

# The Relationship Between Instructional Leadership Practices and Learners' Reading Abilities

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## ABSTRACT

A key factor in the enhancement of learners' reading ability is effective instructional leadership. This research examined how instructional leaders' approaches relate to learners' reading abilities. Conducted within the Schools Division of Ozamiz City during the School Year 2024-2025, the study involved 43 school heads assigned at the different elementary and integrated schools. Data were gathered using the Modified Instructional Leadership Questionnaire (MILQ) and post-assessment results from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Spearman rho correlation coefficient. The findings revealed that school principals exhibit a strong degree of instructional leadership, notably by providing support for their teachers, fostering positive learning spaces, and involving parents in their children's education. Despite strong leadership practices, the correlation between leadership practices and reading abilities was minimal. The study concluded that while instructional leadership is robust, its impact on reading performance is limited. The study recommended that school heads implement research-based supervisory strategies, teachers use differentiated instruction, and schools enhance parental involvement to bridge the gap between leadership inputs and learner reading outcomes.

**Keywords:** Instructional Leadership, Leadership Practices, Learners, Reading Ability, Relationship

## INTRODUCTION

Reading proficiency is a foundational skill that significantly influences academic success and lifelong learning. In the context of elementary education, developing strong literacy skills at an early age is essential. As observed, strong leadership played a crucial role in improving the quality of reading instruction, which directly affected learners' literacy outcomes. Fullan (2014) argued that principals are central to 'fostering collaboration, building capacity, and creating a culture of continuous improvement,' which are all vital for improving reading instruction. By examining the role of instructional leaders, the study highlighted the significance of school leadership in fostering an environment where effective reading instruction could thrive.

Recent studies consistently demonstrate that instructional leadership significantly impacts learner achievement directly through principal actions and indirectly by fostering teacher efficacy and commitment (Dutta & Sahney, 2021; Liu et al., 2022; Rodrigues & de Lima, 2024; ). Specifically for literacy, strong instructional leadership shapes the vision, promotes effective practices, and supports implementation and monitoring of literacy initiatives (Groenewald et al., 2024). This leadership is crucial for improving reading instruction by supporting teachers and cultivating a school-wide focus on literacy (Wallace Foundation, 2023). Overall, contemporary research reinforces the critical role of instructional leadership in enhancing both academic and literacy outcomes.

Despite these insights, there remained a gap in understanding how instructional leadership specifically affected learners who fell under the frustration reading level, particularly in the local context of the Philippine school system. Existing studies often focused on general academic performance or leadership styles but failed to address targeted interventions for struggling readers in primary and secondary education. Furthermore, existing research has offered limited direct links between school leadership and concrete literacy results, especially when utilizing tools such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). This research endeavors to fill this void by

specifically examining how particular instructional leadership approaches relate to measurable gains in learners' reading ability, as assessed by the Phil-IRI within the Schools Division of Ozamiz City. By exploring leadership practices that directly supported teachers and learners, the research hoped to offer evidence-based strategies that addressed the pressing reading challenges in schools.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on several complementary theories and models that explain how instructional leadership practices influence learners' reading abilities. These include Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model, Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and the Effective Schools Model. Each theory contributes uniquely to understanding the interplay between school leadership and literacy development.

**Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Instructional Leadership Model.** This model posits that instructional leaders play a pivotal role in promoting student achievement by focusing on three key dimensions: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate. The model emphasizes that practices such as setting reading targets, supervising instruction, and ensuring relevant professional development significantly influence student outcomes (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This study utilizes a model that provides a framework for analyzing how school heads' leadership behaviors, particularly in managing reading instruction, contribute to learners' reading performance. The model guides the study's focus on leadership as a critical factor in improving reading ability.

**Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory.** Vygotsky (1978) asserts that learning is a social process, where cognitive development occurs through interactions within a learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Teachers and peers scaffold learning through dialogue and collaboration. This theory supports the examination of leadership's role in enabling socially constructed reading experiences. In this study, instructional leaders create conditions that support interactive, socially mediated reading instruction through professional development and collaboration.

**Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory.** Bandura (1986) emphasizes the role of social interaction, modeling, and self-efficacy in learning. Learners and teachers alike perform better when they believe in their abilities. The theory highlights the psychological mechanisms, such as motivation and belief in success, that leadership can nurture to support reading development. In the context of this study, instructional leaders influence both teacher and student self-efficacy through recognition, encouragement, and a culture of continuous improvement.

**Transformational Leadership Theory.** Transformational leadership focuses on vision-building, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and high expectations (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). The theory provides a relational and motivational perspective on how leadership affects literacy practices. In this study, school heads with transformational qualities can inspire teachers to commit to innovative reading instruction and student-centered strategies.

**The Effective Schools Model.** This model, developed through research by Edmonds (1979) and refined by Lezotte (1991), posits that schools can overcome socioeconomic challenges through factors such as strong instructional leadership, high expectations, and regular monitoring of learning. The model provides a systems-level view showing how school-wide leadership practices contribute to literacy success. This study it reinforces the idea that effective leadership can improve reading outcomes regardless of background.

The integration of these five theoretical foundations provides a comprehensive lens through which the relationship between instructional leadership and learners' reading abilities can be understood and examined. Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model offers a direct link between leadership practices and academic outcomes, while Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory highlight the social and psychological dimensions of literacy learning that leaders can influence. The Transformational Leadership Theory brings in the motivational and visionary aspects of leadership necessary for sustained instructional change, and the Effective Schools Model situates these dynamics within the broader school system, emphasizing the potential of leadership to drive equity and excellence. Collectively, these theories justify the

study's focus on instructional leadership as a multifaceted and powerful lever in enhancing reading achievement, particularly in diverse and resource-constrained educational contexts.

## Research Objectives

This study aimed to examine the relationship between instructional leadership practices of school heads and learners' reading abilities in a medium-sized schools division in Northern Mindanao during the School Year 2024-2025. The specific objectives were as follows:

assessed the extent of school heads' instructional leadership practices in terms of teacher support and training; learning environment; use of assessment tool; teacher experience and qualifications; and parental involvement;

determined the learners' reading ability based on the results of the Phil-IRI posttest in Filipino and English;

explored the significant relationship between the instructional leadership practices and learners' reading ability; and

proposed instructional supervisory strategies based on the findings of the study.

## RELATED LITERATURE

### Instructional Leadership and Teacher Professional Development

Instructional leadership has emerged as a cornerstone of school effectiveness and student learning, particularly in the area of literacy. The primary variable of interest in this study instructional leadership practices has been linked to improvements in learners' reading abilities, the study's dependent variable. Recent research affirms that school leaders who prioritize instructional quality, particularly in reading and language instruction, tend to influence literacy outcomes more significantly than those who focus solely on administrative functions (Ng, 2021; Rodrigues & De Lima, 2024). Instructional leadership is commonly conceptualized through variables such as strategic goal-setting, curriculum supervision, teacher development, and learning environment management (Reutzel, 2020).

Effective instructional leadership often includes providing sustained professional development for teachers. This aspect teacher support and training is a recurring mediating variable in literacy research. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasize that student learning improves when teacher development is ongoing, collaborative, and practice-based. Reutzel (2020) and Ng (2021) support this, arguing that professional learning communities (PLCs) and instructional coaching foster teacher competence in literacy strategies. In the Southeast Asian context, Ng (2021) specifically notes the success of principals who actively mentor teachers in reading instruction. Kini and Podolsky (2016) further identify leadership-guided training as a key driver of improved literacy instruction. However, most of these studies have been conducted in urban or well-resourced school systems, leaving a gap in understanding how such practices operate in developing regions or rural public schools, such as those in Northern Mindanao.

### School Environment and Resource Allocation

A positive and inclusive school environment, shaped by leadership, has been linked to increased reading motivation and comprehension. Reutzel (2020) describes the importance of print-rich, emotionally safe classrooms, while Martin (2016) underscores the need for culturally responsive teaching spaces that affirm learners' linguistic backgrounds. The Wallace Foundation (2023) expands this by asserting that instructional leaders shape school culture through equitable policies and resource allocation. These findings align with the environmental management dimension of instructional leadership. Yet, limited studies have been conducted in multilingual or indigenous Filipino contexts where environmental inclusivity must reflect local culture and language, a gap that this study seeks to address.

### Use of Formative Assessment in Instructional Leadership

Formative assessment is another vital component of instructional leadership, particularly in literacy. Wiliam (2018) argues that timely and purposeful assessment leads to informed instructional decisions. The Department of Education's (2018) Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) serves as a nationwide tool to evaluate reading performance, but its effective use relies on leadership support in interpretation and follow-through. Learning Forward (2023) points out that without leadership involvement in data analysis, assessment may not translate into instructional improvement. Groenewald et al. (2024) found that schools integrating assessment into their leadership processes tend to implement more targeted and effective reading interventions. Despite these insights, few studies explicitly examine how Phil-IRI results are utilized by instructional leaders to inform teaching strategies, an important focus of this study.

### **Teacher Quality and Leadership in Human Resource Management**

Teacher effectiveness, often determined by training, experience, and specialization, is also shaped by leadership practices in human resource deployment. Desimone and Garet (2015) found that teachers with specialized literacy training use more effective reading strategies. In the Philippines, Groenewald et al. (2024) observed that school heads who assign experienced teachers to critical reading classes yield higher learner outcomes. Rodrigues and De Lima (2024) similarly identify strategic teacher deployment as a leadership practice closely tied to instructional success. However, there is a lack of empirical studies in the Philippine context that investigate this variable in relation to learners' actual reading levels, particularly when measured through standardized reading tools like the Phil-IRI.

### **Home-School Partnerships and Community Engagement**

Strong home-school partnerships are increasingly recognized as essential to literacy development. Kim and Sheridan (2015) note that parental engagement in reading routines and school activities improves learner fluency and comprehension. In the Philippine setting, Martin (2016) and Tupas (2015) highlight the importance of community-based literacy initiatives in bridging the school-home divide. Instructional leaders are instrumental in fostering such partnerships by organizing parent workshops, providing home reading materials, and engaging families in culturally responsive ways. Yet, most studies focus on programmatic interventions rather than on leadership strategies used to institutionalize these partnerships, revealing a practical gap that this study intends to explore.

### **Synthesis**

The reviewed literature consistently highlights the critical influence of instructional leadership on learners' reading development. Key leadership practices such as providing professional support for teachers, fostering inclusive and resource-rich learning environments, using formative assessments, deploying qualified teachers strategically, and engaging families have been shown to contribute positively to literacy outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Martin, 2016; Ng, 2021; Reutzel, 2020; Rodrigues & De Lima, 2024). These findings collectively affirm that effective instructional leadership fosters conditions that are conducive to reading achievement, especially when school heads align instructional goals with data-informed practices and capacity-building initiatives.

### **Research Gap**

Despite this robust body of evidence, several research gaps remain. First, a geographical and contextual gap exists: much of the literature draws from urban, international, or metropolitan school settings, while empirical studies focusing on rural and medium-sized school divisions in Northern Mindanao are scarce. This limits the generalizability of current insights to more localized, under-resourced contexts. Second, there is an instrumental gap regarding the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). Although it is a mandated diagnostic tool in the Philippines, few studies have explored its use in relation to school leadership practices, leaving a gap in understanding how it might serve as a lever for leadership-informed reading interventions. Third, a strategic gap persists in the literature, with limited exploration of how specific dimensions of instructional leadership such as resource management, assessment integration, and teacher deployment directly correlate with reading proficiency levels in both English and Filipino. Addressing these gaps, the present study aims to examine the



relationship between instructional leadership practices and learners' reading abilities, using Phil-IRI data in the context of a medium-sized schools division in Northern Mindanao.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to explore the relationship between school heads' instructional leadership practices and students' reading abilities. Descriptive-correlational designs are advantageous in identifying and quantifying associations between naturally occurring variables without experimental manipulation, making them suitable for educational research (Creswell, 2012). This design was deemed appropriate for this investigation, allowing for a clear examination of the interplay between leadership practices and literacy outcomes.

The research was conducted within the Schools Division of Ozamiz City, which encompasses 59 schools across 10 districts, including 49 elementary and integrated schools as well as 10 high schools. During the School Year 2024-2025, the total student population numbered 36,517, comprised of 19,719 elementary learners, 10,499 junior high school students, and 6,299 senior high school students. This diverse educational setting provided an ideal context for examining the research problem.

The respondents included 43 elementary school heads from the Schools Division of Ozamiz City. Data were collected from 43 school heads or his assistant through complete enumeration with 87.75 percent retrieval rate. The analysis focused on findings from school heads to align with the study's objectives. Inclusion criteria involved currently assigned public school heads with at least one year of relevant experience. Exclusion criteria restricted participation to individuals not on leave during data collection or those who had previously participated in pilot testing.

Data was gathered through two primary instruments: the Modified Instructional Leadership Questionnaire (MILQ) and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). The MILQ, adapted from Akram et al. (2018), included 25 Likert-scale items focusing on teacher support and training, learning environment, use of assessment tools, teacher experience and qualifications, and parental involvement, alongside three open-ended questions for qualitative insights. To evaluate learners' reading abilities, the study utilized post-assessment results from the Phil-IRI, recognized for its reliability in measuring reading performance within the Philippine educational framework.

Content validity of the MILQ was ensured through expert evaluations, demonstrating strong agreement among validators. A pilot test facilitated refinement, and reliability tests produced a high Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ) and McDonald's omega ( $\omega = 0.95$ ), indicating excellent internal consistency across the constructs. Subsequent modifications to the instrument, specifically adjusting the Use of Assessment Tools construct, further enhanced its reliability according to the results from repeated reliability testing.

Data collection involved survey administration and document review. Ethical clearance was secured from the requisite authorities before commencing data collection. Surveys were administered directly to school heads, promoting increased response rates and facilitating immediate clarification of questions. Document review comprised the analysis of Phil-IRI posttest records to assess learners' reading proficiency levels, ensuring the researcher accurately gathered and categorized data. Both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were utilized. Descriptive statistics provided a summary of instructional leadership practices, while Spearman rho correlation coefficient analysis ascertained the correlation between instructional leadership dimensions and learners reading abilities.

Adherence to ethical standards was paramount, ensuring participant privacy and voluntary involvement. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, with data collected securely and anonymized. Consent from the school heads was also acquired for the use of learners' reading performance data. The study received ethical clearance from the University Graduate School Ethics Review Board and complied with institutional guidelines, reinforcing the integrity and credibility of the results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## Extent of School Heads' Instructional Leadership Practices

The school heads level of instructional leadership practices across five key areas is shown in Table 1. The overall mean score of 4.61 (SD = 0.62) reflects that, on average, school heads exhibit a very high level of engagement in instructional leadership, which is crucial for enhancing the quality of education, particularly in fostering reading development. The high ratings in all constructs indicate that school heads are deeply committed to creating an environment that supports both teachers and learners in their learning journey.

Table 1 School Heads' Extent of Instructional Leadership Practices

Constructs	Mean	StDev	Remarks
Teacher Support and Training	4.66	0.54	Very High
Learning Environment	4.67	0.54	Very High
Use of Assessment Tools	4.68	0.50	Very High
Teacher Experience and Qualifications	4.70	0.56	Very High
Parental Involvement	4.21	0.71	Very High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.61</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>Very High</b>

In terms of Teacher Support and Training, school heads are rated very highly ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ) for providing professional development opportunities and technical assistance to improve teachers' reading instruction. This aligns with Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasized the importance of ongoing professional development in enhancing teacher effectiveness. Studies by Desimone & Garet (2015) also highlight that effective professional development is linked to increased teacher capacity and learner achievement, especially in literacy. Similarly, the Learning Environment construct received a very high rating ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ), demonstrating that school heads are actively fostering a literacy-rich environment that supports learners' reading development. This is consistent with Reutzel (2020), who pointed out that a supportive learning environment is essential for promoting literacy, especially in early education.

The Use of Assessment Tools also garnered a very high rating ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ), highlighting the school heads' commitment to using data-driven approaches in instructional planning. This is supported by Wilam (2018), who found that formative assessments play a critical role in improving learning outcomes by providing timely feedback to both learners and teachers. Additionally, Hattie (2009) emphasized that assessment and feedback are crucial to learner success, as they provide clear indicators of learning progress. In the area of Teacher Experience and Qualifications, school heads scored highly ( $M = 4.70$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ), reflecting their recognition of the importance of teacher qualifications and experience in ensuring effective reading instruction. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) further underscores this by stating that teacher quality is a key determinant of student achievement, particularly in literacy.

Lastly, Parental Involvement was rated very high ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ), indicating that school heads are working diligently to engage parents in their children's literacy development. While the standard deviation here is slightly higher, reflecting some variability across schools, the data still suggest strong efforts in maintaining open communication and providing resources to parents. Epstein (2001) identified parental involvement as a critical factor in improving student outcomes, especially when schools provide resources and maintain regular communication with parents. In addition, Kim & Sheridan (2015) found that parental education programs, including those focused on reading, have a significant impact on students' academic success.

Overall, the data suggest that school heads are demonstrating a very high level of instructional leadership, with a particular emphasis on supporting teachers, creating a conducive learning environment, and engaging parents in the educational process. These efforts are consistent with a broad body of research that highlights the importance of instructional leadership in improving educational outcomes.

## Learners' Reading Ability in Filipino and English

**Filipino.** In Filipino, the learners' reading performance shows a similarly promising trend but with slightly stronger results (Table 2). The Independent level posted the highest mean score of 30.10, with a standard deviation of 39.60, suggesting that many learners are able to comprehend Filipino texts independently and confidently. This higher mean compared to English (26.50) reflects the positive impact of using the mother tongue or a more familiar language in early literacy instruction, a principle grounded in Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) as outlined in DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2012. When learners begin reading in a language they understand well, they are more likely to develop fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills, which can later transfer to second-language literacy.

Table 2 Learners Reading Ability based Phil-IRI Post-Assessment

Reading Levels	Filipino			English		
	n	Mean	StDev	n	Mean	StDev
Frustration	43	10.20	18.60	43	12.40	19.10
Instructional	43	23.00	26.70	43	24.50	24.90
Independent	43	30.10	39.60	43	26.50	40.90

The Instructional level in Filipino also posted a mean score of 23.00, with a standard deviation of 26.70. As in English, these learners benefit from teacher guidance and scaffolded reading tasks. They may have partial comprehension and require activities such as shared reading and vocabulary building. The slightly lower instructional mean compared to the independent mean suggests that many learners have successfully transitioned out of the instructional level and into independent reading in Filipino.

Meanwhile, the Frustration level recorded the lowest mean score of 10.20, with a standard deviation of 18.60, indicating a smaller but still significant number of learners who are not yet ready to engage with grade-level texts independently. While the number at this level is concerning, it is slightly lower than the frustration mean in English, possibly due to the increased familiarity and exposure to Filipino texts in daily instruction and home environments. This data highlights the importance of sustaining interventions in Filipino literacy for struggling readers through remediation programs, parent involvement, and the integration of leveled reading materials in the classroom.

Across both English and Filipino, the Phil-IRI results show that while a good number of learners are at the independent level, especially in Filipino, there is a persistent need to assist those in the Instructional and Frustration levels. These findings call for a multi-tiered reading intervention framework. For learners at the instructional level, schools should continue providing small-group reading sessions, vocabulary instruction, and comprehension strategies. For those at the frustration level, intensive remediation programs such as reading recovery clinics, after-school tutoring, and phonemic awareness development are essential.

Moreover, teachers should be trained to analyze Phil-IRI results and use the data to design differentiated instruction plans that meet each learner's reading needs. Strengthening the reading environment through the provision of leveled books, reading corners, and community reading programs will also be vital in sustaining reading growth.

**English.** The Phil-IRI Post-Assessment results for English reading ability reveal varied levels of reading proficiency among the 43 schools assessed. The highest mean score was recorded at the independent level with a mean of 26.50 and a high standard deviation of 40.90, indicating that while many learners demonstrated the ability to read independently with full comprehension, there was a wide range of performance across learners. This outcome is encouraging as it suggests that a substantial number of learners are progressing toward the goal of becoming independent readers in English. According to DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2018, learners at the

independent level can read grade-level texts fluently with 100.00 percent comprehension, requiring little to no teacher assistance.

The Instructional level recorded a mean of 24.50 with a standard deviation of 24.90. Learners within this category are able to read with partial comprehension and benefit from teacher guidance. This group represents those who are on the verge of becoming independent readers but still require support through strategies like guided reading, paired reading, and vocabulary enrichment. These findings align with the goals of Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), which aims to systematically move learners from instructional to independent reading levels through structured reading interventions and teacher facilitation.

However, a noteworthy portion of the learners remains at the Frustration level, with a mean of 12.40 and a standard deviation of 19.10. Learners in this category are unable to read grade-level materials effectively, even with assistance, and may struggle with word recognition, decoding, and comprehension. This presents a challenge for schools and calls for urgent implementation of reading remediation strategies, including pull-out reading sessions, one-on-one tutorials, and the use of phonics-based interventions. The relatively large spread in the scores, as indicated by the high standard deviations, further underscores the need for differentiated instruction in English reading to cater to the varying proficiency levels in the classroom.

## Relationship between the School Heads' Instructional Leadership

### Practices and Learners' Reading Abilities

**Filipino.** The results of the correlation analysis in Table 3 indicate that among the various instructional leadership practices examined, only the learning environment and teacher experience and qualifications showed statistically significant relationships with learners' reading ability in Filipino. Specifically, the learning environment exhibited a moderate positive correlation with all three reading levels: frustration ( $\rho = 0.379$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), instructional ( $\rho = 0.406$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ), and independent ( $\rho = 0.359$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ). These findings suggest that improvements in the physical and psychological aspects of the classroom such as safety, orderliness, availability of learning resources, and positive teacher-student interactions can significantly enhance reading performance across the spectrum. A better learning environment appears to not only support struggling readers by reducing frustration but also helps more students reach instructional and independent reading proficiency.

Table 3 Significant Relationship between the Instructional Leadership Practices and Learners' Reading Ability in Filipino

Constructs	Frustration			Instructional			Independent		
	$\rho$	df	p-values	$\rho$	df	p-values	$\rho$	df	p-values
Teacher Support	-0.072	41	0.645	-0.003	41	0.986	0.058	41	0.709
Learning Environment	0.379	41	0.012*	0.406	41	0.007*	0.359	41	0.018*
Use of Assessment Tools	0.111	41	0.481	0.031	41	0.842	0.126	41	0.422
Teacher Experience and Qualifications	-0.316	41	0.039*	-0.152	41	0.331	0.006	41	0.970
Parental Involvement	-0.028	41	0.858	0.120	41	0.442	0.240	41	0.122

Notes:  $\rho$  – Spearman rho correlation value; \* - significant at 0.05

In addition, teacher experience and qualifications showed a significant negative correlation with learners at the frustration level ( $\rho = -0.316$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ), implying that learners are less likely to fall into the frustration level when taught by more experienced or better-qualified teachers. This highlights the vital role of seasoned educators in identifying and addressing reading difficulties early and effectively. Their instructional expertise and



classroom management skills may contribute to creating learning conditions that prevent reading struggles from escalating. These results emphasize the critical role of a well-managed learning environment and experienced teaching personnel in improving reading outcomes. Instructional leaders should therefore focus on enhancing classroom conditions and strategically utilizing experienced teachers to support literacy instruction, particularly for learners at risk of reading failure.

The significant relationship between the Learning Environment and learners' reading ability is consistent with Rodrigues et al. (2024) assertion that a supportive and engaging environment significantly enhances comprehension and decoding skills in reading. Similarly, the findings are in line with Martin (2016) argument that the learning context, including emotional and social support, plays a pivotal role in literacy development. Conversely, the lack of significant relationships for Teacher Support and Parental Involvement is somewhat surprising, given that research by Ng (2021). highlighted the importance of teacher engagement and parental involvement in improving reading outcomes. The absence of correlation between these factors may point to the need for a more nuanced approach to defining and measuring these constructs, ensuring that teacher support and parental involvement are effectively integrated into the learning process.

The findings may also reflect the complex interplay of factors that influence reading ability. For instance, Tupas (2015) emphasized that socio-economic factors, which may not have been directly assessed in this study, can influence both the learning environment and the extent of teacher and parental involvement. The positive correlation between the Learning Environment and reading ability underscores the importance of creating a school climate that is conducive to learning, but the limited impact of Teacher Support and Parental Involvement suggests that these factors might not be fully leveraged or effectively implemented in some schools. It is crucial for future research to explore how these constructs can be better integrated and tailored to the unique needs of Filipino learners.

English. The correlation analysis (Table 4) reveals that among the various instructional leadership constructs examined, only the learning environment and teacher experience and qualifications showed statistically significant relationships with learners' reading ability in English. The learning environment demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with all three levels of reading ability: frustration ( $\rho = 0.419$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), instructional ( $\rho = 0.386$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ), and independent ( $\rho = 0.316$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ). These results suggest that an enhanced classroom setting characterized by safety, order, availability of materials, and supportive interactions plays a crucial role in improving learners' reading proficiency. A conducive learning environment not only helps lower the number of learners at the frustration level but also supports more learners in achieving instructional and independent reading competencies.

Table 4 Significant Relationship between the School Heads Instructional Leadership Practices and Learners' Reading Ability in English

Constructs	Frustration			Instructional			Independent		
	P	df	p-values	$\rho$	df	p-values	$\rho$	df	p-values
Teacher Support	-0.069	41	0.661	-0.018	41	0.909	0.042	41	0.788
Learning Environment	0.419	41	0.005*	0.386	41	0.010*	0.316	41	0.039*
Use of Assessment Tools	0.106	41	0.500	0.051	41	0.743	0.043	41	0.785
Teacher Experience and Qualification	-0.307	41	0.045*	-0.179	41	0.251	0.025	41	0.875
Parental Involvement	-0.080	41	0.611	0.108	41	0.493	0.290	41	0.059

Notes:  $\rho$  – Spearman rho correlation value; \* - significant at 0.05

Additionally, teacher experience and qualifications exhibited a significant negative correlation with the frustration level in reading ( $\rho = -0.307$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ). This indicates that learners are less likely to struggle with

reading when they are guided by experienced and well-qualified teachers. These educators likely possess stronger instructional strategies and classroom management skills, enabling them to effectively support learners who are lagging behind in reading. The findings underscore the importance of a well-managed, resourceful, and positive learning environment as well as the critical role of experienced teachers in addressing early reading difficulties in English. Instructional leaders, particularly school heads, should focus their leadership efforts on improving classroom conditions and maximizing the impact of qualified teachers to foster better reading outcomes among learners.

The positive relationship between the Learning Environment and learners' reading ability aligns with the findings of Rodrigues et al. (2024) who highlighted the importance of a supportive learning space for fostering reading skills. Similarly, the research by Martin (2016) supports the notion that an effective learning environment tailored to learners' needs is crucial in developing both comprehension and decoding skills. Conversely, the weak or absent relationships for constructs such as Teacher Support and Parental Involvement contradict findings from Ng (2021), who emphasized the significant role of teacher engagement and family involvement in improving reading outcomes. These contradictions suggest that there may be a mismatch in how these factors are applied or a need for more targeted interventions that more directly address the learners' specific needs.

The results suggest that while the learning environment is an influential factor in improving learners' reading ability, other instructional leadership practices, such as Teacher Support and Parental Involvement, may need to be better targeted or refined. The influence of socio-economic factors, as discussed by Tupas (2015), could also play a role in these findings. Teachers may face challenges in providing adequate support or engaging parents effectively, particularly in environments with limited resources or in communities where education is not prioritized. The findings highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach that includes not only a favorable learning environment but also stronger support systems for teachers and parents to work together in improving learners' reading proficiency.

### **Proposed Instructional Supervisory Strategies**

Instructional Supervisory Strategies were formulated based on the findings of the study which revealed that despite school heads demonstrating a very high level of instructional leadership, a number of learners in Grades 4 to 6 continue to face challenges in reading, particularly in comprehension and vocabulary development in both Filipino and English. The results of the study indicate a need for more direct and structured interventions. In response, the plan outlines research-based supervisory strategies to bridge the gap between leadership practices and learner outcomes, aiming to improve reading proficiency through systematic support, teacher development, data-informed instruction, and stronger school-home collaboration.

## **FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Findings of the Study**

The results of the study reveal that:

Most learners' reading ability in Filipino was at the instructional level. A substantial number of learners performed at the frustration level in English. Independent readers were the fewest in both languages and across all grade levels.

The overall rating for school heads' instructional leadership practices was Very High. The highest-rated area was Teacher Experience and Qualifications, while the lowest was Parental Involvement.

There was no statistically significant relationship between the extent of school heads' instructional leadership practices and learners' reading ability levels in Filipino and English.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the above findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

A large proportion of Grades 4, 5, and 6 learners still struggle with reading, particularly in English, which suggests the need for more intensive reading support and differentiated instruction.

School heads practice a very high level of instructional leadership, particularly in leveraging teacher expertise and maintaining strong learning environments. However, gaps remain in consistently involving parents in reading initiatives and providing structured support at home.

Despite the strong leadership practices, no significant correlation was found between instructional leadership and learner reading outcomes. This suggests a possible disconnect between leadership inputs and instructional or learner-level outputs, highlighting the need for improved translation of leadership into teaching practice and learner support.

The effectiveness of instructional leadership may be influenced by other mediating variables, such as teacher competence, availability of resources, home literacy environment, and learners' motivation and readiness to learn.

## Recommendations

The recommendations of this study are grounded in its key findings, which reveal a concerning gap between strong instructional leadership practices and learners' reading proficiency levels. Despite school heads being rated "Very High" in their leadership efforts, especially in areas such as teacher experience and qualifications, the study found no statistically significant relationship between these practices and students' reading abilities in either English or Filipino. This disconnect underscores the need to bridge leadership efforts with direct classroom impact and learner outcomes. The study suggested that:

School heads adapt of research-based instructional supervisory strategies. The prevalence of learners at the frustration level, particularly in English, indicates the urgent need for tailored, context-specific leadership interventions. The proposed instructional supervisory strategies developed by the researcher aim to align leadership actions with classroom realities directly. These strategies aim to move beyond general supervision and provide targeted support that links leadership decisions to improved reading instruction, particularly for Key Stage 2 learners who are at a crucial stage of literacy development.

Schools promote teacher-centered interventions. The recommendation for differentiated instruction and remedial schedules stems from the diverse reading levels observed among students. The fact that the majority are not yet independent readers points to a need for instruction that is both responsive and flexible. Encouraging teacher participation in professional learning communities (PLCs) such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) and Collaborative Expertise (CE) Sessions provides a mechanism for continuous improvement, allowing educators to share best practices, assess learner data collaboratively, and refine pedagogy based on actual learner needs.

Teachers intensify learner engagement and support. Promoting guided independent reading and journal-keeping addresses the need for sustained reading practice beyond the classroom. Given that independent readers represent the smallest group, these activities foster metacognition and personal investment in reading. After-school programs provide an extended learning space for struggling readers to receive focused support, helping close the gap between their current and expected proficiency level.

School heads and teachers strengthen parental involvement. The lowest domain score in instructional leadership was in parental involvement, highlighting a significant area for development. Research showed that active parental engagement positively correlates with reading achievement. Therefore, training parents and involving them in home reading routines, while also encouraging consistent communication with teachers, ensures that reading support extends into the home environment, an often overlooked but crucial component of literacy development.

Researchers consider the same topic but of different methodology in future research endeavors. The absence of a direct correlation between leadership practices and reading performance suggests the influence of unexamined variables. Future studies that investigate factors such as instructional time, quality of teaching materials, or socio-

economic contexts could yield deeper insights into what drives reading proficiency. Additionally, employing qualitative or mixed-method designs would provide a more nuanced understanding of how instructional leadership is enacted and experienced at the classroom level.

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