

“Problems Encountered in Distant Learning Relative to Reading Skills Among Grade 10 Students, Talibon District, Bohol”

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords— Modular Distant Learning, Reading Skills, Problems Encountered, Phil IRI, Frustration Level, Independent Level, Instructional Level, Descriptive-Correlational Design.

This study deals with the problems encountered in distance learning among Grade 10 students of Talibon District I relative to their reading skills. The study focuses on students' problems in terms of internet connection and electricity problems, inadequate and vague learning resources, overloaded lesson activities, conflict with home responsibilities, financial-related problems, and physical and mental health compromises. parent's highest educational attainment, family income, and parent's livelihood means. The PHIL-IRI results of the students were the data for the student's reading

skill level. It seeks to check the significant degrees of relationship, correlation, and difference between and among variables. The method used the descriptive-correlational design of the quantitative research method and descriptive-correlational questionnaires, which determined the respondents' problems in distance learning. In addition, it used a documentary analysis to gather the results of Phil-IRI. It is found that the majority of the students have parents with a high school education and work as farmers with less than P5,000.00 monthly income. Moreover, among the six problems encountered in distant



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learning, ranking first is ‘conflict with home responsibilities and poor learning environment’, which is interpreted as moderately serious. Their reading skills are alarming as they belong to the lowest ‘frustration level’.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education, often known as distance learning, has been an educational technique since the 1800s, providing alternatives to traditional, campus-based education through novel approaches and delivery platforms. Its popularity grew in the twenty-first century, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic, when it became the most extensively used style of instruction worldwide.

The pandemic disrupted educational systems, affecting virtually all pupils in 190 countries (UNESCO, 2020). To slow the virus’s spread, governments around the world implemented temporary school closures (Zhang, 2020).

Distance education promotes knowledge sharing and collaboration between students and instructors, overcoming physical limitations such as distance and space (Ally & Prieto-Blazquez, 2014; Bansal & Dhananjay, 2014). Despite these benefits, specific explanations of how it promotes successful communication and collaboration must be expanded (Ally & Prieto-Blazquez, 2014).

The shift to distant education had an impact on tactics for improving students’ reading skills, as interactions between teachers and students, which are critical in growing these skills, changed dramatically. Transactional Distance Theory addresses this trend by stressing the psychological or communicative gap between instructors and students in remote learning settings. Bornt (2011) emphasizes the need for structured communication, discourse, and learner autonomy in bridging the gap. This viewpoint is also supported by schema theory, which states that reading comprehension is a dynamic interaction between prior knowledge and textual information (Anderson, 2017). This interaction promotes bottom-up and top-down processing, which improves students’ comprehension skills (Carrel & Eisenhold, 2018, as referenced in An, 2018).

Modular Distance Learning (MDL), which is commonly used in public secondary schools, includes self-learning modules (SLMs) in digital or print format. These modules are adapted to the needs of the learners and are supported with a variety of materials such as textbooks, activity sheets, and study guides (Malaya, 2020). According to Gorsuch (2017), regular reading plays a vital role in building ESL learners’ language competency while also boosting decoding and comprehension. However, nurturing a persistent interest in reading among remote learners remains a challenge. Poornima and Adithya (2018) relate reading to software that enriches the intellect, emphasizing its importance in promoting lifelong knowledge acquisition. Initiatives such as rural libraries and mobile reading programs could solve this

issue by increasing access to reading materials.

Yorke (2019) observes that distance learning is becoming increasingly popular due to its flexibility, which allows students to pursue education without having to attend classes every day. This approach, however, requires strong parental and institutional support to create a compelling reading environment. Kleeck (2017) emphasizes the importance of parents and teachers in shaping children's reading habits, arguing that fostering supportive educational and home settings is vital for academic achievement.

Technological improvements also influence reading strategies. Schmar-Dobler (2017) discovered that online reading necessitates a mix of traditional and new inferential reasoning abilities. Similarly, Patchan (2017) proved that blended learning models, which combine online and in-person training, dramatically improve student performance by harnessing the characteristics of both techniques.

Challenges in online learning, particularly during the epidemic, highlight differences in student experiences. Adarkwah (2021) and Barrot (2021) found that students struggled with their home environment, mental health, finances, and social contact. Chohan (2019) and Perman (2019) underline how financial limitations have a substantial impact on academic success. Students from disadvantaged families frequently struggle to reconcile employment and academics, resulting in lower academic performance (Widener, 2018).

Learning resources are essential to the teaching-learning process as they promote student engagement and skill development. The proper use of these materials, as proposed by Conrad (2018), improves learning results. However, enough resources and excessive non-teaching responsibilities for educators contribute to the delivery of quality education (Lardizabal, 2020; Tolentino, 2017).

These studies demonstrate the intricate interaction of factors that influence students' reading skills and academic success in distance learning settings. They emphasize the need to tackle financial, technological, and pedagogical issues to promote equitable and effective education delivery, especially in distant and modular learning environments. The study's primary goal is to determine the problems encountered in distant learning relative to reading skills among the Grade 10 students, Talibon I District, Talibon, Bohol, 2021-2022. The study's findings served as the basis for the proposed enhancement measures.

Specifically, it answered the following sub-problems:

1. What is the extent of the seriousness of the problems encountered by the respondents in a distant learning modality in terms of:
 - 1.1 Internet Connection and Electricity Problems;
 - 1.2 Inadequate and Vague Learning Resources/Materials;
 - 1.3 Overload Lesson Activities and Limited Teacher Scaffold;
 - 1.4 Conflict with Home Responsibilities and Poor Learning Environment;
 - 1.5 Financial-Related Problems; and,
 - 1.6 Physical and Mental Health Compromises?
2. What is the student's reading skill level reflected in their PHIL IRI result?
3. Is there a significant degree of correlation between problems encountered in distant learning and reading skills?
6. Is there a significant degree of difference between male and female students':
 - 6.1 The problems encountered; and
 - 6.2 Level of students' reading skills?
8. Based on the findings, what recommendations can be gleaned?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed a **descriptive-correlational research design**, a quantitative research method suitable for identifying relationships between variables. The descriptive aspect focused on understanding the respondents' demographic profiles and problems encountered in distant learning, while the correlational aspect examined the relationship between these problems and students' reading proficiency.

Sampling Method. A **random sampling technique** was used to select Grade 10 public junior high school students as respondents. This sampling method ensured that every student in the target population had an equal chance of being included, thus increasing the generalizability of the findings.

Research Instruments. Data collection utilized a **Questionnaire** that comprised two parts: **Part 1** is a researcher-designed section to capture the respondents' demographic profiles. **Part 2** Adapted from Barrot (2021), this section identified problems encountered during distant learning. Items were supplemented by observational data. Each question included a **four-point qualitative scale** to measure the severity of the problems:

Weight	Response	Interpretation
4	Very Much Encountered	Highly Serious
3	Much Encountered	Moderately Serious
2	Less Encountered	Slightly Serious
1	Encountered	Serious

- **Very Much Encountered (VME):** Fully agree; the problem is highly serious.
 - **Much Encountered (ME):** Agree in most cases; the problem is moderately serious.
 - **Less Encountered (LE):** Disagree in most cases; the problem is slightly serious.
 - **Encountered (E):** Disagree in some cases; the problem is considered serious.
1. **Phil-IRI Test Results:** The **Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI)** Oral Verification Test assessed students' reading proficiency levels, using criteria adapted from Johnson, Kres, and Pikulski (1987) as cited in Lagarto (2021).

Level	Reading Skills
Independent	80–100%
Instructional	59–79%
Frustration	58% and below

Pilot Testing. Pilot testing was conducted with ten respondents who shared similar characteristics with the actual participants. The tool's reliability was verified using **Cronbach's Alpha**, ensuring its consistency and validity.

Data Collection Procedure. Formal letters were sent to the University of Bohol's VP-Academic office, the Graduate School Dean, the Schools Division Superintendent, the District Supervisor, and the school heads of the four secondary schools in Talibon District I. A consent form for parents and an assent form for respondents were distributed to ensure ethical compliance. For vaccinated students attending limited face-to-face classes, printed questionnaires were distributed during their English classes. For non-vaccinated students, questionnaires were included in their English subject modules. Collected data were processed and analyzed to address the study's research objectives.

Ethical Considerations. The study adhered to ethical research standards, including approval was secured from the ethics panel committee at the University of Bohol's Research Office. Ensured no harm, stress, or discomfort to respondents during the study. **To ensures anonymity and confidentiality**, respondents' names were omitted from questionnaires to protect their identity. Collected data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. No

identifying information was disclosed in the study report. Respondents and their parents were informed about the study's purpose, ensuring voluntary participation.

This rigorous methodology ensured the reliability and validity of the findings while maintaining high ethical standards, making the study fit for publication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problems Encountered in Distant Learning Modality

Internet Connection and Electricity Problems. Among the five internet and electricity problems, *'living in a remote area with an unstable net connection so students can hardly keep in touch with online discussion'* ranked first with a mean of 2.8539 and interpreted as **'Moderately Serious or MS.'** Next to it is *'unanticipated sudden power interruption'* as an aftermath of Super typhoon Odette, with a mean of 2.5552, and interpreted as **'MS'** and ranked second. The last problem that the respondents encountered had a mean of 2.1883 and was solved as *'slightly serious,'* which refers to *'having to walk 20 minutes, crossing rivers and hard roads, all for internet access.'* In general, these problems in internet and electricity encountered by the respondents had a mean of 2.4714 and were *'slightly serious.'*

Inadequate and Vague Learning Resources/Materials. Of the five problems the respondents encountered regarding learning materials inadequacy and vagueness, *'having modules without further discussion confused them'* had the highest mean of 2.6623, with an interpretation of **'MS'** and ranked as first. *'Having a hard time understanding the module with unclear instructions'* ranked second with a mean of 2.6136 and was interpreted as **'MS.'** The lowest rank is *'borrowing an updated phone from a cousin for internet access'* with a mean of 2.3961 and interpreted as *'slightly serious.'* In totality, learning material problems had a mean of 2.5610 and had an interpretation of **'MS.'**

Overloaded Lesson Activities and Limited Teacher Scaffold. Out of the problems in packed lesson activities, *'submitting many activities per subject every week'* ranked first, with a mean weight of 2.7695 and interpreted as **'MS.'** This result is supported by *'answering only the modules without studying, due to quantity of academic-related activities,'* with a mean of 2.7695, **'MS'** interpretation, and a second rank. Last in the level has a mean of 2.4675 and an understanding of *'slightly serious,'* which is *'not being able to reach the teacher, so chances are respondents submitted the wrong answer or wrong format.'* Overall, regarding overloaded lesson activities, the problem has a mean of 2.7045 and is interpreted as **MS.**

Conflict with Home Responsibilities and Poor Learning Environment. Regarding home responsibilities and poor environment conflict, *'losing focus due to helping in household chores'* ranked first with a mean of 2.7273 and was interpreted as **'MS.'** Next is *'not having a complete focus on studying due to responsibilities at home.'* It has a 2.7045 mean, and **MS.** Last in ranking is

'getting distracted by noise when students go to internet shops,' with a mean of 2.5779 and is **MS**. In general, the conflict between home responsibilities and poor learning environment had a mean of 2.6916 and an interpretation of *Moderately Serious*.

Financial Related Problems. In terms of financial relate problems, ranking first on the list is '*still asking for money from parents*' with a mean of 2.7013 and has an interpretation of **MS**. Next in the ranking is 'not having financial assistance for internet load for the online classes,' with a mean of 2.6916 and an interpretation of **MS**. The problem with the lowest mean and last in the ranking is '*not being able to buy the materials, so respondents failed to comply.*' In totality, the financial-related problems encountered by the respondents have a mean of 2.6006 and have an interpretation of *Moderately Serious*.

Physical and Mental Health Compromises. Regarding physical and mental health compromises, ranked first among the specific problems with a mean of 2.6721 and interpreted as **MS**, is '*feeling sick of thinking about difficult lessons, packed schedules, and slow net connection.*' This result is followed by '*facing the phone the entire day, and even until midnight, that it causes eye strain and headache,*' with a mean of 2.6526. Last on the rank is '*lacking focus and motivation, and nurturing the idea of giving up,*' with a mean of 2.5000 and considered as **MS**. Overall, respondents' physical and mental health compromises have a mean of 2.5987 and have an interpretation of **MS**.

Of the six problems encountered by the respondents in distant learning modality, ranking first is '*conflict with home responsibilities and poor learning environment*' with a composite mean of 2.6435 and interpreted as *Moderately Serious*. Next to it is '*overload lesson activities and limited teacher scaffold*' with a composite mean of 2.6396 and has an interpretation of '*Moderately Serious.*' Third on the rank is the '*financial related problems*' with a composite mean of 2.6006 and are also considered *Moderately Serious*. The last on the rank is the '*internet connection and electricity problems*' with a composite mean of 2.4714 and has an interpretation of 'slightly serious.'

It is similar to the study of Özdemiş, S. M., & Önderoz, F. G. (2022) about "Teachers' Opinions on Teaching Primary Reading and Writing Through Distance Education During the Covid-19 Pandemic Period". They found more negative aspects of teaching reading and writing with distance education. Among the negativities, the most mentioned issue by the participant teachers was the problematic writing of the students. In addition, they also highlighted the situations such as being unable to contact the students, indifference of the parents, and not obeying the classroom rules such as unauthorized speaking and raising their hands. According to the participants, distance education is unsuitable for teaching reading and writing skills in general, and face-to-face instruction is necessary for this. The problems encountered in this process are under four main headings. These are: "Problems originating from parents, technical problems, problems related to the learning-teaching process, and

problems related to the learning environment.” To overcome the problems faced by the teachers, trying to involve parents more in the process has been the most used solution.

Level of Students’ Reading Skills

In reading skills among the respondents, ranking first is the lowest level, ‘Frustration,’ with a frequency of 207 out of 308, or 67.2%. Next to it is the second level, or ‘Instructional,’ which has a frequency of 88 or 28.6%. The lowest rank is the highest level, ‘Independent,’ with a frequency of 13 out of 308 respondents, or 4.2% only.

With these, the Grade 10 students of Talibon I district belong to the ‘Frustration’ level with a mean of 1.370. These findings coincide with the PISA result of 2018 that Filipinos are poor in reading. It relates to the study by Baful, R., & Derequito, C. (2022) about “English Language Apprehension and the Reading-Writing Competence of Students.” Language apprehension is significantly associated with students’ reading-writing skills. A negative correlation is found between the apprehension level experienced in the input stage of learning and applied reading comprehension, processing anxiety, and writing fluency.

Correlation Between Problems Encountered and Reading Skills

The Pearson Chi-square test revealed that the p-value is 0.290. Thus, based on the statistical result, the null hypothesis was accepted. It stated that the problems encountered by the respondents in distant learning do not significantly affect their reading skills.

Difference between Males and Females and the Problems Encountered

The Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the p-value is 0.688. Thus, based on the statistical result, the null hypothesis was accepted. It stated that there is no significant degree of difference between males and females and the problems encountered by the respondents in distance learning.

Difference between Male and Female and the Reading Skills

The Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the p-value is 0.460. Thus, based on the statistical result, the null hypothesis was accepted. It stated that there is no significant degree of difference between the males and females and their reading skills.

CONCLUSIONS

From the initial findings, the following are the conclusions:

1. A conflict between home obligations and a subpar learning environment is the first significant difficulty identified, with the particular problem of losing focus as a result of domestic chores being assessed as severe. This finding illustrates the detrimental effects of domestic situations and inadequate study spaces on students' ability to focus and participate in their studies successfully when learning remotely.
2. Second, the survey showed a startling fact: the respondents' reading proficiency is woefully inadequate. Most children are classified as frustrated, indicating that they have serious difficulties with both word recognition and comprehension.
3. The small proportion of pupils who have attained the independent level, however, gives cause for optimism and emphasizes the urgent need for interventions to bridge the gaps in reading proficiency.
4. Lastly, despite the fact that distance learning posed significant challenges, the study found no connection between the challenges faced and the reading proficiency of the students. This finding suggests that students' reading performance may be more significantly impacted by variables unrelated to distance learning.

The study emphasizes how important it is to implement focused programs to improve the home learning environment and raise students' reading levels. In demanding environments like distance learning, addressing these issues is essential to delivering a more prosperous and equitable educational experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the aforementioned conclusions, the following recommendations are to improve students' reading skills.

1. The output of this research is utilized, especially in Talibon I District High Schools.
2. Teachers must lessen tasks and activities so as not to create conflict with the home responsibilities of students.
3. The researcher may disseminate the result of the study to inform the school administrators, English teachers, and even the students and parents for them to be aware.
4. Teachers must consider the students' family background, especially their economic status, before giving them projects.
5. Teachers must allocate time, materials, and resources to support daily independent reading.

6. English classes should include weekly activities or exercises to enhance students' reading skills.
7. The teacher should give students consistent feedback, especially in every speaking performance.
8. English teachers collaborate in developing strategies to develop students' reading and communication skills.

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