Factors Influencing The Instructional Competence Of Teachers In Teaching Reading Comprehension Among Grades 4–6 Learners In Pinamungajan District I

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Abstract — **Teachers play a crucial role in cultivating reading comprehension as a skill, especially among elementary learners. This study investigated the factors influencing the instructional competence of Grades 4–6 teachers in teaching reading comprehension among elementary learners in Pinamungajan District I, Cebu. This study was motivated by the persistent literacy challenges in the Philippine context and aimed to identify how materials and resources, professional development, learner-related factors, and school support affected teachers' capabilities. A convergent mixed-method design was adopted, drawing from a purposive sample of 81 teachers across 15 public elementary schools in the district. Data were collected using a self-constructed survey instrument, supplemented by open-ended interview responses. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means. Thematic analysis was performed on qualitative data to identify major instructional challenges. Results revealed that respondents were predominantly female (88.9%), mostly aged 30–39 (38.3%), and held Master's units (67.9%). Teachers reported generally favorable access to teaching aids and resources (3.89, "Agree"), strong engagement in professional development (4.00, "Agree"), pronounced awareness of learner diversity (4.04, "Agree"), and positive perceptions of school support (4.07, "Agree"). However, teachers noted limitations in technological resources and persistent difficulties related to learner motivation, varying reading abilities, decoding skills, and vocabulary gaps. Qualitative findings underscored teachers' need for differentiated instructional approaches and highlighted major obstacles: learner disengagement, heterogeneous reading abilities, decoding weaknesses, and limited vocabulary. It is concluded that instructional competence in reading comprehension is shaped by individual teacher characteristics and systemic factors, emphasizing the need for targeted professional development, increased digital resource investment, structured phonics and vocabulary programs, and adaptive school support. While the study provides context-specific insights, its generalizability is limited by its single-district scope and reliance on self-reported data. Recommendations include continued research across broader contexts, along with stakeholder attention to differentiated support and resource allocation for sustainable literacy improvement.**

Keywords — **reading comprehension, grades 4–6 teachers and learners, reading difficulties**

I.   INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a foundational academic skill that underpins learners' success across subject areas. Beyond the ability to decode text, it fosters critical thinking, memory retention, and problem-solving abilities essential for lifelong learning [1]. Teachers play a central role in cultivating this skill, as their instructional competence directly influences how students engage with and understand texts. In the Philippine context, where literacy remains a national priority, the urgency of effective reading instruction is particularly pronounced.

Teacher competence, encompassing pedagogical knowledge, instructional strategies, and professional disposition, has been identified as a key determinant of literacy outcomes [2]. Yet, despite the availability of reading programs and interventions, many

educators struggle to implement evidence-based strategies effectively. Even in schools with structured reading initiatives, gaps persist in teachers' ability to adapt strategies to diverse learner needs, suggesting a disconnect between policy-level interventions and classroom-level execution, especially in under-resourced districts [3]. This challenge is compounded by the national literacy crisis, as evidenced by the 2021 PISA results, where 80% of Filipino learners failed to meet the minimum reading proficiency level [4]. In Pinamungajan District I, Cebu, the situation mirrors this national trend, with only 23.14% of Grades 4–6 learners passing the Philippine Reading Inventory's Group Screening Test for SY 2024–2025. These figures highlight the pressing need to strengthen teachers' capabilities in teaching reading comprehension.

Literature underscores that effective reading instruction is shaped by multiple factors. Adequate materials and resources, such as age-appropriate texts and digital tools, enrich lesson delivery, while continuous professional development enhances teachers' pedagogical adaptability [5] [6]. Learner-related factors—including motivation, background knowledge, and language proficiency—further influence instructional outcomes, requiring differentiated approaches [7]. School support, through administrative backing and collaborative culture, also empowers teachers by providing encouragement and structural facilitation [8]. Conversely, persistent challenges such as limited instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, diverse learner abilities, and systemic constraints like insufficient professional development and heavy administrative burdens hinder teachers' effectiveness [5] [7] [8]. Addressing these barriers through context-specific interventions is essential to improving literacy outcomes.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the factors affecting teachers' capabilities in teaching reading comprehension among elementary learners in Pinamungajan District I. Specifically, it examines the extent to which materials and resources, professional development, learner-related factors, and school support influence instructional competence. By identifying these gaps, the study aims to inform professional development programs and literacy interventions tailored to the district's needs, thereby contributing to the broader goal of improving reading comprehension outcomes among Filipino learners. Ultimately, it supports the Department of Education's thrust toward quality, inclusive, and equitable literacy education.

II.   METHODS

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design to comprehensively examine the factors influencing teachers' capabilities in teaching reading comprehension among elementary learners in Pinamungajan District I. A convergent design was deemed appropriate as it allows for the simultaneous collection and independent analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, which are later merged to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon [9]. The quantitative strand utilized a descriptive design to profile teachers demographically and to measure the extent to which materials and resources, professional development, learner-related factors, and school support affect their instructional competence [10]. Complementing this, the qualitative strand employed a descriptive approach to explore in depth the major difficulties teachers encounter in teaching reading comprehension, capturing their lived experiences through open-ended responses and written interviews [11]. Integrating both strands enhanced the validity and richness of the findings by enabling corroboration and elaboration across data types [12].

Participants comprised 81 elementary teachers purposively sampled from 15 public schools in Pinamungajan District I during the 2025–2026 school year. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that respondents possessed relevant experience and were actively engaged in teaching reading comprehension. The district's total teacher population is 185, but the inclusion criteria required teachers to be actively teaching Grades 4–6 during the academic year, as reading comprehension instruction intensifies across these grade levels.

Data were collected using a self-constructed survey questionnaire and a written interview guide, both developed through a comprehensive review of literature and existing instruments on reading comprehension instruction. Content validity was established through expert review by three specialists in language education, who assessed item relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Construct validity was confirmed via factor analysis during pilot testing, ensuring that items accurately measured constructs such as materials and resources, professional development, learner-related factors, and school support. Criterion-related validity was examined by correlating survey scores with external indicators of teaching capability. Reliability was established with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Pilot testing with 20

teachers from a neighboring district led to minor refinements in wording and sequencing. The final instrument consisted of three parts: Part I gathered demographic data, Part II employed a 5-point Likert scale to measure the extent of influencing factors, and Part III included open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights into teaching difficulties.

Prior to data collection, an official transmittal letter was submitted to the Public Schools District Supervisor of Pinamungajan District I to secure permission. Informed consent was subsequently obtained from school principals and individual teacher-respondents, ensuring voluntary participation and awareness of their rights. The finalized instrument was administered electronically via Google Forms, with the researcher monitoring completion and providing technical assistance as needed. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and responses were compiled, cleaned, and securely stored in digital format accessible only to the researcher.

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages to establish teachers' demographic profiles. Weighted means were computed to summarize the extent to which the identified factors influenced teaching capabilities, with interpretations based on the following scale: strongly disagree (1.00–1.80), disagree (1.81–2.60), neutral (2.61–3.40), agree (3.41–4.20), and strongly agree (4.21–5.00). Qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis [13], which involved familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and final reporting. This dual analytic approach ensured both breadth and depth in understanding the challenges and determinants of reading comprehension instruction.

Ethical protocols were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, methodology, potential risks, and benefits. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was safeguarded by removing personally identifiable information and storing data on secure servers with restricted access. The study posed no physical or psychological risks, and cognitive load was minimized by designing clear, comprehensible items and allowing sufficient time for completion. No incentives were provided, and all participants were treated equitably, upholding principles of justice and fairness. The study's findings aim to benefit teachers and learners by identifying key factors that influence instructional competence in reading comprehension, thereby guiding more effective pedagogical interventions.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Teachers

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	20-29	19	23.5
	30-39	31	38.3
	40-49	17	21.0
	50-59	13	16.0
	60 and above	1	1.2
Sex	Male	9	11.1
	Female	72	88.9
Civil Status	Single	17	21.0
	Married	61	75.3
	Widowed	2	2.5
	Separated	1	1.2
Current Position	Teacher 1	35	43.2
	Teacher 2	26	32.1
	Teacher 3	17	21.0
	Master Teacher 1	3	3.7
Years in Service	No response	3	3.7
	1-5 years	17	21.0

	6-10 years	28	34.6
	11-15 years	8	9.9
	16-20 years	6	7.4
	21 years and above	19	23.5
	No Response	1	1.2
	Bachelor's Degree	18	22.2
Highest Educational Attainment	Master's With Units	55	67.9
	Master's Degree	6	7.4
	Doctorate With Units	1	1.2
Total		**81**	**100**

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the teachers. Each indicator is discussed in detail in the following paragraphs. The age distribution of the 81 respondents reveals that the largest proportion falls within the 30–39-year-old range (38.3%), with additional significant representations from the 20–29 (23.5%) and 40–49 (21.0%) age groups. This indicates that the teaching workforce in Pinamungajan District I is primarily comprised of young to middle-aged educators, suggesting a cohort likely balancing recent training with practical classroom experience. This demographic is significant, as teachers in their early and middle careers are often positioned to be receptive to new methodologies while still relying on a growing base of instructional practice, which research shows can positively impact instructional effectiveness and innovation in the teaching of reading comprehension [14]. The small percentage of teachers aged 50 and above points to a youthful demographic profile, with implications for succession planning, mentorship, and potential differences in professional development needs among age cohorts.

The sex profile of the respondents is notably skewed, with 88.9% (72 out of 81) being female and only 11.1% (9 out of 81) male. This imbalance reflects national and international trends where the teaching profession, particularly at the elementary level, is dominated by females [15]. The predominance of female teachers means that findings related to instructional strategies, challenges, and professional needs are predominantly drawn from women's experiences, which may shape both classroom dynamics and the engagement with professional development. Given the global recognition of gender-sensitive approaches, it is worth considering how this demographic feature may affect both pedagogy and student achievement, and exploring how to nurture teacher diversity for a more holistic instructional environment.

Among the respondents, 75.3% are married, followed by 21.0% who are single, with only a small minority widowed or separated. The dominance of married teachers may significantly influence classroom dynamics, work-life balance, and access to professional development activities, as marital status has been linked to variations in job stress, support systems, and time available for career advancement [16]. Awareness of these factors is crucial, as married teachers might face greater familial responsibilities, potentially affecting their instructional focus and capacity for ongoing learning. Thus, when considering interventions for instructional improvement, it is important to acknowledge the civil status profile, as it may shape teachers' professional engagement and the overall social climate of the school.

Teachers holding the positions of Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3 make up 96.3% of the respondents, while only 3.7% are Master Teacher 1. This dominance of early- to mid-career classroom teachers suggests that the reported experiences and challenges are reflective of those still consolidating pedagogical expertise and likely engaging more frequently with professional development programs. Research supports the idea that early- and mid-career teachers benefit greatly from targeted instructional support and professional learning communities to develop and refine their skills, especially in specialized areas like reading comprehension [17]. The minimal representation of Master Teachers implies reduced mentoring or curriculum leadership at the grassroots level, highlighting the need to leverage the expertise of senior teachers for broader school improvement.

The years of service among respondents are widely distributed, with the greatest concentration (34.6%) having 6–10 years of experience, followed by notable groups with 21+ years (23.5%) and 1–5 years (21.0%). This indicates a healthy mix of emerging, consolidating, and veteran teachers within the schools. Evidence suggests that as teachers move from novice to experienced status, their capacity to implement complex reading comprehension strategies and manage diverse learners improves [18]. The relatively high proportion of more experienced teachers (21+ years) provides a basis for mentoring and professional

collaboration, yet the presence of a significant cohort with under 10 years' service underscores the ongoing need for targeted professional development to support best practices in reading instruction.

The vast majority of respondents (67.9%) report "Master's With Units" as their highest educational attainment, followed by 22.2% with a bachelor's degree. This suggests a teaching force strongly oriented toward further academic qualification and professional development, factors which have been shown to enhance teaching competence and instructional outcomes [19]. However, the contrast between those actively pursuing versus those who have completed graduate studies may indicate differing levels of exposure to research-based practices and critical reflection in pedagogy. This strong academic orientation is promising for instructional quality, yet school leaders should ensure continued support for educators in completing advanced studies and translating academic learning into classroom impact.

Factors Affecting the Teachers' Capabilities

Table 2

Extent to which Factors Affects Teachers' Capabilities in Teaching Reading Comprehension

Factors	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Materials and Resources		
I gain access and provide adequate and appropriate teaching aid and materials for my learners.	4.00	Agree
There is available aid for differentiated instruction in reading.	3.93	Agree
I have sufficient technological resources to teach reading instruction.	3.52	Agree
The accessible teaching materials are aligned with the contents and learning objectives for literacy instruction.	3.94	Agree
I gain access to and use various resources, such as digital and printed materials to address unique learner's learning needs and style.	4.05	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.89**	**Agree**
Professional Development		
I have joined sufficient training or workshops on teaching reading comprehension.	3.68	A
The professional development opportunities provided are significant to my teaching needs.	3.99	A
I have opportunities to observe my peers and collaborate with them.	4.00	A
There is an alignment of my personal development plan with school's objectives and my unique teaching needs.	4.10	A
I continuously pursue professional development opportunities to improve my knowledge and skills in teaching reading comprehension.	4.25	SA
Overall Weighted Mean	**4.00**	**Agree**
Learner-related		
My learners have different reading abilities and learning needs.	4.48	SA
I can cater to the different learning styles and reading abilities of my learners.	3.90	A
The learners' motivation substantially influences their ability to comprehend text or passage.	4.10	A
My learners are provided with diverse learning materials which address learners' reading levels and improve comprehension.	3.80	A
Learners' intrinsic motivation is a main predictor of their learning.	3.90	A
Overall Weighted Mean	**4.04**	**A**
School Support		
The school administrator furnishes sufficient support for reading instruction.	4.09	A
The school has an encouraging environment and collaborative school culture.	4.10	A
The school offers ample time for planning, designing and preparation for reading instruction.	3.98	A
The school furnishes ample resources to aid effective teaching in reading comprehension.	4.01	A
The teachers are engaged in any professional development opportunities related to teaching reading and relevant to teachers' teaching needs.	4.17	A
Overall Weighted Mean	**4.07**	**A**

Legend:

4.21–5.00   Strongly Agree (SA)

3.41–4.20   Agree (A)

2.61–3.40   Neutral (N)

1.81–2.60   Disagree (D)

1.00–1.80   Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 2 presents the extent to which four specific factors affect the teachers' capabilities in teaching reading comprehension to elementary learners. In the following paragraphs, each factor is discussed thoroughly. The findings show that teachers in Pinamungajan District I largely agree that they have adequate and appropriate teaching aids, materials, and differentiated resources to support reading instruction, with individual weighted means ranging from 3.52 to 4.05 and an overall mean of 3.89 ("Agree"). Notably, the highest agreement is seen for access to diverse resources that address unique learner needs, supporting inclusive teaching practices and curriculum alignment. However, technological resources for reading instruction are perceived as relatively weaker, indicating a gap that may warrant targeted investment or training. This suggests that while the district has built a solid foundation of traditional teaching materials, enhancing digital resource access and teachers' technological proficiency is a promising area for development, especially in today's increasingly digital educational landscape. This is consistent with the findings of Kaplan and Muminovic [20], who emphasize that well-equipped teachers with accessible materials, both print and digital, are better positioned to differentiate instruction and respond effectively to diverse student needs. Ensuring alignment between resources and instructional goals is vital for effective literacy outcomes, as also projected by recent instructional standards research [8].

Teachers express strong engagement in professional development, as reflected by an overall weighted mean of 4.00 ("Agree"). There is particularly high agreement on continuous pursuit of professional development and the perceived alignment between their personal growth plans and school objectives. Teachers also report ample opportunities for peer observation and collaboration. These findings indicate that teachers value lifelong learning and see clear relevance in their professional development activities, which directly support their instructional competency in reading comprehension. Such an environment fosters knowledge sharing, improve self-efficacy, and encourages instructional innovation. Campbell et al. [21] highlight that meaningful, structured professional development opportunities, especially those that are collaborative and sustained, are key to boosting teacher effectiveness in the classroom. The proactive approach of pursuing ongoing training further enhances teachers' capacity to implement evidence-based reading strategies and adapt to evolving educational contexts.

The data also reveals that teachers strongly recognize the diversity of their learners' reading abilities and needs, with a particularly high weighted mean (4.48) for recognizing varied reading abilities. There is agreement that they can cater to these differences and that learner motivation, both extrinsic and intrinsic, is crucial for comprehension, with weighted means from 3.80 to 4.10. Teachers also report providing varied learning materials tailored to different reading levels, reinforcing their commitment to differentiated instruction. These insights underscore an awareness of the critical role of individual learner differences and motivation in shaping reading success. Santikacahya et al. [22] affirm that awareness of and adaptation to learners' diversities are foundational for instructional effectiveness, with motivation serving as a key driver for comprehension gains. While teachers feel capable, ongoing support to further diversify instructional approaches and sustain learner motivation remains important for continued growth in reading outcomes.

Teachers report a strong and supportive school environment for reading instruction, as reflected by consistently high ratings (overall weighted mean = 4.07, "Agree"). Teachers feel supported by administrators and benefit from access to resources, time for planning, and opportunities for professional development. The school's culture encourages collaboration, which is essential for sharing best practices and driving school-wide improvement. While there is slightly less agreement on time for planning, it remains a strength rather than a significant barrier. These results highlight the importance of a robust support system in empowering teachers and nurturing a positive climate for sustained instructional improvement. Jiang [23] emphasizes that supportive schools reinforce teacher capacity, foster collaboration, and improve student reading achievement by enabling consistent application of best teaching practices.

Major Difficulties in Teaching Reading Comprehension to Elementary Learners

Four recurring themes were generated from the data, encompassing disengagement and lack of motivation, diverse reading abilities, poor decoding skills, and the impact of limited vocabulary.

1. Disengagement and Lack of Motivation in Learning

Disengagement and lack of motivation among learners remain significant barriers to reading comprehension, often stemming from unmet individual learning needs. Respondent 12 observed that students "*are disinterested in writings when they don't see the relevance to their lives,*" while Respondent 36 noted, "*If they don't recognize the words quickly, they just give up,*" pointing to both contextual and cognitive disconnects. Respondent 44 added, "*Students struggle to connect with texts not aligned to their interests,*" reinforcing the need for personalized content. Recent studies affirm that differentiated instruction enhances motivation by aligning materials with learners' interests and readiness levels. Ramilo and Ting [24] found that students with diverse learning needs showed increased engagement when instructional materials were tailored to their profiles. Similarly, Zannat [25] emphasized that differentiated strategies foster intrinsic motivation, especially among reluctant readers. These findings underscore the importance of flexible, student-centered approaches to rekindle interest and improve reading outcomes.

2. Diverse Reading Abilities

Teachers face the complex challenge of managing diverse reading abilities within a single classroom. Respondent 19 shared, "*It's difficult because I must balance my attention between those who are falling behind and those who can advance,*" while Respondent 50 noted, "*Many students simply don't have the foundational skills, yet they are expected to keep up.*" Respondent 40 added, "*Without differentiated instruction, my advanced students complain of boredom while the others feel lost,*" highlighting the pedagogical tension. William et al. [26] show that individualized reading programs significantly improve engagement and proficiency across varied learner profiles. Velasco [27] further argues that differentiated instruction and collaborative learning are essential in heterogeneous classrooms to ensure equitable learning experiences. These insights point to the urgent need for teacher training and resource allocation that support differentiated methodologies, enabling educators to meet the full spectrum of student needs.

3. Poor Decoding Skills among Learners

Poor decoding skills continue to hinder learners' reading fluency and comprehension. Respondent 28 lamented, "*Some students can barely decode simple words, and this has been a persistent issue throughout the year,*" while Respondent 33 emphasized, "*If a child can't decode words, they can't comprehend what they read.*" Respondent 55 added, "*Many students reach grade five unable to connect sounds with letters,*" revealing systemic gaps in early literacy instruction. Aclin [28] found that decoding deficits are prevalent in linguistically diverse settings and require targeted interventions. Other studies also demonstrated that phonics instruction significantly improves decoding and sight word recognition, especially when integrated early [29]. These findings highlight the need for structured phonics programs and early literacy screening to ensure foundational reading skills are developed before comprehension tasks become too demanding.

4. Impact of Limited Vocabulary on Comprehension

Limited vocabulary remains a critical obstacle to reading comprehension. Respondent 13 noted, "*The students frequently misinterpret fundamental vocabulary, affecting their overall comprehension of lessons,*" while Respondent 18 shared, "*Most students shy away from reading complex texts because they don't understand the words.*" Respondent 52 added, "*When they do not understand the words, they become frustrated and disengaged from reading altogether.*" Research found that explicit vocabulary instruction improves comprehension and confidence, especially among multilingual learners [30] and showed that repeated exposure and contextual practice in vocabulary teaching led to measurable gains in reading performance [31]. These findings affirm that vocabulary development is not just a linguistic goal but a gateway to deeper comprehension, engagement, and academic success.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that teachers' capabilities in teaching reading comprehension among elementary learners in Pinamungajan District I are shaped by a complex interplay of demographic factors, access to resources, professional development, learner diversity, and institutional support. Majority of teachers are young to middle-aged, predominantly female, and hold advanced academic

qualifications, while most teaching positions are occupied by early- to mid-career educators who actively pursue professional growth. Teachers generally perceive strong access to teaching materials and supportive environments but highlight gaps in technological resources and the need for differentiated approaches to cater to diverse student abilities and motivators. Major challenges identified include learner disengagement, varying reading abilities within a classroom, poor decoding skills, and limited vocabulary, with qualitative responses underscoring the necessity for individualized and flexible instruction. These findings reinforce and extend existing literature, affirming the central role that teacher demographics and contextual factors play in effective reading comprehension instruction. The study's limitations include its focus on a single district and reliance on teacher self-reports, suggesting the need for broader, multi-site studies and direct observational data for future research. Practical recommendations include enhancing the integration of digital resources, expanding structured phonics and vocabulary programs, and providing ongoing differentiated professional development that responds to specific teacher needs. For stakeholders and policymakers, investing in targeted resources, sustained training, and adaptive support systems is essential for advancing reading achievement and educational equity.

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