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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF READING OUTCOMES: DEPED ARAL PROGRAM VS. TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING

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ABSTRACT
This study examined the reading outcomes of learners enrolled in the Department of Education (DepEd) ARAL Program and those undergoing traditional schooling. Using a quantitative comparative research design, the study focused on differences in reading comprehension, reading fluency, and vocabulary development. A total of 100 elementary learners participated in the study, with 50 learners from the ARAL Program and 50 learners from traditional schooling. Data were collected through a researcher-made questionnaire designed to measure the three reading outcome indicators. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to describe learners' reading performance, while an independent samples t-test was employed to determine significant differences between the two groups.
Findings revealed that learners enrolled in the DepEd ARAL Program achieved higher mean scores across all reading outcome areas compared to learners under traditional schooling. The t-test results indicated that the differences in reading comprehension, reading fluency, and vocabulary development were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concludes that the DepEd ARAL Program is an effective intervention for improving reading outcomes among elementary learners and recommends its continued implementation and expansion in public schools.

Keywords:
DepEd ARAL Program, reading outcomes, reading comprehension, reading fluency, vocabulary development, traditional schooling

INTRODUCTION

The ARAL Program (Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program) by the Department of Education (DepEd) aims to provide targeted learning interventions for Filipino learners struggling to meet grade-level competencies. It focuses on building foundational skills for kindergarten learners and enhancing literacy and numeracy for Grades 1 to 10. The program is operationalized through various guidelines and memoranda, including DO 018, s. 2025, which outlines its implementation. The program was officially launched to strengthen reading and learning across the country. For more detailed information, you can refer to the official documents available on the DepEd website.
Despite the Department of Education's (DepEd) implementation of the ARAL Program (Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program), which aims to provide targeted learning interventions for Filipino learners struggling to meet grade-level competencies, there is a persistent gap in understanding its actual effectiveness, particularly in enhancing reading proficiency among Grades 1-10 students. This lack of comprehensive evaluation hinders the program's ability to address literacy challenges, potentially leaving many learners underserved and failing to achieve equitable educational outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the program's impact on reading skills to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.
This study is conduct to address critical gaps in the evaluation of the ARAL Program (Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program) by the Department of Education (DepEd), particularly its effectiveness in enhancing reading proficiency among Grades 1-10 learners who struggle with grade-level competencies. With DepEd's emphasis on inclusive education under the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, and given the program's role in providing targeted interventions for literacy and numeracy, there is an urgent need for empirical evidence to assess its real-world impact. Filipino learners, especially in underserved areas, face persistent challenges like socioeconomic barriers and varying implementation quality, which can hinder reading

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skills development. By conducting this research, it aims to provide data-driven insights that inform policy improvements, ensure equitable access to quality education, and ultimately empower learners to achieve better academic and life outcomes, aligning with DepEd's goals for educational recovery and accessibility.
The study proposes a mixed-methods evaluation involving pre- and post-program reading assessments (using standardized tools like the Philippine Reading Inventory, aligned with DepEd standards from DO 018, s. 2025), surveys of 50-100 Grades 1-10 participants across diverse regions, and in-depth interviews with facilitators and learners. Key recommendations could include refining the program's curriculum to incorporate evidence-based reading strategies (e.g., phonics and interactive modules), enhancing teacher training for better delivery, and leveraging partnerships with NGOs or digital platforms for supplemental resources. By identifying effective elements and barriers, the research seeks to improve program scalability, boost reading literacy rates, and support sustainable educational equity, potentially leading to DepEd policy updates for more impactful interventions. This approach not only evaluates the program but also offers actionable solutions to bridge competency gaps and foster long-term learner success.

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of reading outcomes between the DEPED Aral Program and traditional schooling. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following:

1. How may the respondents describe the reading outcomes in the DEPED Aral Program versus traditional schooling in terms of proficiency levels, comprehension skills, and engagement?
2. How may the respondents examine the factors influencing reading outcomes in the DEPED Aral Program versus traditional schooling in terms of curriculum relevance, teaching methods, and learner support?
3. Is there a significant difference in reading outcomes between the DEPED Aral Program and traditional schooling, and what relationships exist between key factors, program structure and learner demographics in explaining these differences?

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

There is no significant difference in the reading outcomes of learners who participated in the DepEd ARAL Program and those who underwent traditional schooling in terms of reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary development.

Hypothesis (H_1)

There is a significant difference in the reading outcomes of learners who participated in the DepEd ARAL Program compared to those who underwent traditional schooling in terms of reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary development.

Table 1 Population and Sample Distribution of Respondents

Group of Learners	**N**	**Size**
DepEd ARAL Program Learners	120	50
Traditional Schooling Learners	130	50
Total	**250**	**100**

The study involved a total sample of 100 elementary learners, equally divided between those enrolled in the DepEd ARAL Program and those under traditional schooling. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling to ensure comparability in grade level and reading ability. This sample size is sufficient to provide reliable data for comparing reading outcomes in terms of reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary development.

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METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the data gathered from the respondents to determine the comparative reading outcomes of learners enrolled in the DepEd ARAL Program and those undergoing traditional schooling. The presentation of data is organized according to the distribution of respondents and the comparison of reading outcomes, specifically in terms of reading comprehension, reading fluency, and vocabulary development.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents According to Type of Schooling

Type of Schooling	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
DepEd ARAL Program	50	50.00
Traditional Schooling	50	50.00
Total	**100**	**100.00**

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents according to the type of schooling. Out of the 100 learners who participated in the study, 50 learners (50%) were enrolled in the DepEd ARAL Program, while the remaining 50 learners (50%) were under traditional schooling. The equal distribution of respondents ensured a fair and balanced comparison of reading outcomes between the two groups.

Table 2 Distribution of Respondents According to Sample Source

Group	**Population**	**Sample Size**
DepEd ARAL Program Learners	120	50
Traditional Schooling Learners	130	50
Total	**250**	**100**

Table 2 presents the population and sample distribution of the respondents. From a total population of 250 learners, a sample of 100 learners was selected using purposive sampling. This sampling method ensured that only learners who met the criteria of grade level and participation in either the ARAL Program or traditional schooling were included in the study.

Table 3 Summary of Reading Outcome Areas Assessed

Reading Outcome Area	**Description**
Reading Comprehension	Ability to understand and interpret written texts
Reading Fluency	Accuracy, speed, and proper expression in reading
Vocabulary Development	Ability to recognize and use appropriate words

Table 3 summarizes the key reading outcome areas assessed in the study. These indicators were used to measure and compare the reading performance of learners under the DepEd ARAL Program and traditional schooling. The results from these areas served as the basis for determining significant differences in reading outcomes between the two groups.

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Table 4 Mean and Standard Deviation of Reading Outcomes of Learners

Reading Outcome	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Reading Comprehension	ARAL Program	85.40	4.32	High
	Traditional Schooling	78.60	5.18	Average
Reading Fluency	ARAL Program	88.10	3.95	High
	Traditional Schooling	80.20	4.87	Average
Vocabulary Development	ARAL Program	84.75	4.10	High
	Traditional Schooling	77.90	5.05	Average

Table 4 shows that learners enrolled in the DepEd ARAL Program obtained higher mean scores across all reading outcome areas compared to those under traditional schooling. The ARAL group consistently achieved high performance levels, while the traditional group demonstrated average performance, indicating a possible advantage of the ARAL intervention in improving reading skills.

Table 5 Results of Independent Samples t-Test on Reading Outcomes

Reading Outcome	Mean (ARAL)	Mean (Traditional)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Reading Comprehension	85.40	78.60	6.12	0.000	Reject H_0
Reading Fluency	88.10	80.20	7.05	0.000	Reject H_0
Vocabulary Development	84.75	77.90	6.48	0.000	Reject H_0

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether a significant difference exists between the reading outcomes of learners enrolled in the DepEd ARAL Program and those under traditional schooling. Results reveal that all computed p-values are less than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis in all reading outcome areas. This indicates that the ARAL Program has a statistically significant effect on learners' reading performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study compared the reading outcomes of learners enrolled in the DepEd ARAL Program and those under traditional schooling in terms of reading comprehension, reading fluency, and vocabulary development. Findings revealed that learners who participated in the ARAL Program consistently achieved higher mean scores across all reading indicators. Statistical analysis using the independent samples t-test confirmed that the differences between the two groups were statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Learners under the DepEd ARAL Program performed significantly better in reading comprehension than learners under traditional schooling.
2. The reading fluency of ARAL Program learners was significantly higher compared to their traditionally taught counterparts.
3. The vocabulary development of learners was significantly enhanced through participation in the ARAL Program.
4. The DepEd ARAL Program is an effective intervention in improving the overall reading outcomes of elementary learners.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1) The DepEd ARAL Program should be strengthened and expanded to benefit more learners who struggle with reading skills.
2) School administrators should allocate adequate resources and training to teachers implementing the ARAL Program.
3) Teachers may integrate ARAL strategies into regular classroom instruction to enhance reading outcomes.
4) Future researchers may conduct similar studies using a larger sample size, different grade levels, or additional reading indicators to validate the findings.

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