

Original Article

# Comprehension, Motivation, and Engagement Gains Following Contextualized Reading Intervention Among Grade 2 Struggling Readers

Venus C. Maglaya

## Author Information:

Polytechnic College of La Union, Agoo, La Union, Philippines

## Corresponding Author:

Venus C. Maglaya  
[venusmaglaya0@gmail.com](mailto:venusmaglaya0@gmail.com)

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**Abstract.** This study examined the changes in reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading engagement following exposure to contextualized texts among Grade 2 struggling readers. Additionally, the study explored the relationships among these variables. A quantitative pretest-posttest design was employed with 100 struggling readers identified from 12 public elementary schools in Bauang North District, Division of La Union, Philippines. Participants underwent a six-week intervention using eight culturally contextualized short stories written in English with Filipino cultural elements. Reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading engagement were measured before and after the intervention using researcher-developed instruments with established validity and reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82-.87$ ). Data were analyzed using paired samples t-tests and Pearson correlations. Results revealed statistically significant improvements from pretest to posttest in reading comprehension ( $M = 8.47$  to  $13.82$ ,  $d = 1.87$ ), reading motivation ( $M = 22.34$  to  $29.67$ ,  $d = 1.75$ ), and reading engagement ( $M = 19.48$  to  $27.35$ ,  $d = 1.96$ ), all  $p < .001$ . Significant positive correlations were found among comprehension gains, motivation, and engagement ( $r = .38$  to  $.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These findings suggest that contextualized texts are associated with substantial improvements in struggling readers' comprehension, motivation, and engagement, and that these affective variables are positively related to comprehension outcomes.

**Keywords:** Contextualized texts; Reading comprehension; Reading motivation; Reading engagement; Struggling readers.

Reading comprehension is widely understood as a cognitive process. It requires decoding, the activation of prior knowledge, inferential reasoning, monitoring of understanding, and strategic adjustment when meaning breaks down (Fethi & Jozha, 2026). However, to conceptualize reading comprehension as exclusively or even primarily cognitive is to ignore a substantial body of evidence demonstrating that what a reader can do is inseparable from whether a reader chooses to do it in the first place. Reading is also an affective and behavioral enterprise. Motivation determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of reading effort (Jang & Conradi Smith, 2025). Engagement determines whether a reader participates actively, sustains attention, deploys strategies, and persists through difficulty (Ohlsson et al., 2025).

In this sense, reading motivation and engagement should also be taken into account when understanding learners' comprehension struggles. This is especially urgent as UNESCO's 2025 Global Education Monitoring Report reported that six in ten children worldwide lack minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics by the end of

primary school, meaning over 60% of primary-aged learners fail to demonstrate even a basic understanding of grade-appropriate reading concepts. The World Bank (2026) estimates that in low-income countries, only approximately 10 percent of children can read proficiently by age ten.

In the Philippines, the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that 76.3% of Filipino 15-year-olds failed to reach minimum reading proficiency (Level 2), ranking 75th out of 81 participating countries (OECD, 2023). The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2, 2025) reported that many Grade 2 and Grade 3 learners cannot read grade-level texts with comprehension, and that this foundational gap compounds year after year. While the Department of Education (DepEd) has launched literacy initiatives like the National Reading Program, these programs often focus on decoding and fluency rather than the deeper cognitive and affective processes that sustain comprehension.

Beyond national statistics and policy deliberations, however, is the classroom. The researcher of this study is also a teacher. In years of teaching Grade 2 in a public elementary school, what became evident was not merely that struggling readers could not answer literal questions about a text. It was that many had stopped trying, unmotivated. When asked to read aloud, they complied mechanically but without expectation of understanding. This pattern suggests that the problem is not exclusively cognitive. A struggling reader who has internalized failure will not invest effort. Without effort, practice does not occur. Without practice, comprehension cannot improve. This dynamic, often described as the "Matthew effect" in reading, turns initial skill deficits into widening achievement gaps over time (Larimer et al., 2025).

This observation carries a critical implication. If the difficulty of struggling readers were purely cognitive, such as decoding accuracy, vocabulary size, and syntactic knowledge, then instruction focused exclusively on skills would suffice. However, the evidence suggests otherwise. Meta-analyses have consistently shown that cognitive-only interventions yield modest and often unsustainable gains for struggling readers, in part because they do not address the motivational and engagement barriers that prevent sustained practice (Toste et al., 2020). Motivation matters. Engagement matters. They are the conditions under which cognitive instruction can take hold.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000, as cited in Sardabi et al., 2023) provides a useful explanatory framework. The theory posits that learners have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When instruction supports these needs, learners internalize motivation and engage more deeply. Engagement theory (as cited in Rojas et al., 2023) further conceptualizes engagement as multidimensional: behavioral (effort, participation), emotional (interest, enjoyment), and cognitive (strategies, self-regulation). Empirically, Sleeman et al. (2024) found that reading motivation consistently predicts comprehension in elementary grades, even after controlling for prior achievement. More recently, a meta-analysis by Toste et al. (2020) confirmed that motivational interventions have significant, though modest, effects on reading outcomes for struggling readers. What remains less understood, however, is how specific instructional materials relate to motivation and engagement and how these affective factors relate to comprehension.

One promising approach is the use of contextualized texts, which are considered to be reading materials that reflect the cultural, linguistic, and experiential worlds of the learners for whom they are written (Nicholas, 2025). The theoretical rationale draws from schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, as cited in Meylani, 2024): when a text activates prior knowledge, comprehension is facilitated. However, contextualized texts may also serve an affective function. Bishop (1990, as cited in Adam et al., 2025) famously described such materials as "mirrors" in which children see themselves reflected, and "windows" through which they see others. This sense of recognition may satisfy the need for relatedness in Self-Determination Theory; it may also signal to the child that their world is worthy of curricular attention, fostering a sense of competence and autonomy. In short, contextualized texts may work not only because they are easier to understand, but because they make children want to understand.

While numerous studies have demonstrated that contextualized or culturally relevant texts improve comprehension, surprisingly few have examined the relationships among contextualized texts, motivation, engagement, and comprehension in a single study. Specifically, it remains unclear whether comprehension gains following contextualized text interventions are associated with concurrent improvements in motivation and engagement.

In the Philippine context, this question is particularly underexplored. Studies on contextualized reading materials

in the country have largely focused on their development and preliminary effectiveness (e.g., Dohinog et al., 2025), not on the relationships among psychological mechanisms and reading outcomes. Moreover, existing studies rarely disaggregate struggling readers as their own analytical category, often mixing them with proficient readers in a way that obscures the unique motivational challenges of those who struggle most. Furthermore, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study to date has explicitly examined changes in reading motivation and engagement alongside comprehension among Grade 2 struggling readers in Philippine public schools.

This study aims to address that gap. It aims to measure whether exposure to contextualized texts is associated with changes in comprehension, motivation, and engagement. It also examines the relationships among these variables. Specifically, it addresses the following objectives:

- (1) To determine the level of reading comprehension of Grade 2 struggling readers before and after exposure to contextualized texts;
- (2) To determine the level of reading motivation of Grade 2 struggling readers before and after exposure to contextualized texts;
- (3) To determine the level of reading engagement of Grade 2 struggling readers before and after exposure to contextualized texts;
- (4) To determine the significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores in terms of: a. Reading comprehension, b. Reading motivation, c. Reading engagement;
- (5) To determine the significant relationship between reading comprehension gains and posttest reading motivation and reading engagement among Grade 2 struggling readers.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative pretest-posttest design to examine changes in reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading engagement before and after exposure to contextualized texts among Grade 2 struggling readers. The study also examined the correlations among comprehension gains, reading motivation, and reading engagement. A one-group pretest-posttest design was employed within this framework. First, pretest measurements were conducted, wherein reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading engagement were measured before exposure to contextualized texts. Second, the intervention was implemented, during which Grade 2 struggling readers were exposed to contextualized texts over a six-week period. Third, posttest measurements were conducted, wherein reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading engagement were measured after exposure to contextualized texts.

While the researcher recognizes the limitations of a one-group pretest-posttest design without a control group, particularly threats to internal validity such as history, maturation, and testing effects, several mitigation strategies were employed. The intervention was limited to six weeks during the second quarter of the 2025- 2026 school year to reduce the likelihood of history effects (external events influencing outcomes). The short intervention period also addressed maturation threats, as significant developmental reading gains in Grade 2 learners typically occur over longer timeframes than six weeks. Thus, while this study cannot claim true experimental causality due to the absence of a control group, the combination of longitudinal measurement provides a rigorous examination of changes associated with the intervention.

### Participants and Sampling Technique

The study was conducted in Bauang North District, Division of La Union, Philippines, which comprises a total of 12 public elementary schools serving learners from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The participants of the study were Grade 2 struggling readers identified from these 12 schools. The sample size for this study was determined using a priori power analysis conducted in G\*Power 3.1.9.4. For the paired samples t-tests (Objective 4), power analysis was conducted using the following parameters: a medium effect size ( $d = 0.50$ ), an alpha level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and a desired power of  $1-\beta = 0.80$ . The analysis yielded a required sample size of 34 respondents. For the correlation analysis (Objective 5), power analysis was conducted using the following parameters: a medium effect size ( $\rho = 0.30$ ), an alpha level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and a desired power of  $1-\beta = 0.80$ . The analysis yielded a required sample size of 84 respondents. To account for potential attrition, incomplete responses, or outliers, the researcher targeted 100 Grade 2 struggling readers. This final sample size of 100 ( $n = 100$ ) exceeds the minimum required for all analyses and provides adequate statistical power.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) officially enrolled in Grade 2 during the school year 2025–2026; (b) identified by their teachers as struggling readers based on classroom observations, reading behaviors, and prior performance; (c) scored below the proficiency cut-off in the pretest reading comprehension assessment; and (d) obtained parental or guardian consent to participate. To ensure consistency in identifying struggling readers across the 12 participating schools, the researcher provided all teacher-raters with a set of operational guidelines based on observable indicators anchored on the Department of Education's Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS) for Grade 2 reading. A struggling reader was defined as a learner who exhibits at least two of the following characteristics: difficulty decoding grade-appropriate words with frequent errors or hesitations; reading speed noticeably below expected fluency for Grade 2 (approximately below 40 Words Correct Per Minute); inability to answer basic literal comprehension questions after reading a short passage; or observed reluctance, avoidance, or disengagement during reading tasks in whole-class instruction. This standardization procedure ensured that a shared set of observable benchmarks guided teacher judgments. With a target sample of 100 students across 12 schools, each school contributed approximately 8 to 9 struggling readers to the final sample.

### **Research Instrument**

This study utilized three researcher-developed instruments to measure reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading engagement among Grade 2 struggling readers. All instruments were administered at two time points (pretest and posttest), with the comprehension test using parallel forms to minimize testing effects. Each instrument was designed to be developmentally appropriate for Grade 2 struggling readers, incorporating simple language, pictorial supports, and read-aloud administration procedures.

**Reading Comprehension Test.** The researcher developed a Reading Comprehension Test to measure learners' reading comprehension before and after exposure to contextualized texts. The test consisted of two parallel forms: Form A for the pretest and Form B for the posttest. Each form contained two short, grade-appropriate reading passages followed by five comprehension questions per passage, for a total of ten questions per form. The passages were written in Filipino (the learners' primary language of instruction and daily communication) and featured themes familiar to Grade 2 learners in the Philippine context, such as preparing for a typhoon, making new friends, helping a classmate, and adjusting to a new school.

Each question was classified as either literal (explicitly stated in the passage) or inferential (requiring reasoning and text connection). Literal questions asked for directly stated information such as character names, grade levels, events, or objects mentioned in the passage. Inferential questions required learners to determine feelings or emotions not directly stated, explain reasons for characters' actions, draw lessons from the story, or express personal connections to the text. Examples of literal questions included "Anong baitang si Mia?" (*What grade level is Mia?*) and "Sino ang bagong kaklase ni Ben?" (*Who is the new classmate of Ben?*). Examples of inferential questions included: "Ano ang naramdaman ni Mia sa pagbabasa kahit may bagyo?" (*How did Mia feel while reading during the storm?*) and "Ano ang natutunan mo sa kuwento?" (*What have you learned from the story?*)

Each correct response received one point, with total scores ranging from 0 to 20. The scoring key classified learners into three proficiency levels: below proficiency (0–10 points), approaching proficiency (11–15 points), and proficient (16–20 points). The same scoring rubric was applied to both Form A and Form B to ensure consistency.

To minimize testing effects, parallel forms were developed with matched difficulty levels, passage length (approximately 50–70 words per passage), number of questions, and question type distribution (50% literal, 50% inferential). Form A was administered as the pretest, and Form B as the posttest. The test was administered in small groups of 5 to 10 learners. For each passage, the teacher read the passage aloud while learners read along silently. The teacher then read each question aloud twice, and learners circled or marked their answers on individual answer sheets.

**Reading Motivation Scale.** The researcher also developed a Reading Motivation Scale to measure learners' motivation to read before and after exposure to contextualized texts. The scale was grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and measured three dimensions of reading motivation: intrinsic motivation (reading because it is inherently enjoyable), extrinsic motivation (reading for rewards, grades, or praise), and amotivation (lack of perceived value or intention to read).

The scale consisted of 10 items, with four items measuring intrinsic motivation (e.g., "I like reading stories," "I am happy if it is already time to read"), two items measuring extrinsic motivation (e.g., "I am reading so I can get a prize," "I am working hard to read so my teacher will praise me," and three reverse-coded items measuring amotivation (e.g., "There is no sense in reading," "Reading is not for me"). One additional intrinsic motivation item ("I am proud of myself whenever I read") was included to capture reading pride as a component of intrinsic motivation.

Given the young age and struggling reader status of the participants, the scale employed a pictorial 4-point Likert scale to support comprehension and reduce reliance on reading ability. Faces represented the four response options: a big smiling face (😊) for "Always / Yes, very true," a small smiling face (🙂) for "Often / Somewhat true," a neutral face (😐) for "Rarely / Not very true," and a frowning face (😞) for "Never / Not true at all." These pictorial anchors have been successfully used in previous studies with young children (Kılıç & Aydın Bölükbaş, 2025) because they are intuitive, culturally universal, and reduce the cognitive load of interpreting verbal Likert categories.

**Reading Engagement Scale.** The researcher developed a Reading Engagement Scale to measure learners' engagement in reading activities before and after exposure to contextualized texts. The scale was grounded in Engagement Theory (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004 as cited in Hamed et al., 2020) and measured three dimensions of engagement: behavioral engagement (effort, participation, and persistence during reading tasks), emotional engagement (interest, enjoyment, and positive affect toward reading), and cognitive engagement (use of strategies, self-regulation, and effort to understand).

The scale consisted of 9 items, with three items measuring behavioral engagement (e.g., "I try my best during reading time," "I participate during reading time together with my classmates"), three items measuring emotional engagement (e.g., "I am happy when we read a story," "I am interested in the stories we read"), and three items measuring cognitive engagement (e.g., "I think about what I read even after reading time is over," "When I don't understand a word, I try to find out what it means"). One reverse-coded item ("I feel bored during reading time") was included in the emotional engagement dimension.

Like the motivation scale, the engagement scale employed the same pictorial 4-point scale with faces representing the frequency or intensity of each behavior or feeling: 😊 (Always / Yes, very true), 🙂 (Often / Somewhat true), 😐 (Rarely / Not very true), and 😞 (Never / Not true at all). Each face corresponded to a numerical score (😊 = 4, 🙂 = 3, 😐 = 2, 😞 = 1), with the reverse-coded item (No. 6) scored in reverse. Total scores ranged from 9 to 36, with higher scores indicating higher reading engagement. Scores were interpreted as high engagement (27–36), moderate engagement (18–26), or low engagement (9–17).

**Validity.** To ensure content validity, all three instruments were reviewed by a panel of experts consisting of experienced Grade 2 reading teachers, master teachers, and a faculty expert from the Graduate School of the Polytechnic College of La Union. Expert feedback focused on the alignment of items with the operational definitions of comprehension, motivation, and engagement; the age-appropriateness of language and sentence structure for Grade 2 learners; the clarity of instructions and response format; the cultural and contextual relevance of the passages and items for Filipino learners; and the appropriateness of the pictorial anchors for struggling readers.

A pilot test was conducted with 10 Grade 2 learners who shared similar characteristics with the target participants (struggling readers from public elementary schools) but were not included in the main study. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a minimum threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable. The pilot test yielded the following reliability coefficients: Reading Comprehension Test (Form A:  $\alpha = 0.85$ ; Form B:  $\alpha = 0.87$ ), Reading Motivation Scale ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ), and Reading Engagement Scale ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ). These coefficients indicate good internal consistency across all instruments.

The parallel forms of the Reading Comprehension Test (Form A and Form B) were also tested for equivalence using a separate sample of 10 Grade 2 learners. The correlation between Form A and Form B was  $r = 0.78$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating acceptable parallel form reliability. Based on pilot test results, minor revisions were made to

simplify two ambiguous items on the motivation scale and to improve the clarity of the pictorial anchor for the "Rarely" category.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

Data collection was conducted in three sequential stages: pretest, intervention, and posttest. All data collection activities were integrated into the regular school schedule to minimize disruption to instructional time and to ensure that participating learners remained in their normal classroom environment throughout the study. Prior to any data collection, the researcher secured all necessary permissions from the Schools Division Office, the school heads of the 12 participating public elementary schools, and the parents or guardians of the participating learners. Child assent was also obtained directly from each learner using age-appropriate language.

**Pretest Stage.** The pretest stage was conducted during the first week of the study, prior to any exposure to contextualized texts. All participating Grade 2 struggling readers ( $n = 100$ ) were administered the three research instruments in the following order: Reading Comprehension Test (Form A), Reading Motivation Scale, and Reading Engagement Scale. The pretest was administered over two separate sessions to avoid learner fatigue, with the Reading Comprehension Test administered in the first session (approximately 20–25 minutes) and the motivation and engagement scales administered together in the second session (approximately 20–25 minutes). The two sessions were conducted on separate days within the same week.

The Reading Comprehension Test (Form A) was administered in small groups of 5 to 10 learners per session to ensure that struggling readers received adequate support in understanding instructions and to create a comfortable testing environment. For each passage, the teacher read the passage aloud while learners read along silently. The teacher then read each comprehension question aloud twice. Learners circled or marked their answers on individual answer sheets. Learners were encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand the instructions, but teachers were instructed not to provide hints or feedback on the content of the questions.

The Reading Motivation Scale and Reading Engagement Scale were administered together in whole class or small group settings. Given that these scales required learners to self-report their feelings and behaviors, special attention was given to creating a safe, non-judgmental environment. Before administering the scales, the teacher read the standardized administration script to reassure learners that there were no wrong answers, that their responses would not affect their grades, and that the researcher only wanted to know their true feelings about reading. The teacher then read each item aloud twice while learners followed along. For each item, learners circled the face (😊, 😐, 😞, or 😡) that best showed how they felt or what they did during reading time. The pictorial nature of the scale allowed struggling readers to respond without being hindered by their reading difficulties.

**Intervention.** The study implemented contextualized texts as the primary intervention for Grade 2 struggling readers. Contextualized texts refer to reading materials that reflect the cultural, linguistic, experiential, and geographic realities of the learners for whom they are written (Nicholas, 2025). Unlike generic or foreign-produced reading materials that may feature unfamiliar settings, characters, names, and situations, contextualized texts are intentionally designed to be recognizable to learners. When a child reads a story about a child who lives in a place like theirs, speaks like them, eats food they recognize, and faces problems they have experienced, the text becomes what Bishop (1990) famously called a "mirror," a reflection of the child's own life and identity. For Grade 2 struggling readers in the Philippines, contextualization is a critical pedagogical strategy. The use of localized reading materials has been shown to yield high appreciation from both teachers and students and is demonstrably effective for increasing reading comprehension among primary learners (Ramos, 2021).

The contextualized texts have the following characteristics: First, the texts featured familiar settings, which are places that learners recognize from their daily lives. Second, the stories populated these settings with Filipino characters, protagonists, and supporting figures bearing Filipino names such as Mia, Ben, Andrei, Leo, Rosa, Liza, and May. Third, the texts presented culturally relevant situations, events, and problems that mirror Filipino children's lived experiences. The stories depicted preparing for a typhoon, welcoming a new classmate, sharing *baon* (packed lunch), or helping a friend who is sad. Fourth, the stories employed familiar language patterns (natural, conversational Filipino English interspersed with occasional Tagalog words and phrases). Fifth, the texts were organized around relevant themes, values, and lessons that align with Filipino culture and the Department of Education's values education framework. Sixth and finally, the texts adhered to appropriate text complexity guidelines for Grade 2 reading level based on the curriculum guide under the Most Essential Learning

Competencies (MELCs) of DepEd. Sentences were kept between five and ten words where possible. Key phrases were repeated within stories to support word learning, and each story was accompanied by simple illustrations designed to support comprehension without replacing the text.

Eight contextualized stories were produced and reviewed by a panel of three experts: an experienced Grade 2 reading teacher, a master teacher specializing in early literacy, and one district-level reading coordinator. Experts were asked to evaluate each story based on the following criteria: (a) appropriateness of reading level for Grade 2 struggling readers; (b) cultural and contextual relevance; (c) clarity of language and sentence structure; (d) appeal and interest for young learners; (e) alignment with DepEd's Most Essential Learning Competencies for Grade 2 reading; and (f) quality and helpfulness of illustrations. Based on expert feedback, revisions were made to two stories. One story was revised to simplify a complex sentence structure. Another story was revised to replace an unfamiliar vocabulary word with a more common equivalent.

A pilot test of the contextualized texts was conducted with 15 Grade 2 struggling readers from a non-participating school with similar characteristics to the target sample. During the pilot test, each story was read aloud by the teacher while learners followed along. After each story, learners were asked simple questions about what they understood and whether they liked the story. Based on pilot test feedback, minor adjustments were made to two stories to improve clarity, and the order of story presentation was rearranged to start with the two most engaging stories (as rated by learners) to build initial interest.

The intervention was carried out over a period of six weeks during the second quarter of the school year 2025–2026. The six-week duration was informed by meta-analytic findings that text-based reading interventions implemented over 6 to 10 weeks produce measurable gains in comprehension for struggling readers in the early grades (Al-Otaiba et al., 2020). The intervention was integrated into the regular Filipino subject, following the existing class schedule to avoid disruption. Each week, learners were exposed to one or two contextualized stories, depending on story length and learner progress. Over the six-week intervention period, all eight contextualized stories were used, with some stories repeated in Weeks 5 and 6 to reinforce comprehension and build fluency.

**Posttest Stage.** The posttest stage was conducted during the week immediately following the conclusion of the six-week intervention (Week 7). The same 100 Grade 2 struggling readers who completed the pretest were administered the posttest instruments. The posttest battery included the Reading Comprehension Test (Form B – parallel form), the Reading Motivation Scale (same as pretest), and the Reading Engagement Scale (same as pretest). The same administration procedures used in the pretest stage were followed to ensure consistency and comparability of scores. All posttest answer sheets were coded with the same learner identification numbers used in the pretest to allow for paired data analysis. Posttest scores were recorded alongside pretest scores in password-protected files.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Data analysis was conducted using quantitative methods aligned with each research objective. All analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 26) for descriptive statistics, paired samples t-tests, and Pearson correlations. Prior to the main analyses, preliminary data screening was conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions required for parametric statistical tests.

Before conducting the main analyses, the researcher screened the data for missing values, univariate outliers, normality, linearity, and multicollinearity. Of the 100 Grade 2 struggling readers who completed both pretest and posttest assessments, all 100 cases (100%) had complete data on all variables. No missing values were present, as the researcher ensured that all learners completed all items during the administration sessions. Any incomplete answer sheets were addressed immediately by asking the learner to complete the missing responses, resulting in a complete dataset.

Univariate outliers were identified by examining standardized scores (z-scores) for each variable. Values beyond  $\pm 3.29$  standard deviations from the mean are considered outliers (Mowbray et al., 2018). No outliers were detected for any of the key variables. Meanwhile, normality of the data was assessed using skewness and kurtosis as well as the Shapiro-Wilk test. All skewness and kurtosis values fell within the acceptable range ( $|\text{skewness}| < 2.0$ ,  $|\text{kurtosis}| < 2.0$ ). The Shapiro-Wilk test yielded p-values greater than 0.05 for all variables, indicating that the null hypothesis of normality could not be rejected. Therefore, the assumption of normality was met for all variables.

For the correlation analysis (Objective 5), the assumption of bivariate normality was met, as confirmed by the Shapiro-Wilk test results for all variables ( $p > 0.05$ ) and visual inspection of scatterplots showing linear relationships with no extreme outliers.

**Descriptive Statistics.** To address Objective 1 (level of reading comprehension before and after exposure to contextualized texts), Objective 2 (level of reading motivation before and after exposure), and Objective 3 (level of reading engagement before and after exposure), descriptive statistics were computed. For each variable at each time point (pretest and posttest), frequency and percentage distributions were presented in the results section, and the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were calculated, as they are needed for the inferential tests.

For the Reading Comprehension Test, the total score ranged from 0 to 20. For the Reading Motivation Scale, the total score ranged from 10 to 40. For the Reading Engagement Scale, score ranged from 9 to 36, both for the total scale and for each sub-dimension (behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement).

**Correlation Analysis.** To address Objective 5 (significant relationships between comprehension gains and posttest reading motivation and reading engagement), Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed. Pearson correlation was chosen because the assumption of bivariate normality was met, as confirmed by the Shapiro-Wilk test results for all variables ( $p > 0.05$ ) and visual inspection of scatterplots showing linear relationships with no extreme outliers. The following correlations were examined: (1) Comprehension gains (posttest comprehension controlling for pretest comprehension) and reading motivation (posttest scores controlling for pretest motivation); and (2) Comprehension gains and reading engagement (posttest scores controlling for pretest engagement)

Each correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) ranges from -1.00 (perfect negative relationship) to +1.00 (perfect positive relationship), with 0 indicating no linear relationship. Correlation coefficients were interpreted using Cohen's guidelines: small ( $r = 0.10$ ), medium ( $r = 0.30$ ), and large ( $r = 0.50$ ). The  $p$ -value for each correlation indicates whether the observed relationship is statistically significantly different from zero ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). For statistically significant correlations, the coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) was also computed to indicate the proportion of variance shared between the two variables.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher recognizes that research with children should ensure that ethical procedures and mechanisms to protect vulnerable groups are undertaken. For the children in this study, consent was a family decision. Parents or legal guardians signed informed consent forms, but this did not override the child's own agency. Child assent was treated as equally binding. If a child said no, the answer was no. No persuasion, no small rewards, no gentle coaxing. This principle was applied strictly: a child who appeared uncomfortable was offered a break; a child who asked to stop was allowed to stop. The researcher did not assume that silence or compliance meant agreement. Assent was sought continuously, not as a one-time event.

For teachers, written informed consent was obtained after a clear explanation that participation was voluntary, that declining would not affect their employment evaluation, and that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. All teacher data were reported in aggregate; no individual teacher or school was identifiable in any published report. The researcher took seriously the possibility that teachers might feel scrutinized in their own classrooms, a space often regarded as professionally sacrosanct.

More so, this study involved no experimental manipulation, deprivation, or deception. For children, the only inconvenience was completing a ten-minute questionnaire with pictorial aids and read-aloud administration. For teachers, the primary risk was the potential discomfort of having their classroom behaviors observed. To minimize this, the researcher emphasized that observations focused on learner behaviors, not teacher performance, and that no evaluative feedback would be provided to school administrators. Teachers who expressed concerns were given opportunities to ask questions before consenting. The researcher did not assume that consent given at the outset was consent forever; teachers could withdraw at any time.

All data were anonymized. Learners received unique codes; teachers received separate codes. The master list linking codes to names was stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher. Data files were password-

protected. However, the researcher also recognizes that in small communities like Bauang District, anonymity can be fragile. Readers familiar with the district might infer which schools participated. The researcher mitigated this by reporting data in aggregate and avoiding any identifying descriptors that could pinpoint a particular classroom or teacher.

## Results and Discussion

### Level of Reading Comprehension Before and After Exposure to Contextualized Texts

The table below shows the frequency and percentages of the pretest and posttest scores of Grade 2 learners.

**Table 1.** *Reading Comprehension Proficiency Pretest and Posttest (n = 100)*

| Score Range  | Interpretation          | Pretest    |             | Posttest   |             |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
|              |                         | f          | %           | f          | %           |
| 0 – 10       | Below proficiency       | 92         | 92%         | 28         | 28%         |
| 11 – 15      | Approaching proficiency | 8          | 8%          | 44         | 44%         |
| 16 – 20      | Proficient              | 0          | 0%          | 28         | 28%         |
| <b>Total</b> |                         | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b> |

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the Grade 2 respondents (92%) scored within the below proficiency range (0–10 points), while the remaining 8% were classified as approaching proficiency (11–15 points). No participant (0%) scored in the proficient range (16–20 points). On one hand, this confirms that the purposive sampling procedure successfully identified struggling readers; on the other, this describes the extent to which Grade 2 learners in the locale find it difficult to comprehend texts without intervention. This empirically supports findings from the EDCOM 2 (2025) with respect to the foundational reading crisis in the early years, where many Grade 2 and Grade 3 learners cannot read grade-level texts with comprehension.

Comparatively, though, the posttest results showed meaningful progress, as shown in Table 1 above. The percentage of participants in the below proficiency category dropped from 92% to 28%. Meanwhile, 44% reached approaching proficiency, and 28% achieved proficient status. This means that after exposure to contextualized texts, more than two-thirds of these struggling readers (72%) moved out of the below-proficiency category, and more than one-quarter (28%) reached full proficiency in comprehension of grade-level texts. This could be explained by the theoretical anchor of this study on schema theory, which posits that comprehension improves when texts activate existing knowledge structures (Aqdas, 2025). The familiar settings in the contextualized stories as intervention could have reduced cognitive load, allowing struggling readers to allocate limited attentional resources to decoding rather than inferring unfamiliar cultural contexts.

### Level of Reading Motivation Before and After Exposure to Contextualized Texts

**Table 2.** *Reading Motivation Proficiency*

|                      |                      | Pretest |      | Posttest |      |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------|------|----------|------|
| Score Range          | Interpretation       | f       | %    | f        | %    |
| Intrinsic Motivation |                      |         |      |          |      |
| 4–7                  | Low                  | 32      | 32%  | 8        | 8%   |
| 8–12                 | Moderate             | 55      | 55%  | 42       | 42%  |
| 13–16                | High                 | 13      | 13%  | 50       | 50%  |
| Subtotal             |                      | 100     | 100% | 100      | 100% |
| Extrinsic Motivation |                      |         |      |          |      |
| 2–3                  | Low                  | 48      | 48%  | 15       | 15%  |
| 4–5                  | Moderate             | 40      | 40%  | 50       | 50%  |
| 6–8                  | High                 | 12      | 12%  | 35       | 35%  |
| Subtotal             |                      | 100     | 100% | 100      | 100% |
| Amotivation*         |                      |         |      |          |      |
| 3–5                  | High amotivation     | 38      | 38%  | 10       | 10%  |
| 6–8                  | Moderate amotivation | 50      | 50%  | 45       | 45%  |
| 9–12                 | Low amotivation      | 12      | 12%  | 45       | 45%  |
| Subtotal             |                      | 100     | 100% | 100      | 100% |

*Note.* \*For the Amotivation subscale, higher scores indicate lower amotivation (greater motivation). "High amotivation" (scores 3–5) means the learner lacks perceived value or intention to read; "Low amotivation" (scores 9–12) means the learner has rejected demotivating beliefs about reading.

In terms of intrinsic reading motivation, Table 2 above shows that at pretest, the majority of participants demonstrated moderate intrinsic motivation (55%), while nearly one-third (32%) fell in the low range. Only 13% showed high intrinsic motivation. This means that prior to the intervention, struggling readers were neither highly motivated nor completely devoid of intrinsic interest; rather, most had moderate intrinsic motivation. This could also be understood as the learners did not actively dislike reading, but they also did not exhibit the enthusiasm that characterizes self-sustaining readers.

However, as to extrinsic motivation, the pretest distribution leaned lower: 48% of participants scored in the low range (2–3), 40% were moderate, and only 12% were high. This indicates that before the intervention, struggling readers were not particularly responsive to external reinforcers such as praise, grades, or recognition.

The amotivation findings are particularly instructive. At pretest, 38% of participants showed high amotivation (scores of 3–5), meaning they endorsed items such as "*Hindi ko nakikita ang saysay ng pagbabasa*" ("I don't see the point of reading") and "*Ang pagbabasa ay hindi para sa akin*" ("Reading is not for me"). Another 50% showed moderate amotivation. These are not neutral stances; they reflect an incipient identity in which reading has been positioned as something that is not for them. Only 12% showed low amotivation at pretest.

Despite the concerning baseline scores of the learners, significant improvements could be observed after the intervention had been undertaken. At posttest, the distribution shifted substantially across all three dimensions. For intrinsic motivation, the percentage of participants in the high range increased from 13% to 50%, while those in the low range dropped from 32% to just 8%. This indicates that after exposure to contextualized texts, half of the participants found reading inherently more enjoyable. For extrinsic motivation, the low category dropped from 48% to 15%, while the moderate category rose from 40% to 50%, and the high category increased from 12% to 35%. In a sense, learners became more responsive to positive reinforcement. Most striking is the change in amotivation. The percentage of participants showing high amotivation dropped dramatically from 38% at pretest to only 10% at posttest. Meanwhile, the low amotivation category (scores 9–12, reflecting minimal amotivation) increased from 12% to 45%. This reflects a substantial reduction in feelings that reading lacks value or is personally irrelevant.

These findings align with recent literature. The pretest amotivation pattern (38% high) is consistent with Sleeman et al. (2024), who found that struggling readers demonstrate distinct cognitive and motivational profiles, with amotivation representing a significant barrier to reading engagement among primary school children aged 8–10. The posttest reductions in amotivation (38%→10%) and increases in intrinsic motivation (13%→50%) are consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000, as cited in Parsons et al., 2025): contextualized texts support relatedness (through culturally familiar content) and competence (through successful comprehension experiences), leading to internalized motivation. Finally, the extrinsic motivation gains (12%→35% high) align with the meta-analysis of Toste et al. (2020), who found a significant, moderate relation between motivation and reading ( $r = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) across 185 independent samples, with implications for developing effective instructional practices that foster students' active engagement in reading.

In substantive terms, what changed is not merely that struggling readers became *more motivated*. What changed is that they became less convinced that reading is not for them. This distinction carries theoretical weight. The reduction in amotivation may be as important as the increase in intrinsic motivation, because amotivation represents the absence of intention to act, a state in which effort is not merely low but is not even considered (Deci & Ryan, 2000, as cited in Parsons et al., 2025). For a struggling reader who has concluded that reading is not for them, no amount of skill instruction will be effective, because the learner has already opted out of the practice that builds skill. The posttest scores suggest that exposure to contextualized texts may have disrupted this demotivating narrative.

### **Level of Reading Engagement Before and After Exposure to Contextualized Texts**

It can be gleaned from Table 3 above that, as for behavioral engagement, the pretest distribution showed 56% in the moderate range and 30% in the low range, with only 14% reaching high engagement. For emotional engagement, 52% were moderate, 26% low, and 22% high. However, cognitive engagement was notably weaker: nearly half (46%) scored in the low range (3–5), another 46% in the moderate range (6–8), and only 8% in the high range (9–12). This pattern suggests that, prior to the intervention, struggling readers were not entirely disengaged; they participated in reading activities (behavioral engagement) and did not actively dislike them

(emotional engagement). However, they were not thinking deeply about what they read. Items such as "*Iniisip ko ang aking binabasa kahit tapos na ang oras ng pagbabasa*" ("I think about what I read even after reading time is over") and "*Kapag hindi ko naiintindihan ang isang salita, sinisikap kong alamin ang kahulugan nito*" ("When I don't understand a word, I try to find out what it means") received low ratings. In other words, struggling readers were going through the motions of reading without deploying the strategic processes that generate comprehension. This is similar to what McGeown and Smith (2024) describe as the multidimensional nature of reading engagement, where cognitive engagement is often the weakest dimension among struggling readers precisely because it demands the expectation that comprehension is possible, an expectation that repeated failure erodes.

**Table 3.** *Reading Engagement Pretest and Posttest Scores (n = 100)*

| Table 3. Reading Engagement Pretest and Posttest Scores (N = 100) |                |         |      |          |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------|------|----------|------|
| Score Range                                                       | Interpretation | Pretest |      | Posttest |      |
|                                                                   |                | f       | %    | f        | %    |
| Behavioral Engagement                                             |                |         |      |          |      |
| 3-5                                                               | Low            | 30      | 30%  | 8        | 8%   |
| 6-8                                                               | Moderate       | 56      | 56%  | 34       | 34%  |
| 9-12                                                              | High           | 14      | 14%  | 58       | 58%  |
| Subtotal                                                          |                | 100     | 100% | 100      | 100% |
| Emotional Engagement                                              |                |         |      |          |      |
| 3-5                                                               | Low            | 26      | 26%  | 6        | 6%   |
| 6-8                                                               | Moderate       | 52      | 52%  | 30       | 30%  |
| 9-12                                                              | High           | 22      | 22%  | 64       | 64%  |
| Subtotal                                                          |                | 100     | 100% | 100      | 100% |
| Cognitive Engagement                                              |                |         |      |          |      |
| 3-5                                                               | Low            | 46      | 46%  | 18       | 18%  |
| 6-8                                                               | Moderate       | 46      | 46%  | 50       | 50%  |
| 9-12                                                              | High           | 8       | 8%   | 32       | 32%  |
| Subtotal                                                          |                | 100     | 100% | 100      | 100% |

Comparatively, the posttest results shifted substantially across all three dimensions. For behavioral engagement, the low category dropped from 30% to 8%, while the high category increased from 14% to 58%. This could be interpreted as more than half of the participants demonstrated high behavioral engagement after the intervention. For emotional engagement, the shift was even more pronounced: the high category rose from 22% to 64%, while the low category fell from 26% to just 6%. However, the most consequential change may be in cognitive engagement. The low category dropped from 46% to 18%, while the high category increased from 8% to 32%. The moderate category rose slightly from 46% to 50%. This means that at posttest, 82% of participants were no longer in the low cognitive engagement range; they had moved into moderate or high levels. They started, in short, to read like readers who expect to understand. As Caliari (2025) argued, when texts reflect learners' cultural backgrounds and personal interests, struggling readers begin to read like readers who expect to understand, transforming passive compliance into active meaning-making.

### Significant Differences Between Pretest and Posttest Scores

To address Objective 4, paired samples t-tests were conducted separately for reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading engagement. The normality of difference scores was confirmed in preliminary screening (Shapiro-Wilk  $p > .05$  for all difference variables), satisfying the assumption for parametric testing.

**Table 4.** *Paired-Samples t-Test Results for Pretest to Posttest Comparisons (n = 100)*

| Variable              | Pretest M (SD) | Posttest M (SD) | t(99) | p     | Mean Difference | Cohen's d |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|-------|-----------------|-----------|
| Reading Comprehension | 8.47 (2.35)    | 13.82 (3.18)    | 18.71 | <.001 | 5.35            | 1.87      |
| Reading Motivation    | 22.34 (4.52)   | 29.67 (5.03)    | 17.54 | <.001 | 7.33            | 1.75      |
| Reading Engagement    | 19.48 (4.21)   | 27.35 (4.89)    | 19.58 | <.001 | 7.87            | 1.96      |

Table 4 above shows that the improvements between pretest and posttest scores were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), with very large effect sizes. For reading comprehension, the mean difference of 5.35 points (from 8.47 to 13.82) produced Cohen's  $d = 1.87$ . For reading motivation, the mean difference of 7.33 points (from 22.34 to 29.67) produced  $d = 1.75$ . For reading engagement, the mean difference of 7.87 points (from 19.48 to 27.35) produced  $d = 1.96$ .

Effect sizes of this magnitude, all above 1.70, are exceptionally large in educational intervention research. For context, Hattie's (2023) identified average effect size of  $d = 0.40$  for educational interventions, with  $d = 0.70$  considered a large effect. The effect sizes observed here are nearly three times the conventional threshold for "large." However, effect sizes from one-group pretest-posttest designs are known to be inflated due to regression to the mean and the absence of a control group (Morris, 2008). The values reported here should therefore be interpreted as descriptive of this sample's improvement rather than as population effect size estimates. Replication in a randomized controlled trial is needed to estimate the true effect of contextualized texts.

Among the domains, the largest effect size was observed for reading engagement ( $d = 1.96$ ), followed closely by comprehension ( $d = 1.87$ ) and motivation ( $d = 1.75$ ). This ordering makes theoretical sense in that engagement is the most directly observable and behaviorally proximal outcome of the intervention. When learners are given texts that reflect their lives, they become more engaged. From engagement, comprehension follows. Recent research by Muche et al. (2026) found that reading engagement had a significant direct effect on reading comprehension among pre-service EFL teachers, and, more critically, served as a partial mediator between epistemic beliefs and reading outcomes.

### Significant Relationships Among Key Variables

Thus far, the paired t-test results in the preceding section have already established that significant change occurred. Objective 5 examines the relationships among comprehension gains, motivation, and engagement to understand how these variables are associated. To address Objective 5, partial Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed between comprehension gains and posttest reading motivation and reading engagement, controlling for pretest scores. Comprehension gains were operationalized as posttest comprehension scores controlling for pretest comprehension. Posttest motivation controlled for pretest motivation, and posttest engagement controlled for pretest engagement. These partial correlations isolate the relationships among the changes in these variables, providing a clearer picture of how improvements in one domain are associated with improvements in another.

**Table 5.** *Partial Correlations Among Posttest Variables Controlling for Pretest Scores ( $n = 100$ )*

| Variable Pair                                   | r   | p     | Interpretation               |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|------------------------------|
| Comprehension Gains ↔ Reading Motivation (Post) | .38 | <.001 | Moderate, positive           |
| Comprehension Gains ↔ Reading Engagement (Post) | .44 | <.001 | Moderate-to-strong, positive |

It is apparent from Table 5 above that all correlations were positive and statistically significant at  $p < .001$ . The correlation between comprehension gains and reading engagement ( $r = .44$ ) was stronger than the correlation between comprehension gains and reading motivation ( $r = .38$ ). These positive correlations indicate that learners who made larger comprehension gains were also those who showed greater improvements in motivation and engagement. In other words, comprehension improvement and affective improvement were not independent events; they were associated. This pattern is consistent with the idea that affective processes may play an important role in contextualized reading instruction, though the correlational nature of these findings does not establish causality.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study showed that contextualized texts were associated with substantial improvements in reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading engagement among Grade 2 struggling readers. The pretest-posttest comparisons revealed statistically significant gains with very large effect sizes across all three domains. Furthermore, significant positive correlations were found between comprehension gains and improvements in motivation and engagement, suggesting that these affective and behavioral variables are associated with comprehension outcomes in the context of contextualized reading instruction.

This study contributes to existing literature by addressing several critical gaps. First, it provides empirical evidence of the magnitude of changes associated with contextualized texts among Grade 2 struggling readers, showing that these materials are not only effective for comprehension but also for the affective and behavioral dimensions of reading. Second, it extends Self-Determination Theory to the specific context of contextualized reading materials in Philippine public schools, showing how culturally familiar texts are associated with internalized motivation and reduced amotivation. Third, by separately examining motivation and engagement, the study demonstrates that struggling readers' improvements are not uniform; engagement, particularly

cognitive engagement, showed the most substantial changes.

This contribution is important as much of the existing literature on contextualized texts has treated motivation and engagement as desirable side effects. The findings of this study suggest that these affective and behavioral variables are not merely bonuses but are closely associated with comprehension gains. If contextualized texts worked only through cognitive pathways, a struggling reader might understand a text more easily but without any change in whether they wanted to read or how deeply they engaged—a fragile gain unlikely to persist. In contrast, when contextualized texts are also associated with changes in motivation and engagement, they may alter the relationship between the learner and reading itself. The learner becomes the kind of person who expects to understand, who persists when meaning is unclear, who chooses to read when no one is watching. This is the difference between a temporary instructional effect and a durable developmental shift.

Another important insight from this study is that engagement ( $d = 1.96$ ,  $r = .44$  with comprehension gains) showed larger effects and stronger associations with comprehension than motivation ( $d = 1.75$ ,  $r = .38$  with comprehension gains). One interpretation is developmental in that Grade 2 struggling readers may not yet have stable, internalized motivational beliefs. Their self-concepts as readers are still forming or, as the pretest amotivation scores suggest, forming in negative directions. In this developmental context, what matters most may not be what children believe about reading but what they do when reading. The behavioral, emotional, and cognitive actions that constitute engagement may be more malleable and more directly linked to comprehension than the more stable beliefs that constitute motivation.

What remains to be explored is the exact nature of the relationships among these variables. While the one-group pretest-posttest design cannot establish causality, the pattern of findings is clear and compelling: improvements in comprehension, motivation, and engagement occurred together following exposure to contextualized texts, and these improvements were significantly correlated. These correlations are consistent with the theoretical explanation that affective processes play an important role in the relationship between contextualized texts and comprehension. This study provides the necessary empirical foundation, establishing that the relationships exist and are substantial, upon which future experimental research can build to test causal pathways. The findings do not prove causality, but they strongly warrant further investigation.

**Implications for classroom practice.** For the classroom teacher, the encouraging news is that contextualized texts are associated with substantial gains. A six-week intervention using stories about typhoons, sari-sari stores, and new classmates produced improvements with exceptionally large effect sizes ( $d = 1.87$  to  $1.96$ ). This is not a marginal improvement requiring expensive materials. However, the mechanism matters. Because comprehension gains are correlated with improvements in motivation and engagement, how teachers use contextualized texts is as important as that they use them. A contextualized text assigned silently with rote comprehension questions may activate prior knowledge but may not change the learner's relationship to reading. A contextualized text read aloud with enthusiasm, discussed in pairs, and connected to learners' own experiences is the approach that is associated with changes in motivation and engagement.

**Implications for policy.** The findings support the current direction of the Philippine Department of Education's National Reading Program while also suggesting a refinement. To the extent that the program emphasizes decoding and fluency, it may be underemphasizing the motivational and engagement mechanisms that this study found to be associated with comprehension gains. A balanced approach would treat contextualized texts not as a supplement to skills instruction but as the context within which skills instruction occurs: the reason to decode, the motivation to persist, the familiar ground on which strategies are practiced until they become automatic.

**Implications for teacher education.** Preparing teachers to select or create contextualized texts and to teach them in motivationally supportive ways should be a core component of literacy courses. Many teacher preparation programs focus on the what of reading instruction (phonics, vocabulary, comprehension strategies) but devote less attention to the why (motivation) and the how (engagement). This study suggests that the why and the how are not secondary; they are closely associated with comprehension outcomes.

**Limitations.** The reliance on self-report measures for Grade 2 learners is a limitation. While pictorial anchors and read-aloud administration were used to mitigate bias, future research should include observational measures of engagement (e.g., time on task, participation frequency) to provide convergent validity. The one-group pretest-

posttest design without a control group limits the causal conclusions that can be drawn. The reported gains could reflect maturation, familiarity with testing, teacher effects, ordinary classroom progress, or other events during the six weeks. The study's effect sizes may be inflated due to regression to the mean and the absence of a control group. Additionally, the pilot sample of 10 for instrument validation is small for strong psychometric claims. However, the pilot sample was adequate for this study: establishing preliminary reliability and content validity for instruments designed specifically for Grade 2 struggling readers in the Philippine context. The obtained reliability coefficients ( $\alpha = .82-.87$ ) provide sufficient confidence that the instruments functioned as intended for this sample. The instrument evidence should be interpreted as preliminary but valid for this context, with future research needed to confirm these psychometric properties in larger samples.

**Directions for future research.** A randomized controlled trial with a control group would provide stronger evidence for causality. Including a measure of decoding would allow examination of whether the relationships among comprehension, motivation, and engagement operate differently for learners with varying skill profiles. Adding qualitative data, such as interviews with learners, classroom observations, and teacher reflections, would further clarify the lived experience of becoming more motivated and engaged. Longitudinal follow-up would also test the durability of the changes observed. The researcher suggests replication in other contexts, such as urban and rural, different regions of the Philippines, and different grade levels, to test the generalizability of the findings. Finally, future studies could examine whether learner characteristics (e.g., gender, baseline decoding level, home literacy environment) moderate the relationships among contextualized texts, motivation, engagement, and comprehension.

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## Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest. Although the author is a teacher in the study locale, appropriate safeguards were implemented to minimize potential bias, and this role enhanced reflexivity throughout the research process without influencing the study's findings.

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