

## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental



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**ABSTRACT:** Reading proficiency is a critical skill impacting academic success, comprehension, and critical thinking. Thus, this study was conducted to determine the reading proficiency of Indigenous People (IP) learners of Opol Districts Schools for the School Year 2024-2025. It sought to describe the respondents' profile, find the respondents' level of reading proficiency, and determine the significant relationship between the respondents' level of reading proficiency and each of the respondent's profile. In this study the respondents were one hundred fifty-two (152) Grade 3 IP learners with a margin error of 8% using Slovin's formula and a stratified sample to get the appropriate number of respondents in every school. This study used descriptive -qualitative research design, and a researcher made questionnaires and reading proficiency tests based on the Grade 3 English curriculum guide. Statistical tool such as means, standard deviation, and Pearson-r were applied to interpret the data on the level and significant relationship between learners' profile and reading proficiency. The findings indicate that the overall reading proficiency level of the Grade 3 IP learners was in Satisfactory while learners demonstrated a good understanding of phonics, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension, significant challenges were observed in fluency. The study found no significant relationship between respondents' profile and reading proficiency, except for a weak positive significant relationship between parents' and occupation and reading proficiency highlighting the need for better resources and collaboration. The Study concluded that culturally sensitive and individualized approach to education is important, considering the diverse learner profile. The findings recommended on providing ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers on effective strategies for teaching Indigenous learners reading fluency, developing materials in local help learners learn both languages, and integrating regular and targeted fluency practice into daily lessons.

**KEYWORDS:** Reading Proficiency, IP Learners

### I. INTRODUCTION

Reading proficiency is the ability to understand and make sense of written text at a level necessary to engage with content appropriately. It is a key element for academic success and overall school achievement. It is a dynamic skill that develops and evolves through practice, exposure to diverse texts, effective instruction, and ongoing support. Specifically, this study is on the reading proficiency of Indigenous learners in Opol District schools which also experiencing challenges in developing their reading skills. Based on the statistics given by DepEd Division of Misamis Oriental (2023), about 419 males and 219 females were identified as frustrated readers in public elementary schools. The office has directed all teachers and school heads to give more emphasis on their reading proficiency program.

Reading proficiency of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) learners is a fundamental skill that impacts various aspects of learning including comprehension, critical thinking, and academic achievement it empowers and supports their language and literacy development. This study investigated the relationship between IP learners' profile and reading proficiency and offered development opportunities for educators to deeply understand the IP learners and enhance their literacy development and preserve cultural heritage. Likewise, the researcher found that there is less attention in learners to language proficiency, aptitude, and needs. However, learners who have different levels of reading proficiency are often placed in the same class providing individualized attention and support to each student's reading needs that can be difficult. Balancing the need for comprehensive literacy education with other subject areas and school requirements can be challenging.

## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental

Low reading proficiency leads to academic difficulties across subject areas, avoidance of engaging in reading tasks, challenges in expressing ideas, engaging in meaningful conversations, and participating effectively in social interactions. Furthermore, a person's capacity to understand and enjoy reading is largely determined by their reading skills. By conceding skills largely determine a person's capacity to understand and enjoy reading interesting on improving their reading abilities, an individual can also increase their self-assurance and drive to read, which will ultimately result in a more enjoyable reading experience.

Unfortunately, during the 2018 Program for the International Student Assessment (PISA), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) assessed about 600,000 15-year-old students in 79 countries. The Philippines participated in PISA for the first time as part of the quality basic education reform initiative. According to the PISA results, the Philippines has the lowest average reading score of 340, which is below the OECD average of 487. According to the former president of the Reading Association of the Philippines, the central issue is the reading skills that learners must acquire. Society necessitates excellent reading skills, as they are associated with students' success in school and even in life.

According to Leaño (2019), as education curriculum changed in the Philippines, teaching approaches needed to be transformed. Every Kindergarten to Grade 12 Curriculum strand requires learners, indigenous or non-indigenous, to acquire mastery of lessons as they go through different educational levels. Indigenous peoples are already being given due recognition and importance as part of the bigger community. Further, the K to 12 enhance the quality of education by ensuring that students develop competency in various areas, including reading. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on the value of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities—all of which are directly related to reading competency. It has become clear that developing one's reading skills is essential for success in both the classroom and the workplace. The curriculum recognizes the importance of preserving and promoting the culture and heritage of Indigenous Peoples (Ips) in the Philippines, it aims to provide equal opportunities for all learners.

In line, to regional memorandum no.153, s.2020 (DepEd, Region X), enforcement of the no read no move policy, the results of the evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of (3B's) Bawat Bata Bumabasa (DO. No.173, s.2019). Regional Memorandum No 243, s. 2023. It is recommended that all schools implement Project CNR, or the ROX Reading Program, in 2019 (DepEd Region X). This project uses a "pull out" system in which students who have been selected for it are required to show up for the reading session on the scheduled day to receive rigorous training from a qualified reading teacher.

Additionally, the Department of Education launched DepEd Order no. 001.s 2024, known as Re Implementation of CATCH-UP Fridays, the office of DepEd Misamis Oriental, through the Curriculum Implementation Division, began the implementation of this program, a one-day class catch-up session every Friday starting January 12, 2024, to all public school elementary and secondary learners to cultivate a reading habit. The goals of the catch-up Friday program are to give students the chance to improve their poor reading proficiency levels; improve their academic achievement through independent reading performance; close learning gaps; and increase each student's reading competence (DO no.1, s. 2024).

On the other hand, in primary level, mother tongue is used as a language of instruction helps learners develop a strong foundation which can facilitate the acquisition of reading skills in other languages. This has been the knowledge by the researcher how IP learners may face challenges in reading proficiency due to limited proficiency in language instruction, especially if it differs from their mother tongue, also recognizes the potential language barrier that may impact their reading skills. All things considered, the field of research on the five elements of reading proficiency is intricate and multidimensional, and it is still developing. By being aware of the historical background, significant personalities, effects, influential people, and different viewpoints around this subject, scholars and educators can better understand how to support the growth of literacy in a variety of communities. To improve reading proficiency in people of all ages and backgrounds, new research directions and cutting-edge methods of reading instruction must be explored.

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory served as the foundation for this investigation. The social cognitive theory serves as a strong foundation for enhancing the reading proficiency of Indigenous learners by emphasizing the dynamic interaction between cognitive processes, social influences, and environmental factors. Bandura highlights the importance of observational learning, self-efficacy, and social modeling in shaping behavior and learning outcomes. In the context of reading proficiency for IP learners, social cognitive theory key element is Modeling it is when teachers or other proficient readers model successful reading techniques and behaviors, it is referred to as modeling in the context of reading. It is beneficial for elementary students to observe a model reader who uses appropriate reading strategies. They can improve their reading abilities by seeing the behaviors and starting the actions. Teachers can employ this by providing IP learners role models who demonstrate proficient reading skills and positive attitudes towards literacy that would motivate them to engage with reading through imitation and practice.

Moreover, the concept of Self-Efficacy within social cognitive theory is crucial for empowering IP learners to believe in their ability to succeed in reading tasks, which requires students to keep track of their reading development, pinpoint areas for

## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental

growth, and create personal objectives, by fostering a sense of self efficacy in reading, teachers can empower IP learners to tackle challenging texts and persist in developing their reading skills. This could involve providing opportunities for success, offering constructive feedback, and creating a supportive learning environment where learners feel capable and safe.

Additionally, the theory's emphasis on social learning in which collaborative reading exercises like small group talks and companion reading can help students improve their reading abilities. By engaging in discussions, sharing ideas, and receiving feedback from peers, students can enhance learners reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, and overall reading abilities. These activities not only provide opportunities for IP learners to practice reading skills in a supportive context but also promote social engagement and culture within the classroom. By these principles, of social cognitive theory lead the teachers, researchers design effective instructional strategies, interventions, and classroom environments that promote observational learning (modeling), self-efficacy, and social learning to support the development of reading proficiency among IP learners, ultimately empowering them to succeed in their reading endeavors.

Certainly, this theory gives valuable insights and strategies for improving the reading proficiency of IP learners provide a useful understanding and supporting reading proficiency. By considering students' beliefs about their abilities, their goals, their strategies for self-regulation and reinforcements that influence them, educators and parents can better support students in becoming proficient readers.

The study on the reading proficiency of Indigenous learners is anchored on the interplay of cultural, linguistic, and educational factors that influence reading development. Reading proficiency serves as a fundamental skill for academic success. However, Quirino (2021) examined the interaction between reading proficiency and respondents' profile, such that, numerous factors impact learners' reading proficiency, for instance, individuals with more educated parents and from higher socioeconomic backgrounds typically have better reading competence level. The interplay between the variables highlights the complexity and interconnectedness of the factors influencing reading proficiency and it is determined by the combination and interaction of various elements which helps equitable opportunities to support the reading development of all learners. Thus, age plays a role in reading proficiency as reading skills develop and mature over time. Sex differences in reading proficiency have been observe, although the extent and consistency can vary. Tribal Affiliation may face additional challenges in developing reading skills in a second language, such as limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with syntax and grammar. Fathers' occupation affects both the resources available and the values, support, and language exposure that children received. Parental support creates a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters a love for reading, enhances reading skills, and promotes lifelong reading habits.

To assess the level of five (5) components of reading skills and to determine the reading proficiency of the Grade 3 IP learners in Elementary schools in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental for the academic School Year 2024 to 2025. The researcher will employ the null hypothesis as a benchmark to rigorously evaluate the findings. Subjecting the null hypothesis to statistical scrutiny, aims to either accept or reject the null hypothesis of the study and this will help the researcher to identify how to assess, collect information, process, and access the data for this study.

In exploring the interplay between variables in the context of basic reading skills as dependent variables and learners' profile as an independent variable among indigenous peoples (IP) learners, a complex and dynamic relationship emerges. The basic reading skills, the phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are influence by a multitude of factors encapsulated within learners' profile such as, age, sex, tribal affiliation, fathers' occupation, and parental support. These independent variables interact with and impact the development and mastery of basic reading skills.

Additionally, by understanding and addressing the complex interactions between learners' profile as independent variables and reading proficiency as dependent variables, teachers and researchers tailored approaches to support diverse needs and strengths of IP learners, ultimately fostering enhanced reading proficiency and academic success within cultural and linguistic contexts. These are believed to be integral components in the study because they signify the hypothesized impact or influence of the level of reading proficiency throughout their school year. It suggests that the five (5) components of reading skills underscore the importance as a foundational element for academic success and literacy development.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design. The researcher took into consideration the present factors and current conditions of a group of persons, events, or a class in finding facts and data to be interpreted. Additionally, this method is the most appropriate way to determine systematically and accurately, the profile of the Grade 3 IP learners, their reading proficiency level, for the School Year of 2024 to 2025 of Opol Districts Elementary School, Division of Misamis Oriental. This quantitative design is a study in which bodies of data are collected, recorded, and analyzed. The intent was to determine if and to what degree the variables are related.

## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental

Moreover, the descriptive method is the most popular approach in research. It systematically, factually, and accurately describes an area of interest or situation. Description, analysis, and interpretation of conditions that exist are involved. Researchers may also deal with comparison and contrast or the discovery of an existing relationship between events or groups. As such, descriptive-quantitative research methods can be useful for determining the reading proficiency of Grade 3 IP learners because they provide a systematic and objective way to collect and analyze data.

Furthermore, these methods combined descriptive statistics with quantitative data to offer a comprehensive overview of the reading abilities of Grade 3 IP learners. Through quantitative data analysis, the researcher can identify specific areas in which these learners excel in reading and areas where they may struggle. This information can guide educators in designing targeted interventions and *support to address students' weaknesses*

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problem 1: What is the respondent's profile in terms of age, sex, tribal affiliation, fathers' occupation, and parental support?

**Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents' Profile in terms of Age**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
11 years old and above	2	1.30
10 years old	5	3.30
9 years old	26	17.10
8 years old	112	73.70
7 years old	7	4.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 shows the respondents' profile of the Grade 3 IP learners in terms of age. Results show that out of 152 learner-respondents, **112 (73.7%)** are 8 years old. This means that the most common age where most children are expected to be in this grade since most schools follow a grade structure where learners progress through grades based on their age. Typically, at the age of 5 most of the children begin their formal education in kindergarten generally they have reached Grade 3 at around 8 years old. Age 8-year-old is a stage of development, particularly regarding language and literacy they might be more eager to read about specific topics that resonate with their experiences and interest which can enhance engagement and proficiency.

As observed, by the age of 8, most children have developed crucial skills such as phonemic awareness, decoding, and vocabulary which are essential for reading proficiency. Additionally, learners at this age become more aware of others' feelings and perspectives which helps in collaborative learning in school. They can work better in groups and consider others' point of view. They are more independent and enjoy taking responsibilities for their learning, they do not rely on teacher guidance. At this age characterized by growing independence, improve cognitive skills, and a greater ability to understand complex ideas, though they need support and encouragement to stay engaged and motivated.

A report from the National Literacy Trust in 2023 revealed that the children aged 8 to 11 are experiencing declining levels of reading enjoyment and frequency, with only 43% of them expressing enjoyment in reading. The finding suggests that as the children grow, their attitudes towards reading can change significantly impacting their proficiency particularly around the age of 8, may still find joy in reading, but without the right encouragement and practices, this enjoyment can diminish, leading to lower proficiency as they reach middle childhood.

Similarly, as highlighted in educational conferences Education and New Developments (2023) addressing diverse learner profiles can enhance pedagogical effectiveness and student engagement. The conference underscore the importance of age-appropriate curriculum design and resource allocation in fostering optimal learning environments. As The predominance of 8-year-olds among respondents thus calls for an examination of curricular frameworks to ensure they are conducive to maximizing educational outcomes for learners at this pivotal age.

On the other hand, the lowest frequency of 2 (1.3%) shows that the least age of the learners are 11 years old and above, as such, this age group are generally older than the expected age for this grade, making them rare in this group. In some cases, learners may have started school later than the standard age, especially indigenous or rural communities may have distance from home to school resulting in older students being in lower grades. Furthermore, the rarity of 11-year-old in Grade 3 reflects the fact that most students progress through school according to typical age structure. However, the presence of few older learners maybe due to grade repetition, late enrollment, learning difficulties, or personal and family circumstances. These are typically exceptional cases, which an 11-year-old is rare in this grade.

## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental

Specifically, this phenomenon may be attributed to a numerous of factors, including developmental readiness and cognitive engagement levels. The age of 11 often coincides with a transitional phase in learning, where students are expected to shift from basic literacy skills to more complex comprehension abilities Keefer, (2024). Such a transition can be daunting and may result in decreased academic performance if not adequately supported. As teachers, supported learner's effectivity on this age by making the environment conducive to learning is required to meet diverse needs. The incorporation of specialized programs within Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) could provide support for struggling students Watts, (202). It is essential to recognize the unique challenges faced by this age group and adapt changes on learning.

**Table 2: Distribution of the indigenous learners Respondents' Profile in terms of Sex**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	77	50.70
Female	75	49.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows the learner-respondents' profile in terms of sex. Results show that most of these learners are male with a frequency of **77 (50.7%)**. This shows an almost equal distribution between two groups. This suggests no significant gender disparity in terms of the number of respondents participating in the study. Although the male frequency is higher by a small margin of 2 respondents, it is not a substantial difference. The slight lead in the male participation might reflect cultural factors, where men might feel more comfortable or encouraged to participate in study. IP learners' sheds light on the significant role of males, prompting discussions about societal expectations and norms which allows for an analysis of how these dynamics can shape educational policies and practices aimed at fostering equity in learning environments.

As perceived, gender is an important factor to consider in education as it can influence access to resources, opportunities, and outcomes. Understanding this result can help policymakers and educators develop targeted interventions to address any challenges faced by specific groups within the community. In connection, this suggests that gender may influence academic achievement, in complex ways. Tsaousis and Alghamdi (2022) emphasize that while some studies indicate boys outperform girls in certain subjects, the results across various contexts remain inconclusive. The observed trend among Grade 3 IP learners necessitates further investigation to understand the underlying factors contributing to this disparity.

However, **75 (49.3%)** are female got the lowest frequency. The data indicates a close frequency count implies that female respondents were almost as equally represented as their male counterparts, showing no substantial barriers to their inclusion in the study. This suggest that efforts were made to ensure that both genders could be reached and included effectively. With broader trends, observed in educational research, which suggest that gender differences can be complex and multifaceted Tsaousis & Alghamdi, (2022). While girls often outperform boys in various subjects, including language arts, this may indicate underlying issues related to engagement or confidence within the learning environment. The nearly equal frequency of male and female respondents does not indicate a meaningful gender disparity. Instead, it reflects a well-balanced sample, demonstrating equitable participation from both genders. This balanced distribution allows for a comprehensive and fair analysis of the data, ensuring that the perspectives of both genders are equally considered. In essence, the small difference in frequency highlights the natural variability rather than a lack of inclusiveness, making it a strong indicator of gender equality in the study.

**Table 3: Distribution of the Respondents' Profile in terms of Tribal Affiliation**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Hiligaynon/Ilonggo	14	9.20
Ilokano	10	6.60
Tausug	2	1.30
Higaonon	100	65.80
Maranao	8	5.30
Others (Dumagat,Cebuano, Subanen)	18	11.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows the profile of Grade 3 IP learners in terms of tribal affiliation. The dominance of the Higaonon tribe with **highest frequency of 100 (65.8%)**. This means that the Higaonon tribes represents the largest proportion of learners actively involved in the learning process, which highlights the importance of considering educational programs and resources should be

## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental

tailored to meet their specific cultural needs to improved academic performance making the learners to be more motivated and involved in learning by fostering a sense of belonging and respect for their identity.

As highlighted, such academic performance can be attributed to cultural factors that enhance their educational experiences, including strong community support and an intrinsic motivation to succeed academically Fontanilla et al., (2023). Consequently, fostering an inclusive educational environment that acknowledges and values these differences is essential for enhancing learning experiences among all IP students (Assessment on Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy Implementation, n.d.). Likewise, by fostering an environment conducive to learning—one that is culturally sensitive and supportive—educators can significantly enhance academic outcomes for all IP learners Japeth, (2023). Ultimately, understanding the unique profiles of these students is essential for developing effective pedagogical strategies aimed at improving their educational experiences. By developing framework that consider these differences in learner profile, educators can establish more effective pedagogical approaches tailored to varying needs across different ages Sherpa (2021) ultimately, enhancing our understanding of the distribution and performance trends among indigenous learners will contribute significantly to fostering equitable educational environments.

On the other hand, **the lowest frequency of only 2 (1.3%)** are members of Tausug tribe. This means that among the respondents, there is a small proportion of learners who came from Tausug tribe. This suggest that it is relatively smaller compared to other tribes which Opol might not be a traditional settlement area for the Tausug people who are historically associated with coastal areas. As noticed, coastal areas provided access to the sea, which allowed the Tausug to maintain their connections and influence into trade network and has greater economic opportunities, which focus natural attraction to coastal areas. The data suggests a possible correlation between geographic location and performance, with coastal groups like the Tausug possibly facing more significant challenges.

In addition, the coastal environment offers fertile grounds for agriculture alongside maritime pursuits. The Tausug cultivate staple crops like rice while engaging in fishing activities that are vital for sustenance tausug.pdf - DLIFLC by The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (2024). This dual reliance on both land and sea reflects a sustainable lifestyle that has been maintained over generations. Additionally, their clan-based social structure thrives in these coastal communities where local leaders known as "datus" oversee communal resources and governance Tausug Philippines, Sulu Archipelago, Moro People, Specifically, factors influencing reading proficiency identified in various studies point to broader socio-economic determinants impacting educational outcomes Grindal et al., (2021) underscores systemic inequalities that may affect Tausug learners disproportionately. Addressing these disparities through culturally relevant pedagogical approaches is essential to foster both language development and academic achievement within this community.

**Table 4: Distribution of the Respondents' Learners in terms of Fathers Occupation**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Government	7	4.60
Private Employee	12	7.90
Business Owner	14	9.20
Self-Employed	8	5.30
Farming	77	50.70
Others	34	22.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows the respondents' profile of Grade 3 IP learners in terms of parents' occupation. Results show that farming has the common fathers' occupation with highest frequency of, **77 (50.7%)**. This finding indicates that substantial number of these learners come from families where the primary occupation is farming which suggest that farming is a significant source of income for many families. Farming in Indigenous community underscore its role as more than just an economic activity, it often deeply embedded in the cultural practices and traditions of indigenous peoples which farming is focused on meeting basic needs rather than generating excess produce for profit ensuring there is enough food to sustain the daily needs of the family.

As perceived, in many rural communities, farming is not only a source of livelihood but also an integral part of familial identity. IP parents often aspire for their children to continue the family tradition in agriculture thus, engaged these values in their children, fostering a sense of identity tied to farming. This cultural transmission is crucial for IP communities, where farming is not merely an economic activity but also a way of life. Besides, farm parents' perceptions regarding risk exposure significantly influence their children's involvement in agriculture. Research indicates that while first-generation farmers may exhibit different safety practices compared to multi-generational farmers, systemic socio-economic factors largely shape these behaviors Becot et al.,

## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental

(2021). This suggests that farm parents are often caught between the desire for their children to inherit the family business and the urgent need for them to pursue alternative opportunities that promise stability and safety.

Notably, farmers emerged as the predominant group among parents, which is a common trend in rural communities where agriculture serves as a primary livelihood. This finding aligns with Antonia et al., (2021) research, which highlights that many parents in similar situation have limited education and income, thereby affecting their children's academic aspirations and opportunities.

Furthermore, parental occupations significantly influence learners' education and aspirations. Nandi (2021) notes that home environments have strong impact on learners' achievement; thus, understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective educational programs. This associated with children of farmers may indicate better engagement or support mechanisms within agricultural families, emphasizing the need to consider socioeconomic backgrounds when addressing educational disparities among Indigenous learners.

Specifically, with the lowest frequency of only seven **7 (4.6%)** are government employees. This means many indigenous communities live in remote areas, far from urban centers where government jobs are often concentrated which makes them difficult to access such employment opportunities especially for parents who need to stay connected to their communities and family support. In Indigenous communities' face challenges when it comes to government jobs, such as poor transportation make it hard for them to travel to cities where these jobs are available. Also, a lack of affordable housing, and the cost of living is often too high for families from remote areas which gives difficulty for indigenous families to access government work. This implies that the opportunities for career advancement and access stable employment is limited.

As perceived, indigenous cultures emphasize caregiving and community involvement such that parents have significant responsibilities within their families and communities. Government roles require the flexibility needed to accommodate the family and community-oriented lifestyles that are central to many indigenous cultures resulting in fewer to apply for government positions. Furthermore, as the traditional values of bayanihan which signifies communal cooperation and mutual aid Bersamira (2022) foster a sense of belonging and interdependence among community members, essential for maintaining social harmony and resilience against external challenges. The collaborative spirit in these practices not only strengthens interpersonal bonds but also enhances collective problem-solving capabilities.

Similarly, Bamba et al., (2021) highlights the importance of indigenous knowledge system by prioritizing indigenous capacity building and community participation which ensure the local traditions and practices are respected and integrated into development initiatives thus, caregiving becomes a collective endeavor that nurtures both personal well-being and communal stability.

Consequently, the less government employees from indigenous people can attribute to socio-economic factors that disproportionately affect them. Historical neglect by governmental institutions has to systemic barriers that limit access to quality education for these populations, Sanchez (2024) such as lack of culturally relevant curricula and insufficient educational resources. Problem 2: What is the respondents' level of Reading proficiency in terms of phonics, phonological awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension?

**Table 5: Summary of the Respondents Level of Reading Proficiency**

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Phonics	5.82	0.46	Proficient
Phonological Awareness	5.80	0.45	Proficient
Vocabulary	4.93	0.45	Moderately Proficient
Fluency	3.20	0.41	Moderately Proficient
Comprehension	5.78	0.45	Proficient
<b>Overall</b>	<b>5.11</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

*Legend: 8 = outstanding/ Highly advanced      6-5= Satisfactory/Proficient*  
*7 =very satisfactory/ Advanced                4-3 = Fairly Satisfactory/ Moderately Proficient*  
*2 below = did not meet expectations/ Basic*

Table 5 shows the respondents' level of reading proficiency. Overall, results show that the level of the reading proficiency was **Satisfactory** as indicated by the overall mean score of **5.11 (SD=0.45)**. This means that the respondents have met the basic expectations for reading proficiency, while this indicates that most learners are able to perform essential tasks, it also implies that their skills may not well develop enough to handle more complex reading demands such as advanced comprehension or higher-

## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental

level of critical thinking. Indigenous learners often speak their native languages at home and not fully proficient in English which impacted by lack of early exposure and practice. This suggests that the respondents still struggle with applying their reading skills across diverse contexts, particularly in higher academic settings which interventions are necessary to improve beyond basic proficiency. Reading materials do not reflect the cultural background of the learners resulted in disengagement and lower comprehension, as they find it harder to relate to the content.

As perceived, learners have different ways of processing information and acquiring knowledge. Some maybe visual learners while others are auditory or kinesthetic. Additionally, when they feel their needs are understood they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their learning which can lead to better academic performance and more positive learning experience. The National Reading Panel (2021) advocates for a more integrated approach to reading instruction focusing on the basic reading skills which stresses the importance of dedicating equal attention to phonics instruction and fluency training to move learners satisfactory to advanced proficiency.

On the other hand, Bangoy (2024) indicates that phonological awareness and fluency are pivotal in enhancing reading comprehension which suggests that when learners exhibit satisfactory levels in these areas, their capacity to comprehend complex texts improves significantly. Moreover, Caraig (2022) emphasizes phonic, phonological awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension strategies are essential for sustaining learners when these skills are prioritized within the educational framework, this can contribute to improving overall reading proficiency among learners.

Specifically, the indicator **Phonics** obtained the **highest** mean score of **5.82 (SD0.46)** interpreted as **Proficient**. This means that the learners have good understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds which is crucial for decoding and sounding out words. This foundation is critical for learners overall reading success, as it enables them to tackle unfamiliar words with confidence which can positively impact their overall reading proficiency and academic performance. Indigenous learners may have some language advantages in phonics depending on the language they speak which might have simpler sound to letter relationships that make phonics easier for them. Learners who are familiar with sounds of their native language more easily to reading in another language, improving their phonics performance.

As perceived, phonics is one of the earliest skills learners learn in their reading journey. A high mean suggests that the learners are mastering this foundational step, which is an indicator of their readiness for more complex literacy tasks, such as comprehension, vocabulary development, and fluency. It sets the stage for later academic success in reading. In line with, phonics has emerged as a critical component within the broader framework of reading instruction, Vaughn et. al., (2022) posits the instruction in phonics enhances decoding abilities, thereby facilitating overall literacy development in which this foundational skill enables learners to connect sounds with letters systematically, which is important for proficient reading.

Additionally, some scholars argue to balance approach that integrates phonics with comprehension strategies Forzani (2023) said that the predominance of research supporting phonics instruction cannot be overlooked. Phonics not only foster early literacy but also serves as a gateway to developing other skills such as vocabulary and comprehension. As educators strive to cultivate proficient instruction may yield the most substantial gains in literacy outcomes.

Moreover, the indicator **Fluency** got the lowest mean score of **3.20 (SD=0.41)** interpreted as **Fairly proficient**. This means that learners struggling with the ability to read smoothly, quickly, and with proper expression. This suggests that performance anxiety or stress may affect how learners performed on fluency tests, particularly oral readings. Learners might be self-conscious about reading aloud or feel pressured to performed within a time limit, which can cause hesitation, and interruptions. This indicates that learners have not had enough opportunities to practice reading aloud which impacts fluency because it prevents learners from developing expressive reading skills and confidence. It also limits their exposure to diverse texts and opportunities for corrective feedback.

As noticed, fluency improves when learners read variety of texts, including different sentence structures with enough opportunities to practice reading aloud across diverse materials learners might develop the flexibility needed to read smoothly in different contexts. They may become familiar with certain words and boost their confidence in reading and develop to be a fluent reader. Specifically, studies have shown that interventions aimed at enhancing reading fluency can lead to substantial improvements in overall reading performance. Gedik (2022) demonstrated that techniques such as repeated readings and vocabulary building exercises significantly improved learners' fluency and motivation. This highlights the potential for targeted instructional strategies to mitigate the challenges faced by struggling readers.

Furthermore, Kang (2020) emphasizes that while both decoding and fluency contribute to reading comprehension, fluency's impact is notably smaller compared to decoding. This suggests that educators must prioritize not only the development of decoding skills but also effective strategies to enhance fluency among learners experiencing difficulties by addressing these foundational skills holistically is important for fostering comprehensive literacy development.



## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental

The study of Barshay (2021) highlights a notable decrease in eight graders' reading comprehension scores from 2017 to 2019, which cannot be solely attributed to reduce reading time which raises factors that contribute to poor reading comprehension outcomes and underscore the need for comprehensive instructional strategies that address comprehension skills. Additionally, Van Bergen et al. (2020) highlight the benefits of children reading outside of school. This research indicates that children who regularly engage in independent reading outside the school are more likely to develop strong reading skills, comprehension, and critical thinking. This is because reading different texts allows children to expand their prior knowledge and understanding of different subjects, ultimately leading to improved reading proficiency.

Problem 3: Is there a significant relationship between respondents' level of reading proficiency and each of their profiles.

**Table 6: Test of Relationship between the Respondents' Reading Proficiency and each of their profile**

Profile	Reading Proficiency Indicators					OVERALL
	Phonics	Phonological Awareness	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	
Age	0.004	0.074	0.006	0.101	0.007	0.054
	0.962	0.366	0.943	0.216	0.928	0.508
	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Sex	0.081	0.156	0.024	0.003	0.032	0.002
	0.320	0.055	0.770	0.972	0.692	0.985
	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Tribal Affiliation	0.035	0.161	0.035	0.049	0.027	0.051
	0.667	0.057	0.668	0.550	0.740	0.531
	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Fathers Occupation	0.108	0.103	<b>0.171</b>	<b>0.196</b>	<b>0.306</b>	<b>0.189</b>
	0.186	0.207	<b>0.036*</b>	<b>0.015*</b>	<b>0.001*</b>	<b>0.019*</b>
	NS	NS	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>
Parental support	0.014	0.006	0.025	0.094	0.035	0.032
	0.861	0.938	0.756	0.252	0.667	0.698
	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

**Legend:** \*significant at  $p < 0.05$  alpha level      S – significant      NS – not significant

Table 12 shows the test of relationship between the respondents' level of reading proficiency and their profile. The overall results showed that there was no significant relationship between the learners' overall profile and their reading proficiency levels. This means that age, sex, tribal affiliation, and parental support do not significantly affect the learners' reading proficiency. Reading proficiency is a complex skill influenced by a multitude of factors, and the study do not capture the intricate interplay between these factors, for instance, a learners' age might interact with their tribal affiliation, or parental support might be more impactful for learners with certain sex or tribal affiliation.

Furthermore, Iheakanwa (2021) emphasizes the importance of study habits and their association with academic performance rather than focusing solely on demographic characteristics such as gender or socioeconomic status. The absence of significant relationship between these profiles indicates a need for educators to prioritize instructional strategies over demographic considerations when addressing reading skills.

On the other hand, respondents' parents' occupation showed **weak positive** significant relationship on their level of reading proficiency as indicated by the correlation  $r$ -value and probability value less than **0.05** alpha level which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that a father's occupation affects access to educational resources. The nature of farming in indigenous communities involved long and irregular hours, which could limit the fathers' availability to engage in activities that support the child's reading development. Additionally, many indigenous farming families live in remote areas with limited access to libraries, and reading resources which restrict Childrens' reading outside the classroom. The cultural context also plays a role, as indigenous families may primarily use their traditional languages at home, while schools often teach in national language creating a linguistic mismatch that can hinder reading proficiency. Economic pressure in subsistence farming communities may require children to assist with farm work, reducing their school attendance and study time.

On the contrary, many indigenous communities traditional farming is highly valued, and the importance of formal education may not always be emphasized. When they see fathers', primary role is seen as farmer, the focus might be more on

## Reading Proficiency among Indigenous Learners in Opol District Schools, Misamis Oriental

practical skills needed for survival rather than the academic achievements like reading. As a result, learners might not receive as much encouragement or motivation to prioritize academic tasks, affecting their reading proficiency. Besides, when learners see fathers as a role model for learning and value education may encourage their children to read, helping them with homework and offering support on learning, even if fathers are not formally educated, they may still impart linguistic skills, such as storytelling, and local knowledge which support reading proficiency. These skills learned in informal settings can lay a foundation for later academic reading.

However, fathers want to help their children with reading, the demanding nature of work in farming often leaves them with little time or energy to do so. The physical labor and long hours required for farming make it challenging for them to give time to their children's education, despite their willingness to support their learning.

Specifically, it is important to remember the connection between the two; their relationship doesn't mean one causes the other. These interconnected factors highlight how farming influences the reading proficiency of indigenous learners, though it was important to note that farming itself was not the direct cause of low reading proficiency. These challenges require culturally relevant educational programs, improved access to resources, and a flexible school system that aligns with the realities of indigenous farming communities. Lastly, the collaboration between schools, families, and community organizations is essential for addressing educational inequities. This includes creating partnerships to provide resources, support, and opportunities for learning to all children. We can work towards creating a more just and equitable society where every child can develop strong reading skills and reach their full potential. The study conducted by the National Center for Education (2023) found a strong correlation between poverty and lower reading scores, also, highlights that children living in poverty are more likely to experience delays in language development, have limited access to books and educational resources, and face challenges in school environments that can negatively impact their reading proficiency.

On the other hand, Hoff et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between family income and children's literacy skills, including reading comprehension and found that children from higher income families showed significantly better literacy outcomes, suggesting that financial resources play a crucial role in supporting early literacy development.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussions presented, the following conclusions are drawn:

The study identified that Grade 3 indigenous learners in Opol District Schools demonstrated satisfactory reading proficiency, indicating that the learners have a good grasp of phonics, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension, except for the struggle with fluency due to insufficient reading practice and a lack of confidence.

The study found no significant relationship between the respondents' level of reading proficiency and their profiles such as age, sex, tribal affiliation, and parental support. However, fathers' occupation has a weak positive significant relationship. This suggests that socioeconomic context, particularly the stability and nature of fathers' occupation, play a role in supporting reading proficiency levels.

It is important to recognize the role of fathers' occupation in supporting a child's reading proficiency.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following are recommended:

1. The Division of Misamis Oriental should provide teachers with trainings and seminars on professional development opportunities on effective strategies for teaching reading fluency, especially with indigenous learners.
2. Instructional leaders and school heads should develop and use reading materials in both the local indigenous language and Filipino/English to support fluency in both languages.
3. Teachers should integrate regular and targeted fluency practice into daily lessons, incorporating local indigenous languages and stories. This could include repeated readings, choral reading, partner reading, and timed reading activities. Provide learners with a variety of engaging texts that align with their interests and reading levels. Integrate "Reading buddies" into the classroom; this involves pairing learners of different reading levels to practice reading together. The stronger reader can model fluency strategies, with the less proficient reader benefiting from the support and guidance.

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