

Reading Literacy Skills and Academic Performance of College Students

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ABSTRACT

Academic performance refers to a student's level of achievement in their educational pursuits, typically measured through grades, test scores, and overall progress in coursework. This study explored the academic performance of college students, focusing on the factors that affected their learning outcomes and overall educational achievement. The study aimed to determine the significant relationship between reading literacy skills and academic performance among college students in Santo Tomas, Province of Davao del Norte. Data were gathered from 309 first-year college students through a stratified random sampling technique. This study utilized quantitative non-experimental research through a descriptive correlational design. Adapted instruments were used and were thoroughly evaluated for precision and relevance. The statistical tools used in this study were mean and Pearson r. Results revealed that reading literacy skills and academic performance had a descriptive level of high, which was oftentimes observed. A high level of reading literacy skills enhanced academic performance by enabling students to comprehend complex texts, critically analyze information, and effectively apply knowledge across various subjects. The relationship between reading literacy skills and academic performance suggested that enhancing students' reading abilities could positively improve their overall academic achievement.

Keywords - Reading Literacy Skills, Academic Performance, Correlational Research Design, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is the measure of a student's achievement in their studies, showing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes, they have developed. It is important because it reflects the quality of a student's educational experience and shows how prepared they are for future challenges in their careers and personal lives (Mappadang et al., 2022). However, one of the issues with academic performance is academic procrastination, it is associated with dysfunctional learning outcomes such as low academic performance, low quality of academic work, lack of knowledge, time pressure, dropout and lengthened course of study (Jones & Blankenship, 2021). Additionally, friends have a big influence on students' academic achievement and can affect them in negative ways, in which lower academic attainment has been associated with poor peer relationships (Shao, 2024).

In Indonesia, low student performance is increasingly linked to poor reading comprehension, with only 30% reaching Level 2 in the 2018 PISA results far below the OECD average of 77% (Weedutap, 2020). This impairment demonstrated poor reading ability and is associated with overall scholastic difficulties in courses such as mathematics and science, where reading comprehension is critical for understanding complex concepts (Weedutap, 2020). A study of English Department students found a mean reading performance score of 47.24, indicating widespread difficulty comprehending English texts (Seltics Journal, 2023). These findings implied that inadequate reading proficiency is a key obstacle to academic success, demanding tailored interventions to improve students' reading abilities.

In the Philippines, poor reading comprehension is a major factor contributing to the low academic performance of students. Based on Bautista (2023), Filipino students frequently rank among the lowest globally in reading, mathematics, and science, as shown in international assessments like the Programme for International Student

Assessment (PISA). The 2022 PISA results revealed that only 24% of Filipino students reached at least a basic level of reading proficiency, far below the OECD average of 74%. Furthermore, metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, or the awareness and control of one's own reading ability, identified Filipino students with poor science literacy performance. Poor-performing students more often perceived low-level reading strategies as more effective than high-level strategies for understanding the text they read (Calleja et al., 2023).

Numerous studies carried out internationally to explore the elements that impact a student's academic performance. However, the researchers had not found a study that links the reading literacy skills and academic performance of the students. Hence, the researcher finds the urgency to conduct this study to fill the gap in the literature covering these subjects, especially in the local context. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the students emphasizing the importance of having strong reading literacy skills as a prerequisite for academic success and the need for focused interventions to help students acquire these vital skills. It also provided insightful information about successful teaching strategies that can raise student achievement and close achievement gaps.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the significant relationship between reading literacy skills and academic performance among college students in Santo Tomas, Province of Davao del Norte. Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of reading literacy skills in terms of:
 - 1.1 habit and attitude;
 - 1.2 knowledge and skill; and
 - 1.3 culture and strategy?
2. What is the level of academic performance in terms of grade in Purposive Communication?
3. Is there a significant relationship between reading literacy skills and academic performance?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis was tested using a 0.05 level of significance stating that there was no significant relationship between reading literacy skills and academic performance of college students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on Schema Theory by Bartlett (1932) which explains that readers understand texts by connecting new information to existing knowledge, called schemas. Strong reading literacy skills rely on well-developed schemas, enhancing comprehension, retention, and academic performance. Furthermore, this was also supported by (Jehan et al., 2023) the study found that schema theory-based pre-reading activities significantly improved reading comprehension and academic performance among intermediate students. This confirms a strong link between reading literacy skills and overall academic success when these strategies are used in instruction.

Moreover, this study was gleaned on Critical Literacy Theory by Freire (1960) which emphasizes that this approach encourages readers to examine texts critically, challenging assumptions, ideologies, and power dynamics. Developing reading literacy skills enhances analytical thinking, deepens comprehension, and improves academic performance. Furthermore, this was supported by Niculescu & Dragomir (2023) states that critical reading as essential for developing literacy skills, which in turn enhances academic performance. Critical reading enhances students' ability to navigate complex academic texts, leading to improved comprehension and retention of information.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of the study as shown in Figure 1. The independent variable of the study was reading literacy skills. The variable consists of three (3) indicators which were: habit and attitude which refers to students' regular reading practices and their disposition toward reading, such as interest, motivation, and enjoyment; knowledge and skill reflects to students' regular engagement with reading activities and their mindset or feelings toward reading, such as interest, enjoyment, and motivation; culture and strategy also pertains to students' understanding of diverse cultural perspectives in texts and their use of effective reading strategies like summarizing, predicting, and questioning (Li et al., 2023). The dependent variable of the study was academic performance. The variable consists of one (1) indicator which was grade in purposive communication.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

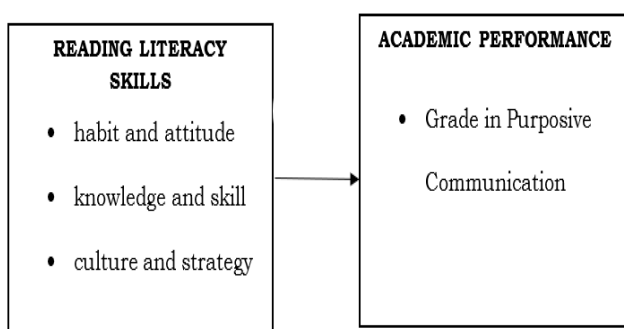


Figure 1. The Conceptual Paradigm of the Study

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive correlational research to describe the quantitative data that were gathered regarding the level of two variables related to reading literacy skills and academic performance. Quantitative research methods were used to observe events that affected a particular group of individuals, which was the sample population (Williams, 2021). In this type of research, diverse numerical data were collected through various methods and then statistically analyzed to aggregate the data, compare them, or show relationships among them (Sreekumar, 2023). Descriptive correlational research identified variables and examined the strength of the relationships between them (Aprecia et al., 2022).

Quantitative research was used to gather numerical data, while descriptive research was employed to explain the findings through words, particularly in relation to reading literacy skills and academic performance. Correlational research examined the relationship between reading literacy skills and academic performance of college students.

Research Subject

The respondents of this study were 309 students out of a total population of 1,570 first-year students studying at a local college in Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte. The researcher used Raosoft sampling, an online sample size calculator, to obtain the target sample size from the recorded population. The respondents were selected through a stratified random sampling technique. Stratified random sampling divided the population into smaller groups based on specific characteristics, then a random sample was selected from each group to ensure representation (Simkus, 2023).

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents

Areas	Population (N)	Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
Department A	138	27	9%
Department B	369	73	24%
Department C	321	63	20%
Department D	428	84	27%
Department E	70	14	5%
Department F	244	48	15%
Total	1570	309	100%

Research Instrument

The researchers used one (1) adapted survey questionnaire for independent variable, and student's grade in their subject in purposive communication for dependent variable. The questionnaires were validated by the panelist and an external validator to ensure its validity.

Literacy Skills Questionnaire. The questionnaire used to get the level of literacy skills, was from the research study titled “Development of the reading literacy questionnaire for EFL learners at primary schools” (Li et al., 2023). The questionnaire consists of 14 items covering the following aspects: Habit and Attitude (4 items), Knowledge and Skills (5 items), and Culture and Strategy (5 items). Respondents rated each item using a 5-point Likert scale, from 5 for “Strongly Agree”, 4 for “Agree”, 3 for “Moderate”, 2 for “Disagree”, and 1 for “Strongly Disagree”.

The parameter used for the interpretation of reading literacy skills and academic performance of college students studying in a local higher education institution in Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte, were the following:

Academic Performance. In determining the level of academic performance, the researcher utilized the grades given by the subject instructor, specifically in the subject of Purposive Communication. These grades were based on the different outcomes performed by the students in accordance with the syllabus set by the Commission on Higher Education. The scoring guide for the academic performance of students was categorized into five levels. The parameter limits used for the interpretation for academic performance of college students studying in higher education.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Mean. The mean was a statistical measure that represents the average value of a dataset. It's calculated by summing all the values and dividing by the total number of values (Luís et al, 2023). This was used to determine the level of literacy skills and academic performance among college students.

Pearson’s r. Pearson's r, a standardized linear correlation coefficient ranging from -1 to +1, measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two interval or ratio-level variables (David et al, 2020). This was used to determine the relationship between literacy skills and academic performance of college students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Level of reading literacy skills in terms of habit and attitude

The results for the reading literacy skills in terms of habit and attitude were presented, examined, and interpreted in table 2. The mean was ranging from 3.48 to 4.07 with an equivalent overall mean of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.99. This was described as high which means oftentimes observed. Moreover, the data revealed that item number 3, “I am willing to learn more through reading in English,” had the highest mean of 4.07, which was described as high. In contrast, item number 1, “I read English extracurricular books every day,” had the lowest mean of 3.48, though it was also described as high.

Table 2 Level of reading literacy skills in terms of habit and attitude

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I read English extracurricular books every day	3.48	0.97	High
2. I often take notes while reading English books.	3.50	1.04	High
3. I am willing to learn more through reading in English.	4.07	1.02	High
4. I can meet the basic requirements of the English course through reading.	3.84	0.91	High
Average	3.72	0.99	High

The overall findings of reading literacy skills in terms of habit and attitude implied that individuals with a high level of reading literacy develop a consistent habit of reading diverse materials and maintain a curious, analytical attitude toward new information. The result conformed to the study of Hashim et al. (2021), who found that students who maintained positive attitudes toward learning and consistent study habits tended to perform better academically. Similarly, Caparos and Napil (2024) revealed that a positive attitude toward reading is associated with improved academic performance. Their study involving Filipino students showed that reading attitudes played a mediating role between motivation and academic success, indicating that cultivating a positive reading mindset can boost both motivation and academic achievement.

Level of reading literacy skills in terms of knowledge and skills

The results for the reading literacy skills in terms of knowledge and skills were presented in table 3. The mean was ranging from 3.52 to 3.76 with an equivalent overall mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 0.91. This was described as high which means oftentimes observed. Moreover, the data revealed that the item with the highest mean of 3.76, described as high, was the item number 1, which was “I can pronounce new words correctly”. Meanwhile, the item with the lowest mean of 3.52, also described as high, was item number 4, “I have mastered most of the English vocabulary”.

The overall findings of reading literacy skills in terms of knowledge and skills implied that individuals can effectively comprehend, analyze, and apply information across various texts, enhancing their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Table 3 Level of reading literacy skills in terms of knowledge and skill

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I can pronounce new words correctly	3.76	0.88	High
2. I usually guess the meaning of new words from the context	3.60	0.89	High
3. I can quickly grasp the main idea of English reading materials.	3.63	0.91	High
4. I have mastered most of the English vocabulary required by the standard.	3.52	0.93	High
5. I have mastered the basic English grammar rules required by the standard.	3.61	0.94	High
Average	3.63	0.91	High

This result conformed to the study of Naira Muylaert et al., (2019), which shows that vocabulary knowledge plays a key role in connecting morphological awareness to academic literacy skills, emphasizing its importance in understanding texts. Moreover, according to Zhou et al. (2024), teachers' ability to assess reading effectively

plays a vital role in enhancing students' literacy development. While many teachers possess relevant knowledge, developing strong skills in selecting appropriate materials and designing effective assessments can further improve reading instruction and student outcomes.

Level of reading literacy skills in terms of culture and strategy

Table 4 presented, analyzed, and interpreted the findings on reading literacy skills in terms of culture and strategy. The mean scores ranged from 3.51 to 3.90, with an overall mean of 3.67 and a standard deviation of 1.00. These results were categorized as high, indicating that the behaviors were often observed. Among the items, the highest mean score was 3.90 for item number 2, "I am willing to share ideas from reading with others," which was rated high. On the other hand, the lowest mean score was 3.51 for item number 3, "I know some customs of English-speaking countries," though it was also classified as high.

Table 4 Level of reading literacy skills in terms of culture and strategy

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I can use different reading methods as needed.	3.67	0.95	High
2. I am willing to share ideas from reading with others.	3.90	0.95	High
3. I know some customs of English-speaking countries.	3.51	1.02	High
4. I like reading books about the culture of my own country	3.70	1.07	High
5. I am willing to make a simple comparison between Eastern and Western cultures.	3.58	1.02	High
Average	3.67	1.00	High

The overall findings on reading literacy skills in terms of culture and strategy suggested that a strong reading culture encouraged individuals to engage consistently with diverse materials, while effective reading strategies help them develop a curious and analytical approach to new information. This result conformed to the study by Saro et al., (2024), which emphasizes that a strong literacy culture characterized by daily reading activities and diverse reading materials was crucial for improving reading skills. By implementing a 15-minute reading session at the beginning of the school day had shown positive effects on students' engagement. Moreover, according to Altamimi & Ogdol, (2023) Effective strategies such as shared reading, storytelling, and the use of technology had been identified as beneficial in enhancing students' reading abilities.

Level of Reading Literacy Skills

Reflected in Table 5 was a summary of the level of Reading Literacy Skills. As shown, the equivalent overall mean was 3.67 with a standard deviation of 0.97, qualitatively described as high. This means that Reading Literacy Skills was oftentimes manifested. The highest mean of 3.72, described as "high," was for indicator 1, "Habit and Attitude" While, the lowest mean of 3.63 is for indicator 2, "Knowledge and Skill" described as high.

Table 5 Summary on the Level of reading literacy skills

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
1. Habit And Attitude	3.72	0.99	High
2. Knowledge And Skill	3.63	0.91	High
3. Culture And Strategy	3.67	1.00	High
Overall	3.67	0.97	High

The overall findings on the level of reading literacy skills imply that high levels of reading literacy enhance students' ability to comprehend complex texts, think critically, and effectively communicate ideas, leading to improved academic performance and lifelong learning success. According to the data collected, this aligned with the study by Ulfaika (2023), which highlights that high levels of reading literacy skills positively impact academic performance by enabling students to effectively analyze, interpret, and communicate information. Moreover, enhanced literacy skills were associated with higher GPAs and overall academic success, particularly in online learning environments. Similarly, Galiza (2022) found that respondents with competent reading proficiency levels achieved significantly higher General Weighted Averages (GWA) than those at beginning, developing, or approaching proficiency levels, indicating a strong correlation between reading literacy and academic performance. Conversely, Driana and Ernawati (2024) emphasize that high-level reading literacy skills go beyond comprehension, encompassing critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Their study, which focused on assessing higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in reading literacy, highlights how these advanced skills enable students to effectively manage and interpret information, further contributing to academic success.

Level of Academic Performance

The results for academic performance were presented in Table 6. The data shows that students obtained an average grade of 86.41 in Purposive Communication, with a standard deviation of 4.61. This performance was categorized as high, indicating that students demonstrate strong academic abilities in this subject. The overall findings suggested that students' proficiency in Purposive Communication reflects their ability to comprehend and convey ideas effectively, which was essential for academic success.

Table 6 Level of academic performance

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
Grade in Purposive Communication	86.41	4.61	High

This study conformed to the research by Talwar et al. (2022), which highlights the significant role of reading literacy skills, metacognitive reading strategies, and reading motivation in early academic success in college. The findings emphasized that students with strong reading skills tend to perform well academically, as reflected in their grades. This aligned with the results in Table 4, where students demonstrated a high level of academic performance in Purposive Communication, suggesting that their literacy skills contribute positively to their success in this subject.

Correlation between reading literacy skills and academic performance

Showed in table 7 were the findings about the significance of the association between reading literacy skills and academic performance with an overall calculated r-value of .130 and a p-value of .009, which was lower than the .05 the level of significance. This implied that the relationship of the variables got a positive, very weak and significant correlation. This finding demonstrated that the perception of reading literacy skills was significantly correlated with academic performance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. It indicated that strong reading literacy skills positively influence academic achievement. While challenges such as dissatisfaction may hinder their full effectiveness, fostering positive attitudes toward reading can enhance instructional outcomes and support students' academic success.

Table 7 Significance of the Relationship Between reading literacy skills and academic performance

Variables Correlated	Mean	r	p-value	Decision on H ₀	Decision on Relationship
reading literacy skills and academic performance	3.67 86.41	0.130	0.009	Rejected	Significant

According to the data collated, this aligned with the study of Esleta et al. (2024), which highlights a significant relationship between reading ability and academic success in subjects like English, Math, and Science. The study emphasized that improved reading comprehension was essential for achieving better academic outcomes, aligning with the goal of equitable quality education. Similarly, Costa and Pereira (2024) emphasize that reading literacy skills significantly influence academic performance by enhancing critical abilities such as analysis, argumentation, and communication. However, their study also highlighted that many students face challenges in academic reading due to complex technical terminology and insufficient prior reading skills.

Furthermore, the relationship between reading literacy skills and academic performance aligned with Bartlett's (1932) Schema Theory, which suggests that readers interpret texts by connecting new information to their prior knowledge, known as schemas. Well-developed schemas were essential for strong reading literacy skills, as they enhance comprehension, retention, and overall academic performance. Additionally, this was supported by (Jehan et al., 2023), whose study found that schema theory-based pre-reading activities significantly improved reading comprehension and academic performance among intermediate students. This reinforced the strong connection between reading literacy skills and overall academic success when these strategies were incorporated into instruction.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary Of Findings

The major findings of the study were the following:

1. The level of reading literacy skills had an overall mean of 3.67 with a standard deviation of 0.97 with a descriptive equivalent of high. The highest indicator was Habit And Attitude with a mean of 3.72, while the lowest indicator was Knowledge And Skill with a mean of 3.63.
2. The level of academic performance had an overall data show that students obtained an average grade of 86.41 in Purposive Communication, with a standard deviation of 4.61. This performance was categorized as high, indicating that students demonstrate strong academic abilities in this subject.
3. The relationship of reading literacy skills and academic performance showed a positive, very weak and significant correlation with an r -value of .130 and a p -value of $<.009$. These results led to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Conclusions

1. The overall findings on reading literacy skills suggested that strong reading abilities strengthen students' capacity to understand complex texts, engage in critical thinking, and express ideas clearly, ultimately contributing to higher academic achievement and long-term learning success.
2. The Level of academic performance was high, considered as oftentimes observed. The overall findings suggested that students' proficiency in Purposive Communication reflected their ability to comprehend and convey ideas effectively, which was essential for academic success.
3. The results showed the significance of the relationship between reading literacy skills and academic performance indicating a positive, very weak and significant correlation. This indicated that strong reading literacy skills positively influence academic achievement. While challenges such as dissatisfaction may hinder their full effectiveness, fostering positive attitudes toward reading can enhance instructional outcomes and support students' academic success.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, analysis, and conclusion drawn in this study, the following recommendations were summarized:

1. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) may prioritize the integration of reading literacy development into higher education policies and programs. This may involve mandating the inclusion of structured reading enhancement components in general education curricula, promoting faculty training in

- literacy instruction, and funding research-based literacy initiatives. Furthermore, CHED may spearhead national campaigns and policy frameworks that emphasize reading comprehension, critical analysis, and academic literacy as core competencies for all students. By doing so, CHED may help raise the standard of education and address gaps in student academic preparedness across institutions.
2. The school administrators may implement targeted interventions such as structured reading programs, academic support workshops, and the integration of reading strategies into the curriculum. Providing students with access to diverse and challenging reading materials, along with training in critical thinking and comprehension techniques, may enhance their ability to process and analyze complex texts. Additionally, incorporating technology-based reading tools and interactive learning activities may help engage students and reinforce their literacy skills. Regular assessments and personalized feedback should also be utilized to monitor progress and address specific areas for development, ensuring that students acquire the necessary reading competencies for academic success.
 3. Teachers may adopt innovative and inclusive teaching practices that integrate reading strategies across various subject areas. They may benefit from continuous professional development focused on literacy instruction, differentiated learning approaches, and student engagement techniques. By incorporating interactive reading activities, critical thinking exercises, and consistent feedback, teachers may help students enhance their comprehension, vocabulary, and analytical skills.
 4. Parents may play a vital role in supporting their children's literacy development by fostering strong reading habits at home. They may provide reading materials, encourage regular reading routines, and create a positive learning environment that supports academic growth. Schools may also involve parents through literacy-related programs or workshops that highlight the importance of parental involvement in their children's educational journey.
 5. Students may benefit from taking an active role in developing their reading literacy by engaging in various reading activities, using available academic resources, and seeking help when needed. They may practice effective study habits, manage their time efficiently, and pursue independent learning to strengthen their comprehension and critical thinking skills. Developing strong reading abilities may lead to improved academic performance and greater self-confidence.
 6. Future researchers may study how reading literacy skills affect academic performance over time by conducting long-term research. They may also examine factors such as teaching methods, school support, and student participation to understand their influence on academic outcomes. Additionally, exploring different approaches to enhancing reading skills and their impact on school performance may help identify better strategies for student success.

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