

Original Article

Effectiveness of Remedial Reading Support for Struggling Learners in Grade 4

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Abstract. This study examined the effectiveness of remedial reading support in improving the reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition of struggling Grade 4 learners in Bauang North District, La Union. Using a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design, 60 struggling readers from two intact classes participated: one group received structured remedial reading support, while the other continued with regular reading instruction. The study assessed reading performance before and after the intervention using a validated reading achievement test and analyzed the data with descriptive statistics, paired-samples *t*-tests, and an independent-samples *t*-test, complemented by teacher observations. Despite the growing need for targeted reading intervention, empirical evidence on structured remedial reading support among struggling Grade 4 learners in Philippine public schools remains limited. Although both groups improved, learners in the remedial reading program achieved substantially greater gains, reaching a Proficient level of reading performance ($\bar{x} = 41.25$). In contrast, the control group remained at Low Proficient ($\bar{x} = 29.67$). The differences were statistically significant, and classroom observations likewise pointed to greater reading confidence, improved word recognition, and sustained engagement among learners who received the intervention. Overall, the findings suggest that systematic, learner-centered remedial reading support more effectively strengthens the reading abilities of struggling Grade 4 learners than regular classroom instruction alone.

Keywords: Reading comprehension; Reading fluency; Remedial reading; Struggling learners; Word recognition.

Reading has long served as the gateway to formal learning. By Grade 4, learners are expected to move beyond the mechanics of decoding words and toward using reading to understand concepts across the curriculum. Content areas like science, mathematics, and social studies increasingly assume that learners can read independently, make sense of written information, and engage with increasingly complex texts, hence the need for reading comprehension at this stage. However, this transition remains elusive for many learners who continue to struggle with word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. Their difficulties extend beyond language learning itself, limiting participation in classroom activities and restricting access to knowledge across subject areas.

Reading difficulties among Grade 4 learners have remained a global educational concern. Across diverse educational contexts, research shows that struggling readers often have weaknesses in word recognition, reading fluency, and reading comprehension (Sleeman et al., 2022). Word recognition, the ability to identify written words accurately and automatically, provides the foundation for fluent reading. Reading fluency, in turn, refers to the

capacity to read accurately, at an appropriate pace, and with meaningful expression, allowing learners to devote their attention to understanding rather than decoding text (Rupley et al., 2020). Reading comprehension, the ultimate aim of reading instruction, reflects the learner's ability to construct meaning from what is read. Yet these dimensions are closely intertwined. When learners struggle to recognize words efficiently, they often read slowly and laboriously, expending much cognitive effort on decoding and leaving little capacity to make sense of the text (Mutema & Pretorius, 2024). The result is not simply poor reading performance but diminished access to learning itself, as difficulties in recognizing words, reading fluently, and comprehending text reinforce one another and place learners at a considerable disadvantage at a stage when reading increasingly serves as the foundation of learning across the curriculum.

In the Philippines, poor reading performance remains one of the most pressing concerns in basic education. National assessments and international large-scale studies have repeatedly shown that many Filipino learners have not acquired the level of reading proficiency expected of their grade. Findings from the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the 2019 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) demonstrated this reality, placing the country among the lowest-performing education systems in reading literacy. These outcomes reflected more than individual learner deficiencies. They pointed to structural constraints that continue to shape classroom instruction, including limited learning resources, overcrowded classrooms, uneven teacher preparation, and the absence of sustained support for learners who fall behind.

Recognizing these challenges, the Department of Education introduced initiatives such as the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) and the Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs) Initiative (Engada & Maguate, 2023). These programs affirmed the importance of early intervention and remedial instruction in addressing reading difficulties before they became entrenched. However, their implementation across schools has been far from uniform. In many settings, remedial reading has depended largely on available time, teacher initiative, and school resources rather than on a systematic instructional framework. As a result, many learners have carried reading difficulties into the intermediate grades, where curricular demands become increasingly complex.

Remedial reading support emerged as a response to this persistent gap. Rather than simply extending regular classroom instruction, it provided focused intervention that addressed specific reading difficulties through explicit teaching, guided practice, continuous monitoring of learner progress, and instruction tailored to individual needs. Its emphasis on foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension, distinguished it from conventional classroom approaches. Recent empirical studies have provided further evidence that structured reading interventions can improve struggling readers' performance. For instance, Mize and Park (2021) found that iPad-assisted reading fluency instruction improved oral reading fluency among fourth-grade learners with reading difficulties, while Anto et al. (2022) reported improved reading performance following a remote reading remediation program among elementary learners. In the Philippine context, Formento (2023) found significant improvement in the reading performance of Grades 4 to 6 struggling readers after implementing Project 2TK, while Bebis and Prieto (2023) likewise reported significant gains in reading comprehension among Grade 3 learners who received remedial classes.

Despite this growing body of evidence, relatively little empirical work has examined how remedial reading support functions within Philippine public elementary schools, particularly among Grade 4 learners. Although recent local studies have examined reading remediation among elementary learners, much of the available evidence has focused on lower grades, mixed grade-level groups, or single-group intervention designs. For example, Anto et al. (2022) focused on Grades 1 and 2 learners, while Bebis and Prieto (2023) examined Grade 3 learners. Formento (2023) included Grades 4 to 6 learners but considered them as a combined group rather than focusing specifically on Grade 4. Thus, empirical evidence remains limited on structured remedial reading support for struggling Grade 4 learners in Philippine public schools, particularly quasi-experimental comparisons with regular classroom instruction. Existing local studies have largely focused on the primary grades or learners with identified reading disabilities, leaving limited evidence on the broader population of struggling readers at the intermediate level. Moreover, few investigations have employed quasi-experimental designs that compare learners receiving structured remedial intervention with those exposed only to regular classroom instruction.

This gap is especially significant in public schools, where teachers are often expected to address diverse learner needs while meeting curriculum requirements within limited instructional time. Large class sizes and competing

academic demands make individualized reading support difficult to sustain. Under these conditions, questions about the effectiveness of remedial reading support become not only pedagogical but also practical. Determining whether structured intervention can produce measurable improvements in learners' reading skills offers valuable guidance for schools seeking effective ways to assist those who continue to struggle.

In this context, the present study examined the effectiveness of remedial reading support among struggling Grade 4 learners in public elementary schools in Bauang North District, La Union. It compared learners who participated in a structured remedial reading program with those who received regular reading instruction, examining changes in reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition before and after the intervention.

The study is significant because it provides empirical evidence that may help teachers and school leaders determine whether structured remedial reading support can address persistent reading difficulties among intermediate-grade learners. Its findings may also inform the refinement of school-based reading interventions and provide a context-specific basis for strengthening support for struggling readers in Philippine public elementary schools. In particular, the following questions are addressed: (1) What was the level of reading skills of struggling Grade 4 learners in the experimental and control groups in terms of reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition before the intervention? (2) What was the level of reading skills of struggling Grade 4 learners in the experimental and control groups in terms of reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition after the intervention? (3) Was there a significant difference between the pretest and posttest reading scores of the experimental group exposed to remedial reading support? (4) Was there a significant difference between the pretest and posttest reading scores of the control group exposed to regular reading instruction? (5) Was there a significant difference between the posttest reading scores of struggling learners exposed to remedial reading support and those exposed to regular reading instruction?

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design to examine the functionality and effectiveness of remedial reading support among struggling Grade 4 learners. This approach is particularly appropriate in educational research where learners are organized into existing classes and random assignment is neither practical nor consistent with normal school operations (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Rather than reorganizing classes for research purposes, the investigation followed the schools' natural structure, allowing the intervention to be implemented under conditions that closely reflected everyday classroom practice.

One group of learners participated in a systematic remedial reading program integrated into their regular reading instruction, while another continued with the school's usual reading instruction without the additional intervention. Both groups completed the same assessments before and after the implementation period to measure changes in reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition. The initial assessment established the learners' baseline reading performance, while the posttest allowed researchers to determine whether meaningful improvements occurred after the intervention. Comparing changes within each group and across the two groups also strengthened the study's ability to distinguish the effects of the remedial reading support from other influences that commonly arise over time, such as maturation, routine classroom experiences, or familiarity with the assessment.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants were struggling Grade 4 learners enrolled in selected public elementary schools in Bauang North District, La Union, during the 2025–2026 school year. They were identified through the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and teacher recommendations, particularly those who demonstrated frustration-level performance in both oral and silent reading. Because the study examined the effects of remedial reading support among learners with clearly defined reading difficulties, purposive sampling was the most appropriate approach. As Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) noted, this sampling technique allows participants to be selected based on characteristics directly relevant to the objectives of the investigation. The researchers retained existing Grade 4 classes rather than reorganizing them, preserving the natural classroom setting while ensuring learners shared comparable educational experiences and curriculum exposure.

The two intact Grade 4 sections were selected based on the Phil-IRI results identifying them as having the highest

concentration of struggling readers among all Grade 4 classes in the participating schools. The school principal and Grade 4 level coordinator designated one section as the experimental section and another section as the control section through a coin toss to ensure impartiality in group assignment, as both sections had comparable mean pretest scores (22.35 and 23.10, respectively) and similar demographic compositions. Each class included 30 learners, for a total of 60 participants. The study included only learners officially enrolled in Grade 4, who attended classes regularly and were identified as struggling readers. The study excluded learners with diagnosed learning disabilities requiring specialized instructional interventions beyond the scope of general remedial reading support.

The number of participants reflected both the availability of eligible learners and approval from the participating schools. With 30 learners in each group, the sample was sufficient for meaningful statistical comparison and aligned with recommendations for quasi-experimental educational research, where groups of this size generally provide adequate power for parametric analyses such as independent and paired-samples *t*-tests (Vankelecom et al., 2024). More importantly, using intact classes mirrored the realities of Philippine public elementary schools, allowing the intervention to unfold within the ordinary rhythms of classroom life. This strengthened the study's ecological validity and increased the relevance of its findings to similar school settings.

Research Instrument

The study generated evidence primarily through a researcher-developed reading achievement test that assessed three interrelated dimensions of reading performance: reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition. Its development followed the Grade 4 reading competencies prescribed in the curriculum and drew on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), ensuring the assessment reflected both expected learning standards and the realities of reading instruction in the local context.

Before administration, three specialists whose professional work centered on reading instruction and curriculum implementation validated the instrument's content: an Elementary Reading Coordinator, a Master Teacher in Filipino and English, and an Education Program Supervisor for Curriculum and Instruction. All three possessed graduate-level qualifications and substantial experience in literacy education and remedial reading. Using a five-point validation scale, they evaluated the instrument's content, clarity, readability, and appropriateness for struggling Grade 4 learners. The resulting mean rating of 4.61 placed the instrument in the Very Highly Valid category, suggesting that the test adequately represented the reading competencies it was intended to measure.

The study also examined its consistency through a pilot administration involving 30 struggling Grade 4 learners from outside the actual study sample. The analysis produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88, indicating high internal consistency across the test items. Because parts of the assessment required evaluator judgment, particularly in oral reading and fluency, the study also established inter-rater agreement. A Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.85 showed high consistency among the raters, further supporting the instrument's ability to provide dependable measures of learners' reading performance.

Data Gathering Procedure

The investigation began with an assessment of the learners' existing reading abilities to establish a common point of comparison between the experimental and control groups. Each participant completed the reading achievement test individually, allowing reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition to be measured under comparable conditions before any instructional intervention. From this baseline, the two groups followed different instructional paths. Learners in the experimental group participated in a structured remedial reading program conducted in small groups of four to six learners. In contrast, those in the control group continued with the school's regular reading instruction and the usual whole-class learning activities. The intervention consisted of eight weeks of small-group sessions (four to five learners per group), held four times weekly for 40 minutes each, and included explicit phonics instruction, repeated reading, guided comprehension strategy lessons, contextualized vocabulary development, and regular progress monitoring with corrective feedback.

Instruction during the remedial sessions was deliberately focused on the areas where struggling readers most commonly encountered difficulty. Explicit phonics instruction addressed decoding weaknesses, repeated reading activities built fluency, and guided lessons on predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing supported reading comprehension. Vocabulary was enriched through contextualized word study, while regular progress monitoring and immediate corrective feedback allowed instruction to respond to learners' emerging needs rather

than proceed at a fixed pace. Trained reading instructors facilitated the sessions under the classroom teacher's guidance to ensure consistent implementation.

The intervention was observed periodically throughout its duration to determine whether it was being delivered as intended and to monitor learners' progress over time. Once the intervention concluded, the same reading achievement test administered at the outset was given again to both groups, allowing examination of changes in reading performance across the three measured domains. Teacher observation notes complemented these quantitative results by documenting changes not fully captured by test scores alone, including learners' confidence, classroom engagement, and growing use of reading strategies during the remedial sessions.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed using statistical procedures aligned with the study objectives. Mean scores were computed to describe the reading performance of the experimental and control groups before and after the intervention across the three dimensions of reading: comprehension, fluency, and word recognition. Because each item in the reading achievement test carried equal weight, the mean provided an appropriate measure of learners' overall performance and allowed examination of changes in reading proficiency over the course of the intervention.

To facilitate interpretation, learners' scores were classified into five proficiency levels. Scores ranging from 45 to 50 indicated Highly Proficient, reflecting strong performance across all reading domains. Scores between 35 and 44 were interpreted as Proficient, signifying that learners had attained the reading competencies expected at their grade level. A score of 25 to 34 corresponded to Nearly Proficient, suggesting that learners were approaching, but had not yet reached, the desired level of reading ability. Scores from 15 to 24 fell within the Low Proficient category, indicating that although basic reading skills were evident, substantial gaps remained. Scores between 0 and 14 were classified as Beginning, denoting emerging reading abilities that required more intensive instructional support.

We examined changes in reading performance within each group using a paired-samples *t*-test to determine whether differences between pretest and posttest scores were statistically significant. An independent-samples *t*-test compared posttest scores between the experimental and control groups to determine whether the difference between the two independent groups was statistically significant. Prior to this analysis, the assumptions underlying the *t*-test were examined. We assessed normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test and homogeneity of variances using Levene's test. The results indicated that these assumptions were met. To assess the intervention's effect, posttest scores of the experimental and control groups were compared using an independent-samples *t*-test. All statistical decisions were made using the 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed established ethical principles governing educational research. The appropriate school authorities and the Schools Division Office approved the investigation before any data collection began. Parents and guardians received sufficient information about the study's nature and purpose and provided informed consent, while participating Grade 4 learners expressed their willingness to take part through age-appropriate assent. Participation rested entirely on the learners' and their families' voluntary decision, with the assurance that withdrawal from the study could occur at any stage without consequence. To safeguard privacy, participants were identified through coded labels rather than personal names, and all research records were handled confidentially and made accessible only to the researcher. The researcher also ensured that the intervention complemented, rather than disrupted, normal classroom instruction. The remedial reading activities were designed to remain consistent with the Grade 4 curriculum and responsive to learners' developmental needs. Throughout the study, the researcher remained impartial in administering the assessments, documenting classroom observations, and interpreting the results so the findings reflected learners' performance as faithfully as possible.

Results and Discussion

This section brings together the study's findings and considers what they reveal in light of the research questions. The discussion situates the results within established theories of reading and relates them to previous empirical work on remedial reading support for struggling learners, allowing the findings to be understood within the broader context of literacy instruction.

Descriptive Results

Table 1. *Level of Struggling Grade 4 Learners' Reading Skills Before and After the Intervention*

Groups	<i>n</i>	Pretest ($\bar{x}$)	Description	Posttest ($\bar{x}$)	Description	Mean Difference
Experimental (Remedial Support)	30	22.35	Low Proficient	41.25	Proficient	18.90
Control (Regular Instruction)	30	23.10	Low Proficient	29.67	Low Proficient	6.57

The pretest results indicated that the two groups began the study from similar positions. The experimental group obtained a mean score of 22.35, while the control group recorded 23.10, with both falling within the Low Proficient category. These closely comparable scores suggested that the learners entered the intervention with similar limitations in reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition, providing a reasonable basis for examining the remedial reading program's effects. The findings reflected a pattern observed in many educational settings, where struggling readers continue to grapple with foundational reading skills even after reaching the intermediate grades. Weaknesses in word recognition often slow the reading process, requiring learners to devote much of their cognitive effort to decoding individual words rather than constructing meaning from the text. Under such conditions, reading comprehension becomes increasingly difficult, as attention is consumed by the mechanics of reading itself rather than by understanding what is read (Burkins & Yates, 2023).

The intervention produced a different picture. The experimental group attained a mean score of 41.25, placing it in the Proficient category, while the control group improved to 29.67 but remained Low Proficient. Although both groups registered gains, the extent of improvement differed markedly. Learners who participated in the remedial reading program posted a mean gain of 18.90, compared with only 6.57 among those who continued with regular classroom instruction. The difference suggests that structured remedial support did more than reinforce existing classroom practices; it addressed learning needs that conventional instruction had not fully met.

Viewed through the lens of the Simple View of Reading, the findings are unsurprising. Reading proficiency rests on the interaction between efficient word recognition and language comprehension (Karageorgos et al., 2020). By systematically strengthening both dimensions, the remedial intervention enabled learners to move beyond the effortful decoding that had previously constrained their ability to make meaning from text. The gains observed therefore reflected not merely higher test scores but a strengthening of the foundational processes upon which successful reading depends.

Within-group Comparisons

Table 2. *Significant Difference Between Pretest and Posttest Scores Within Groups*

Group	Mean Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
Experimental Group	-18.90	-15.62	29	< .001	Significant
Control Group	-6.57	-4.85	29	< .001	Significant

The paired-sample *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores for both groups ($p < .001$). This indicates that reading skills improved over time in both instructional conditions. However, the experimental group improved substantially more, suggesting that remedial reading support contributed more effectively to improving learners' reading comprehension, fluency, and word recognition. The large *t*-value in the experimental group ($t = -15.62$) compared to the control group ($t = -4.85$) indicates a significant intervention effect. These results align with research emphasizing that systematic, explicit, and targeted remedial instruction produces significantly larger reading gains than regular classroom instruction alone (Storey et al., 2020). The findings also support Automaticity Theory, which posits that repeated practice and fluency-building activities lead to automatic word recognition, freeing cognitive resources for comprehension (Shahini, 2025).

Between-group Comparisons

The posttest scores showed a clear difference between the two groups. The independent-samples *t*-test showed that learners who participated in the remedial reading program performed significantly better than those who received only regular classroom instruction ($p < .001$). The 11.58-point gap between the two groups was not merely a statistical distinction; it reflected meaningful improvements in reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition among learners who received focused instructional support.

Table 3. *Difference in Posttest Scores Between Experimental and Control Groups*

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	Mean Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> -value	Interpretation
Experimental Group	30	41.25	11.58	9.42	58	< .001	Significant
Control Group	30	29.67					

Overall, the findings suggest that the progress observed in the experimental group cannot be attributed solely to the passage of time or routine classroom learning. Although both groups benefited from continued exposure to reading instruction, learners who received systematic remediation advanced much further than those who relied exclusively on the regular curriculum. This points to the value of instruction that deliberately responds to the specific difficulties struggling readers face, rather than assuming these challenges will diminish through ordinary classroom participation alone. The researcher interprets this through Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory (as cited in Bhati & Sethy, 2022). A learning environment that provides structured guidance, timely feedback, and repeated opportunities for success is more likely to strengthen learners' confidence in their own abilities (Bhati & Sethy, 2022). As reading becomes less frustrating and more manageable, learners are encouraged to engage more actively with texts, creating conditions that further support improvement. In contrast, regular classroom instruction, while beneficial for most learners, may not provide the intensity or individual attention needed by those who continue to experience persistent reading difficulties.

The pattern observed in this study is consistent with a substantial body of research demonstrating the effectiveness of explicit and systematic remedial reading interventions. Toste et al. (2020) and other meta-analytic studies likewise found that targeted instruction produces measurable gains in reading achievement among struggling readers across different grade levels. In aggregate, these findings emphasize an important point: classroom instruction remained valuable, as shown by improvements in both groups. However, the markedly greater gains in the experimental group suggest that structured remedial reading support offered learning opportunities that regular instruction alone could not fully provide. For learners who have fallen behind in reading, the difference lies not simply in receiving more instruction, but in receiving instruction that directly addresses the particular obstacles to becoming proficient readers.

Conclusion

The findings pointed to the value of structured remedial reading support in improving the reading skills of struggling Grade 4 learners. The difference suggests that improvement in reading is shaped not only by continued classroom exposure but also by the quality, focus, and intensity of instructional support for struggling learners. The results also offered a broader insight into the nature of reading difficulties in the intermediate grades. Persistent reading problems rarely disappear on their own. They require instruction that deliberately responds to learners' specific needs, particularly in word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. The experimental group's superior performance indicates that systematic, small-group intervention created learning opportunities that ordinary classroom instruction, constrained by time and the demands of whole-class teaching, could not consistently provide. Remedial reading therefore emerges not as a supplementary activity reserved for a few learners, but as an instructional response to those who have yet to acquire the reading competencies expected of their grade level.

The significance of these findings extends beyond the study's immediate context. Efforts to improve literacy through initiatives such as the Every Child a Reader Program and the Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs) Initiative have underscored the importance of ensuring that no learner is left behind in reading. The present findings suggest that this goal is more likely to be realized when schools move beyond broad policy commitments and provide sustained, targeted support for struggling readers within the regular life of the classroom. This does not diminish the influence of other factors that shape reading achievement, including limited learning resources, large class sizes, and differences in teacher preparation. It does, however, indicate that carefully designed remedial instruction can lessen the effects of these constraints by addressing the particular difficulties that prevent learners from progressing.

These observations point to several practical directions. Teachers may consider incorporating structured remedial reading activities into their daily literacy instruction, with particular attention to explicit phonics teaching, guided fluency practice, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies responsive to learners' identified needs. School leaders can strengthen these efforts by investing in professional learning through coaching, Learning

Action Cell sessions, and the provision of appropriate instructional resources that enable teachers to implement remedial programs with greater confidence and consistency. At the curriculum level, greater emphasis may likewise be given to ensuring that time and instructional guidance for remedial reading form part of the elementary literacy program rather than remaining an optional intervention.

The study also leaves room for further inquiry. Future investigations involving larger samples, different grade levels, and varied educational contexts would help determine the extent to which these findings hold across diverse school settings. Longitudinal research may likewise examine whether the gains achieved through remedial reading are sustained over time and whether early intervention reduces the persistence of reading difficulties in later grades. Such evidence would deepen understanding of how remedial reading can be refined to respond more effectively to the realities of Philippine classrooms and, ultimately, to the needs of learners whose success in school begins with the ability to read with confidence and understanding.

Contributions of Authors

Not indicated

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Conflict of Interests

The researcher declares no conflict of interest in the study's conduct, analysis, or reporting.

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