



Purok (Local Community) Reading Comprehension Program among Grade 6 Learners in Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu, Philippines

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Abstract

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the local community reading comprehension program called the “Sustainable Program for Accelerating Reading Comprehension Skills” (SPARCS) in improving the reading comprehension performance of grade 6 learners at Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu. Using an experimental research design, the study involved 22 learners forming the control group and 22 learners forming the experimental group, with pre-test and post-test assessments based on the PHIL-IRI reading comprehension tests. Findings indicate that before the intervention, both groups had similar reading comprehension levels, with most learners classified under the “frustration” level. After the implementation of SPARCS, the experimental group showed a significant improvement, with a majority reaching the “independent” level, while the control group exhibited minimal progress. Additionally, the participants rated the program’s acceptability as “highly acceptable” in terms of reading activities, materials, and tutor support while learning outcome was rated “acceptable.” Based on the findings, it is concluded that the local community reading comprehension improved the reading comprehension of the grade 6 learners. In addition, enhancements of the local community reading comprehension program were made.

Keywords: reading comprehension, purok, local community reading comprehension program

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Introduction

Reading is a cognitive process that involves decoding symbols to arrive at a meaning. It is considered a fundamental skill because it forms the foundation for most human learning and enables life-long education. Reading serves as a key to opening the vast repository of information and allows individuals to acquire knowledge. It also stimulates the mind, promoting cognitive functions such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and memory. Another significant benefit of reading is that it can enrich one's vocabulary, creativity, and imagination. This allows individuals to express themselves effectively and have room for precise communication with others. Reading comprehension is a skill that is integral to reading. It is the product of the interaction between factors at both the level of the reader and the text (Bruggink et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2021). As reading focuses on decoding symbols to arrive at a meaning, reading comprehension is the ability to understand, interpret, and analyze the meaning of a written text. It allows individuals to engage with the material in a deeper way which helps promote learning and retention. The ability to read with understanding is a foundational element for critical thinking and educational achievement. As access to information expands digitally, the demand for strong reading and comprehension skills also continues to grow.

Adolescents worldwide are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading. Even in developing nations, one in four children struggle with basic reading skills (Zhang & Holden, 2025). In the United States, 65 percent of fourth-grade students read below or only at the basic level of proficiency, highlighting significant gaps in early literacy education (Campbell et al., 2019). Thus, this signals a "learning crisis" that could threaten the progress of global development goals. In the Philippine context, reading comprehension has become a pressing concern. According to the results of the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), among 81 participating countries and economies, the Philippines was ranked 76th in terms of reading comprehension (Philstar Global). Both boys and girls in the country performed poorly in reading, underscoring the need to address significant issues within the Philippine education system (Darmawan & Dharmapatni, 2024). Additionally, at least 90% of Filipino children aged 10 struggle to read or understand simple text, according to the World Bank's 2022 data on learning poverty. Although the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said that the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected the results, the decline in the performance of Filipino learners is only partially attributed to it because the scores have been falling prior to the pandemic (Bernardo et al., 2023); (Maddawin et al., 2024). The issue not only affects individual educational outcomes but could also hinder social and economic progress.

This scenario is confirmed by the reading performance of the grade 6 students of Suba Elementary School. Based on the reading assessment conducted by the teachers of Suba Elementary School during the school year 2024-2025, the students are reported to have deficiencies in understanding complex texts, making inferences, and drawing conclusions from what they have read (Samiei & Ebadi, 2021). This is further confirmed by the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) results, indicating that a majority of students are at the "frustration" level of reading. In addition to the local context, there is already an existing reading program among learners in the puroks (sub-local communities) of Suba, Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu initiated by the barangay's local government. This is believed to help schools elevate the reading proficiency among learners. Moreover, this program is part of the regular purok evaluation. However, (Wahidin et al., 2024), reported that such program is not clearly implemented because of unavailability of tutors, lack of reading pedagogical skills among prospective tutors in the purok, and lack of time. That is why, the SPARCS (Sustainable Program for Accelerating Reading Comprehension Skills) is created to determine its impact on the reading proficiency among learners in Suba, Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu.

This program is collaborated by Cebu Technological University-Danao Campus, Liloan National High School, and the local government of Barangay Poblacion as a community extension program. Given the context, this study assessed the effectiveness of the Sustainable Program for Accelerating Reading Comprehension Skills (SPARCS) in improving the reading comprehension performance of the grade 6 learners in the local community of Suba, Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu.

Methodology

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of SPARCS on the reading comprehension performance of grade 6 learners in Sitio Suba, Barangay Poblacion, Liloan. The research design employed was quantitative approaches to gather and analyze data. Specifically, this study utilized the true experimental research design. According to DeCarlo, Cummings, & Agnelli (2022), a true experimental design is characterized by the manipulation of an independent variable, random assignment of participants to groups, and control of extraneous variables to test a causal relationship between variables. In this case, there are two groups employed: the control group and the experimental group. The two groups both answered the pre-reading comprehension assessment and their scores were compared. Next, only the experimental group received the intervention which was letting them engage in the reading activities. Then, the post-reading comprehension assessment was conducted to both groups, and their scores were once again compared. Moreover, the pre-reading comprehension and the post-reading comprehension performances of the experimental group were compared. Finally, the learners in the experimental group assessed the acceptability of the local community reading comprehension program called the 'Sustainable Program for Accelerating Reading Comprehension Skills (SPARCS) program using a survey questionnaire. This became the basis for the analysis and interpretation of data to generate conclusion, recommendations, and the making of the output of the study which is the enhancements of the SPARCS program. The study took place at Sitio Suba, Barangay Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu.

The study was conducted within Sitio Suba where the reading comprehension program was implemented and the reading comprehension performance of the learners was assessed. In the area, there was already an existing reading program among learners initiated by the barangay's local government. This was believed to help schools elevate reading proficiency among learners. Moreover, this program is part of the regular purok evaluation. However, Suplaag (2024) reported that such program was not properly implemented because of the unavailability of tutors, lack of reading pedagogical skills among prospective tutors in the purok, and lack of time. Through the training needs analysis' results, this paved way for the creation of the SPARCS (Sustainable Program for Accelerating Reading Comprehension Skills). The respondents of the study were the 44 grade 6 learners of the puroks of Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu broken into: 22 were from the puroks of Suba, Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu forming the experimental group, and 22 were from the other puroks of Main Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu forming the control group. The control group existed for comparison purposes. Only the experimental group received the intervention in the case of this study. Since the study measured the reading comprehension of the learners, the main instruments used in the study were the pretest and the posttest reading selections with 8 comprehension questions each. These are selections coming from the Philippine Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI). Additionally, the participants of the experimental group assessed their perceived acceptability of the reading comprehension program. Thus, a survey questionnaire was given to them. The survey questionnaire used in the study consisted of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire was for gathering the personal information of the respondents, such as name, grade level, and purok. The second part requests the respondents to give a score based on their perspective of the acceptability of the SPARCS using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree), 4 (agree), 3 (somewhat agree), 2 (disagree), and 1 (strongly disagree). This survey questionnaire was checked and reviewed by the research instrument checking committee of Liloan National High School. The test-retest method was used to determine its

reliability. A correlation index of 0.87 was assessed which means a high reliability.

Results and Discussion

This part presents the results of the study. This study assessed the effectiveness of SPARCS (Sustainable Program for Accelerating Reading Comprehension Skills) in improving the reading comprehension performance among grade 6 learners in Sitio Suba, Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu during the school year 2024-2025.

Research Question # 1: What is the pre-reading comprehension performance of the control group and the experimental group as assessed by the PHIL-IRI Assessment?

Table 1. Pre-Reading Comprehension Performance of the Control and Experimental Groups

Range of Scores/Category	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 4 (Frustration)	14	64	15	68
5 – 6 (Instructional)	8	36	7	32
7 – 8 (Independent)	0	0	0	0
Total	22	100	22	100

The data in Table 1 presents the pre-reading comprehension performance of the two groups, namely the control group and the experimental group. The scores are categorized by range as the scores 1-4 were termed “Frustration”, the scores 5-6 were termed “Instructional,” and scores 7-8 were termed “Independent”. The table indicates the frequency and percentage of participants in each group falling within each scoring category. The results indicate that the control group and experimental group mostly achieved similar pre-reading comprehension scores. The majority of participants in both groups scored in Frustration, that is, 64% of the control group and 68% of the experimental group. Fewer participants, compared to the Frustration range, scored in the Instructional range: 36% in the control group and 32% in the experimental group. The Independent range, however, had no scores from either group. This indicates again that both groups started at about the same reading comprehension level before any intervention or treatment occurred (Stevens et al., 2024); (Decristan et al., 2024); (Li et al., 2022). The absence of independent readers further implies that the participants were possibly at the early stages of reading development.

Research Question # 2: Is there a significant difference in pre-reading comprehension performance between the control and experimental groups?

Table 2. Significant Difference of Pre-Reading Comprehension Performance between the Control and the Experimental Groups

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pretest (Experimental Group)	Pretest (Control group)
Mean	4.384615385	4.307692308
Variance	1.206153846	0.701538462
Observations	22	22
Pearson Correlation	0.083623733	

Hypothesized Mean Difference	0
Df	21
t Stat	0.296174439
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.384771633
t Critical one-tail	1.708140761
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.769543266
t Critical two-tail	2.059538553

Table 2 contains the results of a paired t-test of the control group and experimental group's pre-reading comprehension performance. Interestingly, both groups exhibited comparable mean scores, with the experimental group scoring slightly higher at 4.38 compared to the control group's mean score of 4.31. Upon closer examination of the statistical analysis conducted, the t-statistic computed was found to be 0.2961, reflecting a subtle deviation in results. Moreover, the p-value level of 0.7695 suggests that there is no significant difference in the pre-reading comprehension performance observed between the experimental and control groups. This result leads to the decision to fail to reject the first null hypothesis (H_0). Hence, both groups started in the same level of reading performance.

Research Question # 3: After engaging the grade 6 learners in the reading activities through the SPARCS of the experimental group only, what is the post-reading comprehension performance of both groups?

Table 3 presents the post-reading comprehension performance of both the control and experimental groups categorized by score ranges. The scores are categorized by range as the scores 1-4 were termed "**Frustration**", the scores 5-6 were termed "**Instructional**," and scores 7-8 were termed "**Independent**". In the control group, 27% of respondents scored in the "Frustration" range (1-4), indicating that they were still in the beginning stage of reading comprehension. Additionally, 64% of the control group fell into the "Instructional" range, meaning that most of the participants could benefit from further support. Only 9% of the control group scored in the "Independent" range, suggesting that a minority of participants were able to perform well on their own. In contrast, the experimental group demonstrated a much better performance. None of the participants in the experimental group scored in the "Frustration" range, showing that all participants were able to engage with the material to a greater (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2021); (Deslauriers et al., 2019); (Namaziandost et al., 2025).

Table 3: Post-Reading Comprehension Performance of the Control and Experimental Groups

Range of Scores/Category	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 4 (Frustration)	6	27	0	0
5 – 6 (Instructional)	14	64	5	23
7 – 8 (Independent)	2	9	17	77
Total	22	100	22	100

Only 14% of the experimental group fell into the "Instructional" range, indicating a smaller

portion of the group required some assistance. The experimental group showed a significantly higher independent reading comprehension of 77%, showing that the majority of the participants were able to work independently with the reading materials. This clearly implies that the reading activities through the SPARCS created a positive effect on the reading comprehension performance of the learners (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Research Question # 4: Is there a significant difference in post-reading comprehension performance between the control and experimental groups?

Table 4 displays the results of a paired sample t-test comparing the post- reading comprehension performance between the control group and the experimental group. The experimental group has a mean score of 6.96, while the control group's performance of 5 is implied to be lower. The t-statistic for the comparison is 9.63, which is very large, suggesting a significant difference between both groups. The p-value is extremely small which is less than 0.05. This extremely low p-values indicates that there is strong evidence to suggest a significant difference between the control group and the experimental group's post- reading comprehension performance. This leads to the decision to reject the second null hypothesis (Ho2). Hence, the reading activities through the SPARCS have significantly improved the reading comprehension of the grade 6 learners.

Table 4. Significant Difference of Post Reading Comprehension Performance between the Control and Experimental Groups

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	Posttest of the Experimental Group	Posttest of the Control Group
Mean	6.961538462	5
Variance	0.358461538	0.72
Observations	22	22
Pearson Correlation	0	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	21	
t Stat	9.631217076	
P(T<=t) one-tail	3.4036E-10	
t Critical one-tail	1.708140761	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00000000068072	
t Critical two-tail	2.059538553	

Research Question # 5: Is there a significant difference between the pre-reading comprehension performance and the post-reading comprehension performance of the experimental group?

To substantiate the results in Table 4, Table 5 contains the paired t-test results of the experimental group's pretest and posttest. The results indicate a significant improvement in the

experimental group's reading comprehension performance. The mean score increased from 4.38 on the pretest to 6.96 on the posttest, suggesting a positive effect of the SPARCS intervention. The variance was smaller in the posttest, indicating less variability in the group's scores after the intervention. The p value is less than the significant level which is 0.05. Therefore, this study rejects the third null hypothesis (Ho3) and concludes that the intervention had a significant impact on the participants' reading comprehension from the pretest to the posttest (Muhammadpour & Khalili Sabet, 2024).

Table 5. Significant Difference between the Pre-Reading Comprehension Performance and the Post-Reading Comprehension Performance of the Experimental Group

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>Pretest of the Experimental Group</i>	<i>Posttest of the Experimental Group</i>
Mean	4.384615385	6.961538462
Variance	1.206153846	0.358461538
Observations	22	22
Pearson Correlation	0.023397207	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	21	
t Stat	-10.60955645	
P(T<=t) one-tail	4.79332E-11	
t Critical one-tail	1.708140761	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00000000958663	
t Critical two-tail	2.059538553	

Research Question # 6: As perceived by the grade 6 learners of the experimental group, what is their acceptability level of the SPARCS in terms of reading activities?

Table 6. Acceptability of SPARCS in Terms of Reading Activities

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1.1 The reading activities were enjoyable and engaging.	4.50	Highly Acceptable
1.2 The reading activities helped me improve my reading comprehension.	4.73	Highly Acceptable
1.3 The reading activities challenged me to think critically.	4.58	Highly Acceptable
1.4 I had enough time to complete the reading activities.	4.58	Highly Acceptable
Average Weighted Mean	4.62	Highly Acceptable

The data in Table 6 reveals that participants found the SPARCS reading activities to be highly acceptable across several indicators. The reading activities were considered enjoyable and

engaging, with a weighted mean score of 4.50, reflecting a strong positive response from participants. Moreover, the activities were seen as effective in improving reading comprehension, as indicated by a higher weighted mean score of 4.73. Participants also felt that the activities challenged them to think critically, with a weighted mean score of 4.58, suggesting that the tasks encouraged deeper cognitive engagement. Additionally, the activities were viewed as manageable in terms of time, with a weighted mean score of 4.58, indicating that participants had enough time to complete them without feeling rushed. With an overall average weighted mean of 4.62, the SPARCS reading activities were consistently rated as "highly acceptable." This suggests that the activities were not only engaging but also contributed positively to reading comprehension, critical thinking, and were appropriately timed, making them an effective tool for enhancing participants' reading skills (Medranda-Morales et al., 2023); (Mafarja et al., 2023); (Shafiee Rad, 2025).

Research Question # 7: As perceived by the grade 6 learners of the experimental group, what is their acceptability level of the SPARCS in terms of reading materials?

Table 7. Acceptability of SPARCS in Terms of Reading Activities

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
2.1 The reading materials were interesting and age-appropriate.	4.73	Highly Acceptable
2.2 The reading materials were available and accessible to me.	4.73	Highly Acceptable
2.3 The reading materials provided enough support for my reading level.	4.88	Highly Acceptable
2.4 The reading materials are comprehensible.	4.46	Highly Acceptable
Average Weighted Mean	4.70	Highly Acceptable

Table 7 presents the acceptability of SPARCS in terms of its reading materials, showing positive results. The reading materials were rated as highly acceptable in multiple aspects. For instance, participants found the materials to be both interesting and age-appropriate, with a weighted mean score of 4.73, indicating that the content was engaging and suited to their developmental stage. Similarly, the availability and accessibility of the materials were also rated 4.73, suggesting that participants had easy access to the resources they needed. Additionally, the materials were seen as providing sufficient support for the participants' reading levels, with a weighted mean score of 4.88, which indicates that the resources effectively matched the participants' abilities and offered appropriate challenges. The comprehensibility of the materials received a slightly lower mean score of 4.46, but it still falls within the "highly acceptable" range, suggesting that while the materials were generally clear, there may have been minor areas where some participants found them slightly more difficult. Overall, the average weighted mean of 4.70 indicates that the reading materials were highly acceptable overall, providing an engaging, accessible, supportive, and understandable experience for participants.

Research Question # 8: As perceived by the grade 6 learners of the experimental group, what is their acceptability level of the SPARCS in terms of tutor support?

Table 8 shows the acceptability of SPARCS in terms of tutor support, highlighting a highly acceptable response from participants. Each aspect of tutor support was rated as highly acceptable.

The clarity of instructions provided by the tutor for the reading activities received an exceptional weighted mean score of 4.89, indicating that participants felt the guidance was clear and easy to follow. The tutor's ability to answer questions about the readings was also highly regarded, with a weighted mean score of 4.73, showing that participants felt supported in addressing their concerns and clarifying any doubts. In terms of providing feedback, the tutor again received a strong rating of 4.85, suggesting that participants valued the constructive feedback provided on their reading progress. Additionally, the tutor's encouragement to read independently was rated 4.85, reflecting a strong sense of support for fostering independent learning. With an average weighted mean of 4.83, the overall level of tutor support was deemed highly acceptable, demonstrating that the tutor's guidance, feedback, and encouragement played a crucial role in the participants' positive learning experience (Van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019); (Alt et al., 2023); (Okumu et al., 2024).

Table 8. Acceptability of SPARCS in Terms of Tutor Support

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
3.1 My tutor provided clear instructions for the reading activities.	4.89	Highly Acceptable
3.2 My tutor answered my questions about the readings.	4.73	Highly Acceptable
3.3 My tutor provided me with feedback on my reading progress.	4.85	Highly Acceptable
3.4 My tutor encouraged me to read independently.	4.85	Highly Acceptable
Average Weighted Mean	4.83	Highly Acceptable

Research Question # 9: As perceived by the grade 6 learners of the experimental group, what is their acceptability level of the SPARCS in terms of learning outcomes?

Table 9. Acceptability of SPARCS in Terms of Learning Outcomes

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
4.1 I feel more confident in my reading skills now.	4.85	Highly Acceptable
4.2 I enjoy reading more now than before the program.	4.65	Highly Acceptable
4.3 I am able to read and understand more challenging texts now.	2.58	Less Acceptable
4.4 I am able to use reading strategies effectively.	4.58	Highly Acceptable
Average Weighted Mean	4.17	Acceptable

Table 9 shows the acceptability of SPARCS in terms of learning outcomes, revealing an overall acceptable response coming from the respondents. In terms of building confidence in reading skills, participants strongly agreed, with a weighted mean of 4.85, indicating a high level of acceptability gained through the program. Similarly, participants reported enjoying reading more after the program, with a weighted mean score of 4.65, suggesting that the program effectively fostered a greater appreciation for reading. However, the outcome related to the ability to read and understand more challenging texts received a much lower weighted mean score of 2.58, indicating that this aspect of learning was less acceptable to participants, possibly suggesting that the program did not sufficiently help them tackle more difficult materials. Thus, an enhancement on the SPARCS must be made which

is providing more challenging reading selections as additional units in the learning packet. On the other hand, the ability to use reading strategies effectively was rated highly, with a weighted mean score of 4.58, implying that participants felt they had gained valuable tools to enhance their reading comprehension. The average weighted mean of 4.17 indicates that, overall, the learning outcomes of the SPARCS program were deemed "acceptable (Willems et al., 2022); (Andriella et al., 2023)." While the program significantly boosted confidence and enjoyment and helped with reading strategy use, it appears to have been less successful in enabling participants to handle more challenging texts.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the purok (local community) reading comprehension program called the "Sustainable Program for Accelerating Reading Comprehension Skills" or "SPARCS" improved the reading comprehension program of the grade 6 learners at Poblacion, Liloan, Cebu during the school year 2024-2025 as assessed through the Philippine Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI). In addition, the participants viewed the said program as highly acceptable in terms of reading activities, reading materials, tutor support, while acceptable in terms of learning outcomes. Thus, the enhancements on the reading comprehension program or SPARCS were made most especially on the matter of learners' handling of more challenging texts under the learning outcomes criterion. As a specific enhancement, additional two units of the reading packet were added whereby learners can encounter more challenging texts and questions for them to answer. Expanding the program's focus not only on literal comprehension, but also on higher reading skills such as inferential, evaluative, and appreciative comprehension.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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