storage and Protection

Code names were assigned, survey forms and other information were kept in a locked file cabinet, and data were saved in a password-protected computer. Only the researcher and the panel have access to the respondents' information.

Approval from DepEd

The researcher wrote a permission letter to ask for approval from DepEd to conduct the study. Without the approval from the department, the researcher would not be able to gather data from the respondents. DepEd granted the researcher permission to conduct the study provided that: the participation of the respondents is purely voluntary; results shall be kept confidential and would be used solely for the intended purpose; and proper coordination with the school principals shall be done.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

In terms of Age

Table 1 shows the age range of Grade 1 non-reader pupils in the District of Valencia.

Table 1. Age Profile of the Pupils		
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
6	23	46.94
7	24	48.98
8	2	4.08
Total	49	100.00

As indicated above, there are 49 Grade 1 non-reader pupil respondents. Twenty-three (46.94%) are six years old; twenty-four (48.98%) are seven years old; and only two (4.08%) are eight years old. Pupil respondents aged 7 years are the highest.

In terms of Physical and Clinical Status

Table 2 reveals the physical and clinical status of the Grade 1 non-reader pupil respondents.

Table 2. Physical and Clinical Status of the Pupils		
Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Normal	49	100.00
Non-normal	0	0.00
Total	49	100.00

This is based on their records on their school health cards. As revealed above, all pupil respondents are in good physical and clinical condition. None of the respondents is considered non-normal.

Experience of Non-Reader Pupils

In terms of Preparatory Instruction

Table 3 shows the extent to which non-reader pupils receive appropriate preparatory instruction from teachers in school.

Table 3. Profile of the Non-Reader Pupils in Terms of Preparatory Instruction (n = 49)			
Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Your teacher helped you read simple words.	4.69	0.51	Always
Your teacher articulated the sounds that the letters make.	4.65	0.48	Always
Your teacher taught you the letters in their names.	4.55	0.65	Always
Your teacher articulated how some words end with the same sound.	4.53	0.58	Always
Your teacher helped you become familiar with the letters of the alphabet.	4.43	0.76	Always
Your teacher helped you become familiar with the letters of the alphabet using pictures.	4.27	0.64	Always
Composite	4.52	0.60	Always

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Always (Pupil experience is within the range of 81–100%); 3.41 – 4.20 Frequent (Pupil experience is within the range of 61–80%); 2.61 – 3.40 Sometimes (Pupil experience is within the range of 41–60%); 1.81 – 2.60 Seldom (Pupil experience is within the range of 21–40%); 1.00 – 1.80 Never (Pupil experience is within the range of 1–20%)

The findings show that non-reader pupils consistently receive appropriate preparatory instruction from their

teachers, as reflected by the overall composite mean of 4.52, indicating that these supports are experienced 81–100% of the time. Teachers actively help pupils recognize letters, their names, and the sounds they make, with high mean scores of 4.43, 4.55, and 4.65, respectively. These results align with Kumaş et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of alphabet mastery, phonemic awareness, and print knowledge in improving early reading skills. Similarly, Hulme et al. (2021) highlighted that oral language skills such as letter-sound knowledge, phoneme awareness, and print decoding are essential foundations of literacy. Moreover, Gioia et al. (2026) noted that the alphabetic principle should be learned before pupils can effectively participate in phonemic awareness, while Gerde et al. (2019) affirmed that it is more beneficial to teach letter names and sounds together rather than separately. These findings suggest that consistent exposure to letters and sounds, supported by effective teaching strategies, is crucial in enhancing pupils' reading performance.

Despite these strong instructional practices, the pupils remain non-readers, suggesting that traditional teaching approaches may not fully meet their learning needs. The pupils belong to Generation Alpha, who have a digital-native upbringing and an innate comfort with technology, and are the first to have grown up fully in the twenty-first century (Parimbekovna, 2023). They were born starting in 2010. Their learning preferences differ from those of previous generations, often relying on digital tools and interactive media. Studies have shown that integrating technology into teaching can improve reading, as seen in Quimsing and Cruz (2024), where pupils showed improvements in reading with the use of READTECH 1.0, a technology-based reading application for enhancing literacy. This concept is supported by Klimova and Zamborova (2020), who found that the pupils' reading comprehension had improved after using mobile applications to treat them. Therefore, while teachers provide strong foundational instruction, there is a need to align teaching strategies with the digital nature of Generation Alpha learners by integrating technology to better support their reading development.

In terms of Social Sense

As shown in Table 4, non-reader pupils consistently observe and experience a positive social sense in school, 81–100% of the time.

Table 4. *Profile of the Non-Reader Pupils in Terms of Social Sense (n = 49)*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Your teacher really listens to what you have to say.	4.71	0.46	Always
If you needed extra help, you would receive it from your teacher.	4.69	0.51	Always
You make friends easily at school.	4.53	0.68	Always
You feel happy at school.	4.49	0.68	Always
Your teacher treats you fairly.	4.49	0.65	Always
You feel like you belong at school.	4.41	0.67	Always
Whenever you feel sad, you go to your friends.	4.31	0.80	Always
Other pupils seem to like you.	4.29	0.79	Always
You feel safe in all areas of the school buildings and compound.	4.27	0.78	Always
You were not insulted, teased, beaten, or abused by anyone more than once in school.	3.65	0.83	Frequent
Composite	4.38	0.69	Always

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Always (Pupil experience is within the range of 81–100%); 3.41 – 4.20 Frequent (Pupil experience is within the range of 61–80%); 2.61 – 3.40 Sometimes (Pupil experience is within the range of 41–60%); 1.81 – 2.60 Seldom (Pupil experience is within the range of 21–40%); 1.00 – 1.80 Never (Pupil experience is within the range of 1–20%)

The findings indicate that pupils receive strong support from their teachers, feel safe and secure in school, and experience happiness when they are with their classmates and teachers. They belong to a positive school environment where teachers listen to them and provide help, which contributes to their overall sense of well-being. This positive atmosphere may explain why pupils consistently feel happy in school, as they are not bullied and receive continuous support in learning how to read, as shown in Table 3. In addition, the data reveal that non-reader pupils frequently experience not being insulted or teased in school 61–80% of the time, suggesting that negative experiences are minimal.

These results are consistent with Skordi and Fraser's (2019) findings, which reported that pupils experienced a positive social environment in which they were treated equally, listened to by teachers, and supported in their learning. Pupils also felt accepted and were able to build friendships, which contributed to their academic success. Similarly, Colita and Genuba (2019) found that pupils perceived their teachers as caring and supportive, providing assistance, feedback, and equal treatment to all learners. This concept aligns with The Dignity Act of 2014, as cited in Colita and Genuba (2019), which highlights the importance of strong connections between pupils and school personnel in promoting a sense of belonging and happiness. However, Colita and Genuba (2019) also noted that

some pupils still experience concerns about safety and occasional bullying, findings supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023), which revealed that 43% of girls and 53% of boys in the Philippines are victims of bullying. In the present study, although pupils reported being frequently free from bullying, there remains a little possibility of negative experiences that may affect their reading performance, as social relationships influence learning. Therefore, maintaining a positive, safe, and supportive school environment is essential in promoting pupils' motivation and improving their learning outcomes.

In terms of Language Background

As indicated in Table 5 regarding language background, pupils always receive appropriate instruction and support from their teachers using different reading materials 81–100% of the time.

Table 5. *Profile of the Pupils in Terms of Language Background (n = 49)*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Your teacher uses flash cards, picture dictionary, and charts.	4.61	0.61	Always
Your classroom is clean and conducive for learning.	4.59	0.54	Always
Your teacher guided you well.	4.51	0.71	Always
You have enough time to read in school.	4.45	0.74	Always
You have complete materials for reading.	4.41	0.76	Always
You share the MTB textbook with other pupils.	4.18	0.93	Frequent
You visit the school library.	4.16	0.94	Frequent
In school, you use MTB story books.	4.02	0.83	Frequent
Your classmates are silent when classes are going on.	3.96	0.82	Frequent
Composite	4.32	0.76	Always

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Always (Pupil experience is within the range of 81–100%); 3.41 – 4.20 Frequent (Pupil experience is within the range of 61–80%); 2.61 – 3.40 Sometimes (Pupil experience is within the range of 41–60%); 1.81 – 2.60 Seldom (Pupil experience is within the range of 21–40%); 1.00 – 1.80 Never (Pupil experience is within the range of 1–20%)

The findings show that teachers use a variety of reading materials such as flash cards, picture dictionaries, charts, and MTB storybooks to meet the individual needs of pupils in line with inclusive education. Classrooms are generally clean and conducive to learning, teachers provide guidance, and pupils are given enough time to read. Pupils are also frequently quiet during class, which supports a good learning environment. However, results indicate that pupils frequently share MTB books and only sometimes access sufficient materials, as seen in their shared use of textbooks and storybooks, as well as in their visits to the school library. These practices are consistent with the study of Bularon (2025), which emphasized the use of mother tongue materials and teacher-made instructional tools to improve pupil performance. Similarly, Villacorte (2022) supported the use of storybooks in improving reading skills, while Annisyah and Munisa (2025) found that flashcards are a useful, flexible, and efficient teaching tool for improving primary school pupils' reading abilities.

Despite these positive practices, challenges remain. Apaydin and Kaya (2020) noted that Generation Alpha learners are highly exposed to technology and that teaching strategies should reflect their digital nature. This suggests that traditional materials like flashcards may be less effective if not integrated with technology. In terms of classroom environment, the findings align with Colita and Genuba (2019), who highlight that clean classrooms, supportive teachers, and structured learning environments contribute to better academic performance. However, the frequent sharing of MTB books due to limited resources supports the findings of Reapor (2026), pointing to inadequate reading materials as a barrier to reading development. Hunahunan (2019) further revealed that the supply of MTB textbooks is a problem that leads to lower reading achievement.

Moreover, pupils frequently visit the school library and use available resources, which aligns with the findings of Figuracion and Ormilla (2021), who link library hour programs to improved word reading. Mariano (2026) also highlighted that access to print-rich and digital environments fosters early literacy. However, despite these supports, pupils remain non-readers, which may be due to limited access to adequate MTB materials and insufficient integration of technology in teaching. These factors suggest that while support systems are present, gaps in resources and instructional approaches continue to affect pupils' reading performance.

Profile of School as Perceived by the Teachers

In terms of the General Atmosphere of the Learning Environment

Table 6 depicts the general atmosphere of the learning environment as perceived by the teachers. As indicated, teachers "strongly agree" that they have positive experiences, respect, and a strong, harmonious relationship with co-teachers and pupils 81–100% of the time.

Table 6. Profile of the School in Terms of General Atmosphere of the Learning Environment (n = 22)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The school environment is clean and in good condition.	4.59	0.59	Strongly Agree
Teachers have close working relationships with each other.	4.59	0.50	Strongly Agree
Teachers at this school build strong relationships with pupils.	4.55	0.51	Strongly Agree
In this school, you teach ways to resolve disagreements so that everyone will be satisfied with the outcomes.	4.50	0.51	Strongly Agree
Your class enrollment is not too large.	4.50	0.67	Strongly Agree
You feel safe outside on the school grounds.	4.36	0.58	Strongly Agree
Pupils respect their teachers.	4.27	0.70	Strongly Agree
Pupils in this school respect one another's differences, for example gender and ethnicity.	4.18	0.66	Agree
In this school, it is not common for pupils to tease and insult one another.	3.59	0.59	Agree
Composite	4.35	0.59	Strongly Agree

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 81–100%); 3.41 – 4.20 Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 61–80%); 2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 41–60%); 1.81 – 2.60 Disagree (Teacher experience is within the range of 21–40%); 1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree (Teacher experience is within the range of 1–20%)

The results reveal that teachers strongly agree that the learning environment is conducive, not only in terms of physical factors such as clean classrooms and manageable class sizes, but also through respectful, close relationships within the school community. Teachers also agree that teasing and insulting among pupils is uncommon, occurring only 61–80% of the time, indicating a generally respectful atmosphere. These findings align with Garcia and Cuevas (2019), who found that teachers similarly perceived schools as safe environments and reported having positive work engagement. Overall, this sense of safety and strong interpersonal connections contribute to a positive school climate.

Teachers also strongly agree that the school environment is clean, well-maintained, and not overcrowded, which they experience 81–100% of the time. This finding supports Garcia and Cuevas (2019), who found similar perceptions among respondents, and is reinforced by Mkwama (2023), who emphasizes that school facilities influence pupils' academic achievement. Additionally, pupils are observed to respect their teachers and peers regardless of gender or ethnicity, and incidents of teasing or insulting are minimal. These findings of Colita and Genuba (2019) noted contrasting instances of bullying in some contexts. Still, the overall positive experiences reported by respondents (81–100% of the time) highlight that a conducive learning environment fosters healthy relationships and supports student performance.

Despite these positive conditions, some pupils remain non-readers. This data may be explained by the characteristics of Generation Alpha, as discussed by Hutajulu et al. (2024), who describe this group as more individualistic, less inclined to share, resistant to rules, and highly reliant on technology, with limited face-to-face interaction. These behavioral traits suggest that even in a supportive and conducive school environment, differences in generational learning preference, particularly the reliance on digital engagement, may influence reading development. Thus, these factors could explain why non-readers persist in the Valencia District despite the overall advantageous learning atmosphere.

In terms of the Reading Resources

As reflected in Table 7, teachers agree that their school libraries are functional 61–80% of the time. Thus, they have access to the tools like story books, big books, and charts they need for teaching reading and other subjects, and the recommended course books are adequate. However, they moderately agree (have experienced this 41–60% of the time) that the materials they look for are in the library collection. This data indicates that the school libraries do not have adequate learning materials for teaching beyond the recommended course books.

Table 7. Profile of the School in Terms of Reading Resources (n = 22)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
You have access to the tools or reading instructional material you need to do your job.	3.77	0.87	Agree
There are adequate recommended course books in school for teaching and learning in your subject area.	3.55	0.74	Agree
Your school library is functional.	3.41	1.01	Agree
The materials you have looked for are in the library collection.	2.95	0.79	Moderately Agree
Composite	3.42	0.85	Agree

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 81–100%); 3.41 – 4.20 Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 61–80%); 2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 41–60%); 1.81 – 2.60 Disagree (Teacher experience is within the range of 21–40%); 1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree (Teacher experience is within the range of 1–20%)

The findings indicate that teachers generally have access to the tools needed for their work, aligning with Pagalilauan et al. (2023), who found that respondents agreed they had access to library materials, suggesting a functional and conducive environment for teaching and learning. However, challenges remain, as respondents in the same study also moderately agree that obtaining materials can be difficult. This data is supported by Segismundo (2026), who reported that public elementary school libraries face issues such as inadequate facilities, insufficient funding, and lack of trained personnel.

In contrast, Soriano and Vargas (2021) found that respondents agreed on having moderately adequate instructional materials and books, which contradicts the present study, in which teachers report sufficient materials 61–80% of the time. Soriano and Vargas (2021) also noted that many schools have moderately adequate functional libraries, in contrast to the current findings, in which libraries are considered functional. Despite this, the availability of books remains a concern. Maden et al. (2026) emphasized that both linguistic and visual stimuli, as well as regular usage of written texts, are necessary for the development of reading skills, highlighting the importance of having adequate and appropriate books, especially for early learners such as Grade 1 pupils using mother tongue resources. Overall, while schools in the Valencia District have functional libraries, the lack of sufficient and relevant reading materials persists. Some resources needed by teachers and pupils are not available in library collections, which may contribute to the continued presence of non-reader pupils in the district despite having generally accessible facilities.

In terms of the Policies and Projects that Support the Reading Program

Table 8 reveals that the teachers of the non-reader pupils “strongly agree” that they conduct the SSWRP every afternoon and “agree” that they have implemented the policies and projects that support the reading program in the school 81–100% of the time. They “agree” to have initiated school reading activities to promote reading across all grades, 61–80% of the time, and to have classroom libraries. On the other hand, they “moderately agree” that they have functional, up-to-date classroom libraries where pupils can use the books they want every afternoon and during their free time to promote a love of reading.

Table 8. *Profile of the School in Terms of Policies and Projects that Support Reading Program (n = 22)*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
You conduct Synchronized School-Wide Reading Program (SSWRP) every afternoon.	4.68	0.57	Strongly Agree
There are school activities that encourage and promote reading across all grades.	4.14	0.77	Agree
You have a reading corner in the classroom to promote love for reading.	4.09	0.75	Agree
Your classroom library is developed and updated to encourage leisure reading and to support all curriculum areas.	3.27	0.88	Moderately Agree
Composite	4.05	0.74	Agree
<i>Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 81–100%); 3.41 – 4.20 Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 61–80%); 2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 41–60%); 1.81 – 2.60 Disagree (Teacher experience is within the range of 21–40%); 1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree (Teacher experience is within the range of 1–20%)</i>			

The study's findings support Division Memorandum No. 9, series of 2016, which highlights the high number of non-readers based on the Phil-IRI pretest and ORV. In response, the Division of Negros Oriental strengthened implementation of the SSWRP across schools, aligning with the ECARP and DepEd's goal of developing learners who can read and write at grade level. District supervisors and school administrators closely monitor the program, and teachers strongly agree that they actively implement SSWRP. Supporting this, studies emphasized the importance of engaging reading activities, such as games (Alotaibi, 2024), manipulatives (Paglinawan & Ibojo, 2024), and small-group instruction (Costales, 2026). This data is supported by Omega and Alieto (2019), who found that play-based strategies, such as blocks, puzzles, and songs, are effective in teaching literacy.

The study also aligns with Maja and Motseke (2022), showing that pupils frequently use classroom libraries, and with the study of Mahendra et al. (2024), which reported that school libraries are crucial in shaping children's literacy. These findings emphasize that classroom and school libraries serve as essential learning resources and spaces for promoting a love for reading. As a result, teachers agree to maintain updated reading corners or classroom libraries that provide access to diverse and engaging reading materials. However, maintaining and updating these resources can be costly, posing challenges for teachers in sustaining such initiatives. Despite supportive policies and programs, some pupils are still identified as non-readers. This finding may be attributed to teachers' heavy ancillary workloads, as noted by Evangelista, Binaloga and Bautista (2024), restricting time for professional growth, research, and planning, which frequently results in burnout, low self-esteem, and decreased wellbeing. These additional responsibilities limit the time teachers can devote to reading instruction and to

developing classroom libraries. Consequently, while reading programs are well-supported, the additional duties may hinder their full effectiveness in improving pupils' reading performance.

In terms of the Teachers' Reading Activities in the Classroom

Table 9 shows the different reading activities used by the teacher respondents in the classroom.

Table 9. *Profile of the School in Terms of Teachers' Reading Activities in the Classroom (n = 22)*

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<u>Alphabet matching</u>	22	100.00
Making words with letter tiles	18	81.82
Using visual cues such as posters, picture flash cards, and anchor charts	22	100.00
<u>Blending and segmenting games</u>	21	95.45
Syllable games	20	90.91
<u>Rhyming games</u> (words or phrases)	21	95.45
Using rhythm to identify letter names and sounds (while reading an ABC chart) or word families (while reading a word family chart or list)	21	95.45
Showing videos/computer games	19	86.36
<u>Having audio-assisted reading/</u> incorporating music	21	95.45
Reading at just-the-right level of the pupils	21	95.45
Timed repeated reading	21	95.45
Assigning reading buddies/ <u>paired (or partner) or reading</u> teach a friend	22	100.00
Small group reading	21	95.45
Choral reading	19	86.36
Guided reading	21	95.45
Reading aloud	22	100.00
Drawing objects with their names	20	90.91
Writing and spelling	22	100.00
<u>Other Activities</u>	10	45.45

*Multiple responses

The findings show that teachers employ a wide range of reading activities to support Grade 1 learners. All teacher respondents engaged pupils in alphabet-matching activities using letter tiles, posters, picture flashcards, and anchor charts, and consistently implemented reading buddies, read-aloud sessions, and writing and spelling tasks. Most teachers (21 out of 22) also incorporated blending and segmenting games, rhyming activities, audio-assisted reading, guided and small-group reading, and level-appropriate texts. In contrast, others used drawing, syllable games, videos, choral reading, and word-formation activities. These practices align with Öngören (2022), Kılınçcı and Bayraktar (2021), who emphasized the effectiveness of emergent literacy strategies; Asilestari et al. (2025) on visual aids; and Nkurunziza (2024) on combined alphabet and phonological instruction. Similarly, Nadiera and Yamat (2019) highlighted the importance of blending and segmenting in reading success, while Calub (2026) underscored the value of rhymes, songs, and chants in developing literacy skills.

The integration of technology, such as videos, computer games, and audio-assisted reading, is also evident and supported by Pasqualotto et al. (2025), who found that digital tools enhance engagement and cater to diverse learning styles. Collaborative strategies like peer tutoring, reading buddies, and guided group reading align with findings of Navarro (2026) and Lane, Contesse et al. (2025), which demonstrate that smaller-group instruction and peer support improve literacy outcomes. Additionally, the gradual progression of skills—from phonological awareness to word formation—observed in the study aligns with Fresneda et al. (2026), underscoring that reading development follows a structured, sequential process. Behera (2024) further noted that literacy-rich environments and engaging activities significantly influence children's reading development.

Despite the extensive use of varied and effective reading strategies, some pupils remain non-readers. This finding may be attributed to the presence of mixed-ability learners with diverse needs and learning styles, for whom a single strategy may not be sufficient. Puzio et al. (2020) emphasized that differentiated instruction has been an effective evidence-based practice. Additionally, learners are Generation Alpha, digital natives who require technology-integrated approaches (Höfrová et al., 2024). These factors—learner diversity and generational characteristics—may explain why non-readers persist despite teachers' consistent and varied implementation of reading activities.

In terms of the Teachers' Competence in the Area of Teaching Strategy in Reading

Table 10 shows that teachers strongly agree they are highly competent in applying various reading strategies 81–100% of the time and are fully aware of their role in developing pupils' reading skills. They effectively demonstrate letter sounds, help pupils recognize alphabet patterns, and use engaging activities while consistently motivating learners to develop a love for reading. Overall, teachers exhibit very high competence in teaching reading; however, despite this, some pupils are still considered non-readers.

Table 10. *Profile of the School in Terms of Teachers' Competence in the Area of Teaching Strategy in Reading (n = 22)*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Extent of Competence
You articulate the sounds that letters make.	5.00	0.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
You help children become familiar with the letters of the alphabet.	4.91	0.29	Strongly Agree	Very High
You talk about the relationship between letters and sounds.	4.91	0.29	Strongly Agree	Very High
You help children sound out words (i.e., /buh/ + /oy/ = boy).	4.91	0.29	Strongly Agree	Very High
You demonstrate patterns in words (i.e., ball, balloon).	4.91	0.29	Strongly Agree	Very High
You use alphabet books with children.	4.73	0.46	Strongly Agree	Very High
You do alphabet activities with children (i.e., play with letter blocks, magnets, puzzles, etc.).	4.73	0.55	Strongly Agree	Very High
You listen to children read or pretend to read aloud.	4.73	0.46	Strongly Agree	Very High
You encourage follow-up, guide, and motivate pupils to create interest in the subject.	4.73	0.46	Strongly Agree	Very High
You read books with rhyming texts.	4.55	0.51	Strongly Agree	Very High
You have provision of more teaching and learning resources.	4.36	0.66	Strongly Agree	Very High
Composite	4.77	0.39	Strongly Agree	Very High

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree - Very High; 3.41 – 4.20 Agree - High; 2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Agree - Moderate; 1.81 – 2.60 Disagree - Low; 1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree - Very Low

Research over the past decade confirms that teachers significantly influence pupils' academic and lifelong success (Rudin et al., 2024), particularly through classroom practices that shape reading development. Activities that build alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and literacy through play – such as using letter blocks, puzzles, and alphabet books – align with Sudharani (2024), Irwansyah et al. (2024), and Davis and Evans (2021), who found these practices effective in promoting emergent literacy. Teachers in the present study, like those in Norway, agree that both free play and structured instruction enhance literacy skills, and those who strongly implement these strategies are considered highly competent. Additionally, reading aloud is emphasized as a key strategy, supported by Ningsih et al. (2025), who highlight its role in improving prosodic skills such as intonation, pronunciation, and voice clarity.

Access to sufficient instructional resources also plays a crucial role in literacy development. Teachers strongly agree on the importance of having adequate teaching and learning materials, consistent with Ngunjiri et al. (2019), who stress that literacy-rich environments encourage pupil engagement and support early reading acquisition. However, despite teachers' high competence in applying varied strategies, some pupils remain non-readers. One contributing factor is the presence of mixed-ability learners, as classrooms consist of pupils with diverse backgrounds, skills, and learning styles. Fatona et al. (2025) explain that pupils' reading abilities can be strengthened by adaptable and differentiated instructional strategies, particularly when addressing specific difficulties. Another factor is that pupils are part of Generation Alpha, who are highly influenced by technology and may not respond as effectively to traditional teaching methods. Quimsing and Cruz (2024) emphasized that technology integration in the classroom has the potential to engage and support struggling readers, especially in reading. Thus, while teachers demonstrate high competence in teaching reading, factors such as learner diversity, generational characteristics, and potential gaps in instructional emphasis contribute to the persistence of non-readers.

In terms of the Teachers' Competence in the Area of Length of Experience

Table 11. *Profile of the School in Terms of Teachers' Competence in the Area of Length of Experience (n = 22)*

Length of Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – 2 years	11	50.00
3 – 4 years	5	22.73
5 years and above	6	27.27
Total	22	100.00

Table 11 shows the teachers' length of experience. Half of the teacher respondents (11 teachers or 50%) have 1–2 years of experience at the grade level. The rest have 3–4 years (5 teachers, or 23%) and 5 years or more (6 teachers, or 27%). Most teacher respondents are new Grade 1 teachers. This study shows that teachers have varying lengths of teaching experience, which may directly affect their teaching. In the study by Moon (2023) conducted in Tuguegarao City, most teachers had an average teaching experience of 1–5 years (24.74%). This study is relevant to the present study because it suggests that most teacher respondents are relatively new to the service, with less than five years of teaching experience. Teachers' length of experience at a given grade level varies, which is why new teachers need adequate preparation to become competent. To support teacher development, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 42, series 2017, also known as the National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (Llego, 2019). This order aims to: set clear expectations for teachers across well-defined career stages from beginning to distinguished practice; encourage teachers to pursue proficiency actively; and provide a uniform framework for assessing performance, identifying needs, and supporting professional development. Through this initiative, even new teachers are trained to become properly equipped to implement the K to 12 programs effectively.

Common School Factors Affecting the Reading Performance

Table 12 presents the school factors as perceived by the teachers.

Table 12. *Common School Factors Affecting the Reading Performance of the Non-Reader Pupils (n = 22)*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
There are mixed-ability learners combined in one class.	4.45	0.51	Strongly Agree
More time is allocated to teaching reading.	4.36	0.58	Strongly Agree
There is time set apart for remedial teaching for pupils with difficulties in learning.	4.36	0.66	Strongly Agree
Each pupil is given attention during teaching and learning in class every session.	4.18	0.73	Agree
There is adequate time to teach reading.	4.05	0.58	Agree
Pupils have adequate preparation in Kinder.	3.95	0.84	Agree
The school has adequate teaching and learning resources in reading.	3.86	0.77	Agree
The school has a fair environment.	3.41	0.80	Agree
The school has adequate teachers.	3.27	0.94	Moderately Agree
There is a sufficient number of pupils/class.	3.05	0.79	Moderately Agree
Composite	3.90	0.72	Agree

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 81–100%); 3.41 – 4.20 Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 61–80%); 2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Agree (Teacher experience is within the range of 41–60%); 1.81 – 2.60 Disagree (Teacher experience is within the range of 21–40%); 1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree (Teacher experience is within the range of 1–20%)

Table 12 presents the common school factors affecting the reading performance of non-reader pupils. Teacher respondents “strongly agree” that managing mixed-ability learners, allocating more time for reading, and providing remedial teaching for struggling pupils are significant factors influencing reading outcomes. Teachers also “agree” that addressing individual needs and interests, having a fair school environment, and ensuring adequate preparation in kindergarten contribute to learning 61–80% of the time. However, they “moderately agree” that having adequate teachers and a sufficient number of pupils per class occurs only 41–60% of the time. The presence of mixed-ability learners aligns with Gapuzan’s (2025) findings, which noted that teachers face significant challenges in instructing reading in classes with diverse learners, often requiring experimentation with multiple strategies to find the most effective approaches. Dela Cruz (2026) emphasized that teachers have inadequate time for personalized teaching owing to extensive class sizes and many school obligations, making this a key factor in the persistence of non-reader pupils. Teacher respondents “strongly agree” on the importance of allocating sufficient time for teaching reading (mean = 4.36) and providing remedial instruction for struggling pupils (mean = 4.36), while also “agreeing” on giving individual attention during lessons (mean = 4.18). These findings corroborate the study of Dela Cruz (2026), which emphasizes that dedicated teaching time and remedial interventions such as phonics-based instruction, use of flashcards and reading materials, differentiated instruction, guided reading, peer tutoring, and individualized remedial instruction are used to support the struggling readers. Despite this, ancillary duties reduce the time teachers can devote to actual teaching. Kulal et al. (2022) reported that additional non-academic obligations substantially affect the quality of instruction and negatively affect both teacher and student performance.

Adequate preparation in kindergarten also influences reading performance, with teacher respondents agreeing on its significance (mean = 3.95). This data supports Reed (2024), who found a strong correlation between early skills and later academic performance, noting that kindergarten pupils with formal pre-kindergarten experiences had significantly higher readiness assessment scores than students with non-formal pre-kindergarten experiences.

Similarly, respondents “agree” that a literacy-rich environment with adequate teaching and learning resources promotes reading development (mean = 3.86). However, Robles (2025) highlighted that insufficient Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) resources remain a burden, making lesson preparation and delivery difficult, thereby contributing to the persistence of non-reader pupils. Finally, teacher respondents “moderately agree” that having an adequate number of teachers and appropriate class sizes affects reading outcomes (means = 3.27 and 3.05, respectively). The study by Beuchert and Nandrup (2025) indicated that larger class sizes elevate both physical and emotional strain throughout early education, especially for pupils coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. They further explained that students' socioemotional health is closely connected to attendance and the development of noncognitive and cognitive skills, these influences may exacerbate the detrimental effects of greater class sizes on academic performance. In the Valencia District, Grade 1 class sizes range from 20 to 30 pupils, which is manageable, yet non-reader pupils still exist. Overall, the quality of pupils' education reflects the interplay of the educational system, curriculum, school administrators, learning environment, and teacher competence.

Relationship Between the Non-Readers' Profile and the School Factors

Table 13 shows that all p-values for the paired variables are less than the level of significance (0.05).

Table 13. Relationship Between the Non-Readers' Profile and the School Factors (n = 49)

Non-Readers' Profile Correlated to School Factors	r_s	Degree of Relationship	p-value	Decision	Remark
Preparatory Instruction and School Factors	.31	Moderate	.001	Reject H_{o1}	Significant
Social Sense and School Factors	.52	Strong	< .001	Reject H_{o1}	Significant
Language Background and School Factors	.45	Moderate	.006	Reject H_{o1}	Significant

Level of Significance = 0.05

Legend: Between ± 0.50 to ± 1.00 $\pm$ strong relationship; Between ± 0.30 to ± 0.49 $\pm$ moderate relationship; Between ± 0.10 to ± 0.29 $\pm$ weak relationship; Between ± 0.01 to ± 0.09 $\pm$ very weak relationship

The findings indicate a positive and significant correlation between preparatory instruction, social sense, and language background with school factors, with coefficients of $r = .31$ ($p < .001$), $r = .52$ ($p < .001$), and $r = .45$ ($p < .006$), respectively. For preparatory instruction, the moderate positive relationship ($r_s = .31$) suggests that non-reader pupils who perceive teacher instruction and support positively tend to have teachers who affirm that appropriate preparatory instruction is provided. This data aligns with Bosha and Ukute (2019), who emphasize that teacher and pupil perceptions of teaching practices significantly affect learning outcomes. Despite the favorable preparatory instruction, non-reader pupils still exist due to limited learning resources, insufficient individualized attention, large class sizes, and teachers' ancillary duties. Effective teaching practices, such as using diverse strategies, establishing reading mastery, and exposing pupils to letter sounds and stories, remain crucial for improving reading performance.

Regarding social sense, a strong positive correlation ($r_s = .52$) indicates that pupils' positive social interactions with teachers and peers are associated with teachers' affirmation of appropriate instruction. This finding supports Dimitropoulou et al. (2026), who emphasized the significance of a positive school environment in fostering positive academic emotions, enhancing motivation, and boosting reading comprehension. However, mixed-ability classes, the characteristics of Generation Alpha pupils, and limited teacher resources continue to challenge reading instruction, leaving some pupils as non-readers despite favorable social experiences. In terms of language background, the moderate positive relationship ($r_s = .45$) indicates that pupils who view teachers' initiatives to build language foundations positively align with teachers' reports of providing appropriate instruction. This finding aligns with Ramadhani et al. (2025), indicating that the use of reading materials and Anggelina et al. (2025) audiovisual aids significantly predicts reading achievement. Nonetheless, the persistence of non-reader pupils is attributed to insufficient MTB books, limited remedial teaching time, and competing ancillary duties for teachers. Consolidating these findings, the study affirms that teachers' commitment (Ramadhani et al., 2026), communication with pupils (Phan, 2025), and active instructional roles (Hall et al., 2026) positively influence reading outcomes.

Multivariate Data in Identifying the Relationship Between the Non-Readers' Profile and the School Factors

Table 14 presents the multivariate data on the relationship between the non-readers' profile and school-based factors.

Table 14. *Multivariate Data in Identifying the Relationship Between the Non-Readers' Profile and the School Factors (n = 49)*

Pupil Number	Ave. Preparatory Instruction	Ave. Social Sense	Ave. Language Background	Average School Factors
1	4.17	3.90	3.78	3.40
2	4.83	4.00	3.78	3.40
3	4.50	4.40	4.67	3.20
4	4.67	4.40	4.67	3.20
5	4.67	4.40	4.56	3.20
6	4.67	4.60	4.56	4.15
7	4.67	4.40	4.56	4.15
8	4.67	4.60	4.56	4.15
9	4.00	4.80	4.33	4.15
10	3.67	4.80	4.33	4.15
11	5.00	4.80	4.78	3.53
12	5.00	4.80	4.78	3.53
13	5.00	4.80	4.78	3.53
14	5.00	4.80	4.78	3.53
15	4.00	3.50	3.67	3.30
16	4.00	3.80	3.67	3.30
17	4.00	3.80	4.00	3.30
18	4.00	3.40	3.67	3.30
19	4.00	3.30	3.67	3.30
20	4.00	3.80	3.67	3.30
21	4.00	3.40	3.67	3.30
22	5.00	5.00	4.44	3.80
23	4.17	4.30	4.00	3.60
24	5.00	4.50	3.89	3.60
25	4.33	4.30	4.00	3.60
26	4.33	4.20	4.00	3.60
27	4.50	4.50	4.00	3.60
28	5.00	4.90	4.56	3.85
29	4.83	4.90	4.89	3.85
30	5.00	4.90	4.78	3.85
31	4.83	4.90	4.78	3.85
32	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.60
33	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.60
34	4.67	4.00	4.11	4.10
35	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.00
36	5.00	4.20	4.67	4.00
37	4.00	4.70	4.56	4.00
38	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
39	5.00	4.80	4.56	3.90
40	5.00	4.80	4.56	3.90
41	5.00	4.80	4.56	3.90
42	4.67	3.60	3.67	3.10
43	4.67	4.00	3.89	3.10
44	3.83	4.10	4.11	3.40
45	4.00	4.50	4.33	3.40
46	4.00	4.70	4.22	3.40
47	4.17	4.50	4.22	3.40
48	4.00	4.30	4.33	3.40
49	5.00	4.90	4.78	4.10

The non-readers' profile is classified into three variables: preparatory instruction, social sense, and language background. In the analysis, the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (r_s) is used because the responses on the mentioned variables, including the school factors, are measured on an ordinal scale.

Conclusion

This study provides insights into the school-based factors that affect early reading achievement. The respondents' profiles in terms of preparatory instruction, social sense, and language background are generally favorable to learning. Schools, in general, provide a pleasant learning atmosphere, and policies and projects have been implemented to support reading programs. Teachers employ various teaching strategies in reading, although differences in teaching experience can influence the learners' reading performance. However, certain school-based factors impede reading development. Larger class sizes with mixed-ability learners limit the time available for

reading instruction and remedial teaching, while teachers' ancillary duties reduce opportunities for focused interventions. Overall, school-related factors experienced by Grade 1 non-readers significantly influence their ability to learn to read. This calls for the Department of Education to consider smaller class sizes and reduce teacher ancillary duties to focus on teaching.

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