

Teachers' Use of UNAWA Reading Program for the Reading Skills of Pupils with Reading Difficulty

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ABSTRACT

Reading proficiency is a vital foundation in elementary education, yet many Grade 3 pupils continue to struggle with proper comprehension. It is not merely the ability to decode written symbols but encompasses a broader set of skills that enable individuals to access information, communicate effectively, and engage in lifelong learning. This study examined the effectiveness of the UNAWA reading program in addressing reading difficulty through a structured five-day intervention. UNAWA reading program is an adopted and localized program that is composed of three components. This reading program highlights warm-up activity, stories, and the teacher's guide. The program integrated the adopted strategy into the daily lesson plans, designed to scaffold reading skills and encourage comprehension. Six pupils found with reading difficulty engaged in pre- and post-tests administered to measure whether there was significant progress in their reading skills. Findings showed that all six pupils' frustration levels were at or below their grade level. Consequently, five out of the six pupils demonstrated marked improvements in confidence, comprehension, and fluency, actively engaging in collaborative and contextualized activities. Despite one outlier, the results confirmed the consistency and effectiveness of the utilized reading program. Additionally, an evaluation made by the Grade 3 teachers found the reading program highly effective in terms of objectives, instructional strategies, assessment techniques, and activities. The study concludes that the UNAWA reading program is an effective instructional tool and a useful additional resource that strengthens reading skills development and bridges the gap between pupils' current skills and the necessary Grade 3 competencies.

Keywords: reading skills, reading difficulty, reading program, early childhood

INTRODUCTION

Literacy has long been recognized as one of the most fundamental competencies necessary for human development and participation in society. It is not merely the ability to decode written symbols but encompasses a broader set of skills that enable individuals to access information, communicate effectively, and engage in lifelong learning (Hanemann & Robinson, 2022). Globally, literacy is considered a cornerstone of education and a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development goals, particularly those related to quality education, poverty reduction, and gender equality. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2023) underscores literacy as both a human right and a tool for empowerment, enabling individuals to fully participate in social, cultural, political, and economic life.

Despite its recognized importance, literacy acquisition remains a global challenge, especially among early learners. Reports indicate that millions of children worldwide still struggle with basic reading and writing skills, with disparities most pronounced in low- and middle-income countries. These challenges are compounded by factors such as poverty, limited access to quality education, linguistic diversity, and insufficient teacher training (World Bank, 2022). Early literacy difficulties often have long-term consequences, as children who fail to acquire foundational reading skills in the early grades are more likely to experience academic struggles, reduced self-confidence, and limited opportunities later in life (Idulog et al., 2023). Thus, literacy instruction in the early years is critical, not only for individual learners but also for the broader development of societies.

Within the Philippine context, literacy has been a central focus of educational reforms and initiatives. The

Department of Education (DepEd) has consistently emphasized the importance of strengthening literacy instruction in the early grades, recognizing that reading proficiency is a gateway to academic success across subject areas (2023). Programs such as the “Every Child a Reader Program” (ECARP, 2012) and the “K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum” (2019) highlight the government’s commitment to ensuring that all Filipino children acquire functional literacy skills by the end of Grade 6.

Nevertheless, persistent challenges remain. National assessments and international benchmarking studies have revealed that Filipino learners often perform below expected proficiency levels in reading. For instance, the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2023) and the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) (UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2021) have consistently shown that a significant proportion of Filipino students struggle with reading comprehension and critical literacy skills. These findings underscore the urgency of addressing literacy difficulties at the earliest stages of schooling, particularly in Grade 3, where foundational skills are expected to be established.

The general problem of this study is: "How does the utilization of the UNAWA reading program improve the reading skills of pupils in Grade 3 with reading difficulty?"

Specifically, this study will find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of reading skills of the pupils in Grade 3 with reading difficulty before the use of the UNAWA reading program?
2. How will the UNAWA be adapted and integrated into the lesson plan to support the reading skills of pupils in Grade 3 with reading difficulty?
3. What is the level of reading skills of the pupils in Grade 3 with reading difficulty after the use of the UNAWA reading program?
4. What is the teacher’s evaluation of the UNAWA reading program?
5. Is there a significant difference between the level of reading skills before and after the use of the UNAWA reading program?

This study will make a significant contribution to the field of education by enriching the existing body of knowledge concerning learners with reading difficulty and their reading skills. It may serve as a valuable addition to the literature aimed at understanding and enhancing the lived experiences of pupils and other learners with extensive educational needs. Furthermore, UNAWA, an adapted and localized reading program, addresses the current scarcity of resources specifically designed to meet the needs of learners with extensive needs in the Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design to evaluate the effectiveness of the UNAWA Reading Program in improving the literacy skills of Grade 3 pupils with reading difficulties. This design was selected as it allowed systematic observation of instructional integration while measuring program outcomes through pre-test and post-test assessments. The framework was informed by Conner et al. (2023), whose work on the Friends on the Block (FOTB) program demonstrated the value of structured literacy interventions for learners with special needs. Similar to FOTB, the UNAWA program incorporated warm-up activities, guided reading, and learning games to address diverse learning profiles.

The respondents comprised 103 Grade 3 pupils enrolled at an elementary school in Bulacan, identified as having reading difficulties based on pre-test results. Their ages ranged from 8 to 9 years, with a mean age of 8.39. Cluster random sampling was employed, grouping pupils by sex prior to random selection. The sample included 58 males and 45 females, ensuring near-equal representation and enabling valid comparisons of literacy outcomes across sexes. In addition, five Grade 3 teachers participated, representing varied teaching experience: one with 0–5 years, one with 6–10 years, two with 11–20 years, and one with 21–30 years. This distribution provided a balanced perspective, combining innovative practices from early-career teachers with seasoned approaches from more experienced educators.

Two instruments were employed in data collection. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) served as the standardized tool for assessing pupils’ literacy skills through pre-test and post-test administration. The UNAWA Evaluation Questionnaire was administered to teachers to gather demographic information, observed learner outcomes, and details of program implementation. The questionnaire utilized Likert-scale items to measure perceptions of effectiveness and instructional alignment. All instruments were subjected to expert validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and contextual appropriateness, with minor revisions made to strengthen both face and content validity.

The data collection process was conducted in a systematic and ethical manner. Formal permission was obtained from school administrators, teachers, and parents, and informed consent was secured to protect participants’ rights. An orientation session was conducted with advisers to explain the objectives, activities, and structure of the UNAWA program. The intervention spanned three weeks of classroom sessions, beginning with a printed pre-test to establish baseline literacy levels. The program was then implemented using lesson plans that included translated FOTB stories, a Teacher’s Guide, and warm-up activities. Following the intervention, a printed post-test was administered to measure literacy progress. Teachers also completed evaluation forms to assess both the effectiveness of the program and the facilitation provided by the researchers. All instruments were manually administered to ensure consistency and accessibility.

The collected data were analyzed using the t-test, which provided a statistical measure of the program’s effectiveness by comparing pre-test and post-test results. This analysis determined whether the UNAWA reading program produced significant improvements in the literacy skills of Grade 3 pupils with reading difficulties.

RESULTS

The data collected is divided into five sections. The initial reading proficiency levels of the Grade 3 pupils who were having difficulty before the UNAWA program was implemented are highlighted in the first section. The second section explains how the program was modified and integrated into lesson plans to improve students’ reading skills. The third section illustrates the reading skill levels after engaging with the program. Subsequently, in the fourth section, insights are provided regarding the teacher’s evaluation of the UNAWA reading program, focusing on both its strengths and areas that may benefit from further enhancement. Lastly, in the fifth section, an analysis is conducted to ascertain whether there is a significant difference between the reading skill levels before and after participating in the UNAWA reading program, thus evaluating its overall effectiveness in addressing learners’ reading difficulties.

Table 1 presents the results of the first part of the pretest, which is the Group Screening Test. There are two reading level indicators: learners at their reading level and learners not at their reading level. Both are represented by frequency or mode, and their corresponding percentage. All in all, the researchers have accommodated 5 sections with 103 Grade 3 learners in total at the elementary school.

Table 1. Group Screening Test Results of Grade 3 Learners

Participants	Learners at their Reading Level	Learners not at their Reading Level	TOTAL
Section 1	32	0	32
Section 2	14	0	14
Section 3	18	0	18
Section 4	15	5	20
Section 5	17	2	19
TOTAL	96	7	103

As shown in Table 1, the researchers conducted a Group Screening Test for the Grade 3 learners as the first part of the pretest. This distinguishes the learners who are at their reading level from those who are not. The table reveals that 96 learners are at their reading level, while 7 learners are not at their reading level. It can be noted

that Section 1 has the highest number of participants, with 32, while Section 2 has the lowest, with 14. Notably, Sections 1, 2, and 3 produced no learners who were not at their reading level. On the other hand, both Sections 4 and 5 produced learners who were not at their reading level, with Section 4 higher than Section 5 by 3 learners. In total, there are 103 respondents, and only 7 of them are considered not at their reading level.

Table 2 shows the results of the pretest done by the Grade 3 learners with reading difficulty. However, out of the 7 learners, only 6 were able to continue with the pretest due to the restriction of one of the parents. These are the same learners who did not qualify to be at their reading level in the Group Screening Test. The table shows the categories independent, instructional, and frustration. A learner whose score is from 16–20 in a specific grade level will be considered an independent reader in that specific level. Scores ranging from 12–15 will be deemed as instructional level readers in that specific grade level. Lastly, scores from 0–11 will be considered the frustration level of the learner.

Table 2. Pretest Results of the Grade 3 Learners with Reading Difficulty

Reading Level	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Independent (16-20)	1	3	0
Instructional (12-15)	4	2	0
Frustration (0-11)	1	0	5
TOTAL	6	5	5

Table 4 exposes the results of the pretest of the 6 Grade 3 learners with reading difficulty. In the Grade 1 level pretest, only 1 of the respondents reached the independent level, 4 were at the instructional level, and 1 had already attained the frustration level. Finding the frustration level of a respondent indicates that he or she will no longer continue with the Grade 2 and Grade 3 levels. At the Grade 2 level, 3 learners were found to be independent, while 2 were instructional. For the Grade 3 level, all the remaining 5 respondents fell under the frustration level.

Table 3 shows the scores of the Grade 3 learners with reading difficulty. Each grade level exam consists of a total of 20 items. The respondents started with Grade Level 1, followed by Grade Level 2, and lastly Grade Level 3. The average per respondent, as well as the average score in each grade level, was examined.

Table 3. Pretest Scores of the Grade 3 Learners with Reading Difficulty

Respondent	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Average
Respondent 1	15	18	10	14
Respondent 2	16	12	8	12
Respondent 3	8	-	-	8
Respondent 4	14	19	10	14
Respondent 5	14	17	8	13
Respondent 6	15	14	7	12
AVERAGE	14	16	9	12

Table 3 presents the scores of each respondent in every reading level. Learner 3 garnered the lowest average score with 8, while both Learner 1 and Learner 4 had the highest average score, with 14. In terms of raw scores, Learner 4 received the highest score with 19 at the Grade 2 reading level, while the lowest score is still Learner 3, with 8. Looking at the average garnered per grade level, the Grade 2 reading level received the highest score with 16, followed by the Grade 1 reading level with 14, and lastly, Grade 3 with 9. Overall, the total average of scores of all the respondents in the pretest is 12.

Figure 1 shows that in the first day, the teacher presented learners with the story “Ang Baon ni Sam.” Warm-ups also involved reading activities to prepare learners for the session. The teacher used a guessing game “Hulaan Mo ang Itinatago Ko” to motivate and engage the learners before presenting the story. Echo reading was

included, gradually shifting to loud reading, with comprehension questions that guided learners to identify the story’s characters, events, and moral lessons. Application activities included word recognition games using dice and boards, while the generalization highlighted the value of friendship and sharing. Collaboration was nurtured as learners worked together to answer the questions and reflect on the story’s meaning.

Figure 1. Day 1 Activities of the UNAWA Reading Program Implementation

Day 1	Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review: Recall prior reading skills ● Motivation: Hulaan Mo ang Itinatago Ko (Guessing Game) ● Story: Ang Baon ni Sam ● Game: Echo reading → loud reading; word recognition, board game ● Evaluation: Comprehension questions on characters, events, and moral ● Assignment: Drawing about friendship and sharing

Figure 2 reveals that learners reviewed the previous lesson before engaging with the story “Tagu-taguan.” Motivation was sustained through the game “Hanapin Mo Ako,” where learners searched for hidden words around the classroom. Echo reading and loud reading were again used to scaffold fluency, with comprehension questions focusing on the cause-and-effect relationships in the story. Application activities involved a maze game with dice and pawns, reinforcing comprehension and vocabulary. Generalization emphasized the joy of playing with family, while collaboration was noticeable in group activities that encouraged teamwork and respect.

Figure 2. Day 2 Activities of the UNAWA Reading Program Implementation

Day 2	Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review: Recall Day 1 story ● Motivation: Hanapin Mo Ako (Wordsearch) ● Story: Tagu-taguan ● Game: Board game with die/pawns; echo reading ● Evaluation: Comprehension questions on cause-and-effect ● Assignment: Drawing about playing with friends

Figure 3 shows that on the third day, the focus was on the story “Ang Araw na Nakuha Ko si Bantay.” Learners were engaged and motivated through a word search activity and discussions about pets. Echo reading, loud reading, and guided questioning helped learners to identify the story’s characters, events, and moral lessons. Application activities included a bingo-style phonics game, where learners found and matched sounds to pictures, reinforcing decoding and word recognition. Generalization highlighted the importance of caring for animals, while collaboration was fostered through group participation in the game and shared reflection on the story’s values.

Figure 3. Day 3 Activities of the UNAWA Reading Program Implementation

Day 3	Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review: Recall Day 2 story ● Motivation: Wordsearch + pet discussion ● Story: Ang Araw na Nakuha Ko si Bantay ● Games: Bingo-style phonics game; sound-picture matching ● Evaluation: Comprehension questions on characters, events, values ● Assignment: Comprehension questions about the story.

Figure 4 exhibits the fourth day of the implementation where learners engaged with “Naglakad sina Sam at Brownly.” Motivation was sustained through the “Tama o Mali” game, where the learners judged the actions as

appropriate or not. Echo reading and loud reading continued to scaffold the learners’ fluency, with comprehension questions focusing on events and emotions in the story. Application activities involved letter-grid tasks, where learners searched for letters to form words, promoting vocabulary development. Generalization highlighted empathy and overcoming fear, while collaboration was fostered in cooperative exercises and group reading.

Figure 4. Day 4 Activities of the UNAWA Reading Program Implementation

Day 4	Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review: Recall Day 3 story ● Motivation: Tama o Mali (Judging actions) ● Story: Naglakad sina Sam at Brownny ● Games: Letter-grid word formation; echo reading ● Evaluation: Comprehension questions on events and emotions ● Assignment: Drawing pets and how you take care of them

Figure 5 reveals the activities on the final implementation day, the focus was on the story “Ang Pagpasok ni Bantay sa Paaralan.” Motivation was supported through the game “Sino ang Puwede sa Paaralan,” where the learners categorized images as appropriate or inappropriate in school. Echo reading, loud reading, and guided questioning helped the learners understand the story’s events and moral lessons. Application activities involved a maze game with dice and pawns, supporting vocabulary and comprehension. Generalization highlighted discipline and proper behavior in school, while collaboration was nurtured through cooperative play and group reflection. The week concluded with assignments that extended learning at home, encouraging learners to apply lessons beyond the classroom.

Figure 5. Day 5 Activities of the UNAWA Reading Program Implementation

Day 5	Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review: Recall Day 4 story ● Motivation: Sino ang Puwede sa Paaralan (Categorization activity) ● Story: Ang Pagpasok ni Bantay sa Paaralan ● Game: Maze game with die/pawns ● Evaluation: Comprehension questions about the story ● Assignment: Comprehension questions about the story

Table 4, below, shows the results of the posttest administered to the Grade 3 learners with reading difficulties. These are the same learners who did not qualify to be at their reading level in the Group Screening Test. The table presents the categories independent, instructional, and frustration. A learner whose score ranges from 16–20 in a specific grade level is considered an independent reader at that level. Scores ranging from 12–15 indicate an instructional reader, while scores from 0–11 place the learner in the frustration level.

Table 4. Posttest Results of the Grade 3 Learners with Reading Difficulty

Reading Level	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Independent (16-20)	3	1	2
Instructional (12-15)	2	4	3
Frustration (0-11)	1	0	0
TOTAL	6	5	5

Table 4 presents the results of the posttest of the six Grade 3 learners with reading difficulty. In the Grade 1 level posttest, three respondents reached the independent level, two were at the instructional level, and one remained at the frustration level. A learner who falls into the frustration category at Grade 1 does not continue with the

Grade 2 and Grade 3 levels. At the Grade 2 level, one learner was found to be independent, while four were instructional. At the Grade 3 level, two learners reached independence, while three were instructional.

Table 5 shows the raw scores of the posttest conducted on the Grade 3 learners with reading difficulties. This table presents the scores of each learner in every reading level: Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3. Similar to Table 3, the average of each reading level and the average score of each learner were also included.

Table 5. Posttest Scores of the Grade 3 learners with Reading Difficulty

Respondent	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Average
Respondent 1	16	15	18	16
Respondent 2	16	13	17	15
Respondent 3	10	-	-	10
Respondent 4	15	14	15	15
Respondent 5	17	14	15	15
Respondent 6	15	16	15	15
AVERAGE	15	14	16	15

Table 5 presents the posttest raw scores of the Grade 3 learners with reading difficulty. As displayed, the lowest score was recorded by Learner 3 with a value of 10, while the highest raw score was 18, achieved by Learner 1. Looking at the average scores of each learner, Learner 1 holds the highest average score with 16, while Learner 3 holds the lowest at 10. On the other hand, the Grade 1 reading level shows an average score of 15, which falls under the instructional level. The Grade 2 reading level shows a slight decline, dropping by one point, but still remains within the instructional level. However, a change is evident in the Grade 3 level, as the tier achieved the independent level with an average score of 16. Overall, the average score of all the learners across the reading levels is 15.

Table 6 presents the results of the teachers' perception of the implementation of the UNAWA reading program in terms of objectives. The table includes five indicators for measuring the effectiveness of the program: (1) development of literacy skills, (2) improvement of reading skills, (3) fluency and comprehension, (4) motivation of the learners, and (5) capacitation of teachers through various strategies. Each indicator is accompanied by the mean score, standard deviation, description, and interpretation.

Table 6. Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of the UNAWA Reading Program in terms of Objectives

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Develop the literacy skills of learners	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
2. Develop learners reading competencies appropriate for their grade level	2.80	0.40	Always	Very High
3. Improve learners reading speed and comprehension	2.80	0.40	Always	Very High
4. Motivate the learners through reading which leads to their increased scholastic performance	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
5. Capacitate teachers with different reading strategies	2.80	0.40	Always	Very High
OVERALL	2.88	0.18	Always	Very High

Based on the data presented in Table 6, it is evident that teachers rated the objectives of the UNAWA reading program as "Always" and "Very High." The highest mean scores of 3.00 were recorded for developing literacy skills and motivating learners, both with a standard deviation of 0.00. Slightly lower mean scores of 2.80 were noted for developing reading competencies, improving reading speed and comprehension, and capacitating teachers with strategies, each with a standard deviation of 0.40. The overall mean was 2.88, while the standard

deviation was 0.18, indicating that the objectives of the UNAWA reading program are highly effective, despite minor fluctuations across specific objectives.

Table 7 presents the results of teachers’ perception of the implementation of the UNAWA reading program in terms of instructional strategies. The table includes five indicators that measure: (1) the application of differentiated instruction, (2) the provision of diverse materials, (3) the use of picture clues, (4) the development of vocabulary through a vocabulary garden, and (5) the promotion of directed reading thinking activities. Each indicator is accompanied by the mean score, standard deviation, description, and interpretation.

Table 7. Teachers’ Perceptions on the Implementation of the UNAWA Reading Program in terms of Instructional Strategies

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
6. Providing differentiated instruction to different types of readers	2.60	0.49	Always	Very High
7. Providing different materials for diverse learners	2.60	0.49	Always	Very High
8. Utilizing picture clues to aid learners in reading	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
9. Providing a vocabulary garden to enhance learners’ vocabulary skills	2.80	0.40	Always	Very High
10. Engaging learners in Directed Reading Thinking Activities.	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
OVERALL	2.80	0.28	Always	Very High

The data presented in Table 7 revealed that teachers rated all the instructional strategies implemented by the UNAWA reading program as “Always” and “Very High.” For example, utilizing picture clues and engaging learners in Directed Reading Thinking Activities received the highest mean scores of 3.00, both with a standard deviation of 0.00, indicating unanimous agreement among teachers on the effectiveness of these strategies. Providing vocabulary gardens received a mean score of 2.80 with a standard deviation of 0.40, while providing diverse materials and using differentiated instruction both recorded mean scores of 2.60 and standard deviations of 0.49. These results show that all instructional strategies were rated positively, though some such as providing diverse materials and differentiated instruction may not yet be fully implemented.

Table 8 presents the results of teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the UNAWA reading program in terms of assessment techniques. The indicators include: (1) the inventory of learners’ reading ability, (2) the use of Phil-IRI data, (3) the use of pencil-and-paper tests, (4) the observation of learners undertaking literacy activities, and (5) the interview of learners about their reading experiences. Each indicator is accompanied by the mean score, standard deviation, description, and interpretation.

Table 8. Teachers’ Perceptions on the Implementation of the UNAWA Reading Program in terms of Assessment Technique

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
11. Conduct an inventory of the reading ability of learners	2.80	0.40	Always	Very High
12. Use of Phil-IRI baseline data in crafting intervention activities	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
13. Assessment of learners progress using a pencil and paper test	2.80	0.40	Always	Very High
14. Observation of learners performing literacy tasks	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
15. Interview of learners about their reading experiences	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
OVERALL	2.92	0.11	Always	Very High

The data presented in Table 8 show that the assessment techniques of the UNAWA reading program were consistently rated by teachers as “Always” and “Very High” based on the survey results. The highest mean score of 3.00 was recorded for the use of Phil-IRI baseline data, observing learners performing literacy tasks, and interviewing learners about their reading experiences, all with a standard deviation of 0.00. Meanwhile, the

assessment techniques of conducting inventories of learners’ reading ability and administering pencil-and-paper tests obtained slightly lower mean scores of 2.80, each with a standard deviation of 0.40. The overall mean score of 2.92 and standard deviation of 0.11 indicate that the assessment techniques were rated very highly by the respondents, reflecting strong confidence in the program’s evaluation methods.

Table 9 presents the results of teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the UNAWA reading program in terms of intervention activities. The indicators include: (1) teachers’ conduct of Read Aloud and Ask, (2) teachers’ introduction of new vocabulary through reading, (3) teachers’ facilitation of curiosity-driven tasks, (4) teachers’ development of language activities for listening and expression, and (5) teachers’ conduct of phonemic awareness activities. Each indicator is accompanied by its corresponding mean score, standard deviation, description, and interpretation.

Table 9. Teachers’ Perceptions on the Implementation of the UNAWA Reading Program in terms of Intervention Activities

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
16. Conduct “Read Aloud and Ask” Activity	2.80	0.45	Always	Very High
17. Conduct “Discover a New Word Through Reading Activity”	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
18. Build activities that capitalize on children’s natural curiosity and sense of playfulness	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
19. Include language activities that develop listening and expressive skills	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
20. Build phonemic awareness activities into the instruction of letters and sounds	3.00	0.00	Always	Very High
OVERALL	2.96	0.09	Always	Very High

The data presented in Table 9 show that the intervention activities of the UNAWA reading program were rated by teachers as “Always” and “Very High.” The highest mean score of 3.00 was obtained for the indicators of discovering new words through reading, building curiosity-driven activities, integrating language activities, and developing phonemic awareness, all with a standard deviation of 0.00. The activity Read Aloud and Ask received a slightly lower mean score of 2.80 with a standard deviation of 0.45. Overall, the intervention activities achieved a mean score of 2.96 with a standard deviation of 0.09, affirming that the activities are highly effective and supported by unanimous agreement among the respondents.

Table 10 consolidates the results of teachers’ feedback on the implementation of the UNAWA reading program. Teachers’ perceptions are grouped into four major aspects: (1) objectives, (2) instructional strategies, (3) assessment techniques, and (4) intervention activities. Each aspect is reported with its corresponding mean score, standard deviation, description, and interpretation.

Table 10. Teachers’ Overall Feedback on the UNAWA Reading Program

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Implementation of UNAWA in terms of Objectives	2.88	0.18	Always	Very High
Implementation of UNAWA in terms of Instructional Strategies	2.80	0.28	Always	Very High
Implementation of UNAWA in terms of Assessment Technique	2.92	0.11	Always	Very High
Implementation of UNAWA in terms of Intervention Activities	2.96	0.09	Always	Very High
OVERALL	2.89	0.20	Always	Very High

As indicated by the data in Table 10, teachers rated all aspects of the UNAWA reading program as “Always” and “Very High.” The highest mean rating of 2.96 was recorded for intervention activities, with a corresponding

low standard deviation of 0.09. Assessment methods also received a high rating, with a mean of 2.92 and a low standard deviation of 0.11, indicating strong agreement among teachers regarding the effectiveness of the program’s evaluation techniques. The objectives obtained a mean rating of 2.88, while instructional strategies received the lowest mean rating of 2.80 with a slightly higher standard deviation of 0.28. The overall mean rating of 2.89, with a standard deviation of 0.20, affirms that all aspects of the program were perceived as highly effective.

Table 11 presents the overall performance of Grade 3 learners with reading difficulties, comparing their pretest and posttest scores. The table highlights both individual results and average scores, providing a clear view of the improvement in reading performance after the intervention. The data demonstrate measurable progress across learners, with posttest scores showing advancement toward independent and instructional reading levels. This comparison underscores the effectiveness of the UNAWA reading program in supporting literacy development, as learners moved from frustration levels in the pretest toward higher levels of comprehension and fluency in the posttest.

Table 11. Overall Performance of the Grade 3 Learners with Reading Difficulty

Respondent	Pretest	Posttest
Respondent 1	14	16
Respondent 2	12	15
Respondent 3	8	10
Respondent 4	14	15
Respondent 5	13	15
Respondent 6	12	15
AVERAGE	12	15

Table 11 compares the pretest and posttest scores of Grade 3 learners with reading difficulties, showing clear improvement across all respondents. The group average increased from 12 in the pretest to 15 in the posttest, indicating that the intervention had a positive effect on overall performance. Pupil 1 achieved the highest gain, moving from 14 to 16, while Pupil 3, though still the lowest performer, improved slightly from 8 to 10. This upward trend across the group demonstrates that structured reinforcement and guided activities contributed to better reading outcomes, validating the effectiveness of the intervention program.

Table 12 presents the results of the paired t-test examining the significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the Grade 3 learners with reading difficulties. The table reports the t-value, significance value (p), decision, and interpretation, thereby providing statistical evidence of whether the UNAWA reading program produced measurable improvement in learners’ reading skills.

Table 12. Paired T-test between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Grade 3 Learners with Reading Difficulty

Variables	t	Sig-value	Decision	Interpretation
Pretest and Posttest Scores	-7.05	0.00	Reject Ho	There is a significant difference between the scores of the pretest and posttest.

Table 12 shows that the UNAWA reading program has a strong positive effect on the reading comprehension of Grade 3 learners, with a t-value of -7.05 . The significance value (p) confirms that the relationship is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result indicates that the program substantially improved learners’ comprehension, demonstrating its effectiveness as an intervention.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 suggests that there is no widespread prevalence of reading difficulty among Grade 3 learners in the elementary school, as the majority (96) are at their reading level. This outcome reflects the effective functioning

of the school, teachers, and community in fostering literacy among learners. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and social interaction in literacy acquisition, which aligns with the positive results observed here (Arshad & Chen, 2009). However, the presence of 7 learners who are not at their reading level highlights the need for targeted interventions. Inclusive education research underscores that even small groups of learners with difficulties require tailored support to ensure equitable learning opportunities (Cooner et al., 2023).

Table 2 is consistent with the initial Group Screening Test, which indicates that these learners are indeed not at the Grade 3 reading level. One of the respondents quickly falls under the frustration level at the Grade 1 benchmark, suggesting a more severe reading difficulty compared to the other learners. Research on literacy acquisition emphasizes that early identification of reading challenges is critical, as difficulties at foundational levels often predict later struggles in comprehension and fluency (Arshad & Chen, 2009). Moreover, inclusive education studies highlight that even small groups of learners with persistent reading difficulties require targeted, differentiated interventions to prevent long-term academic setbacks (Conner et al., 2023; Cui, Ni, & Wang, 2023). These findings reinforce the importance of continuous monitoring and tailored instructional support for learners who fall into the frustration category.

Table 3, shows in detail how the researchers arrived at the conclusion that the learners indeed possess reading difficulty. Learner 3, with the lowest raw score and average, demonstrates severe reading difficulty due to the wide gap between their performance and that of the other learners. The Grade 1 average score of 14 suggests that this level is the instructional level of the learners according to Phil-IRI benchmarks. Meanwhile, the Grade 2 average score of 16 indicates that this level is the independent level of the learners. Finally, the Grade 3 average score of 9 places the learners at the frustration level, confirming their struggles at their actual grade level. These findings align with research showing that learners with reading difficulties often require structured, leveled interventions to progress (Wanzek, 2021). Moreover, evidence suggests that literacy instruction enriched with language and delivered consistently, whether in-person or remotely, can significantly improve outcomes for struggling readers (Downing et al., 2023). The presence of severe difficulty in some learners may also reflect limited reinforcement and guidance, underscoring the importance of strong teacher strategies and supportive parent-teacher collaboration in literacy development (Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024).

The use of structured lesson plans in the UNAWA reading program, as shown on Figures 1 to 5, allowed Grade 3 learners with reading difficulty to actively engage with reading tasks in a fun and interactive way. By combining warm-ups, guided story reading, and collaborative activities, learners were able to practice their comprehension and fluency while connecting the lessons to their everyday experiences. This approach made reading less abstract and more encouraging, fostering meaningful participation and building confidence among learners.

Additionally, according to Camino et al. (2025), multisensory strategies improve comprehension and confidence among students with reading difficulty, while Delfin and Baun (2025) emphasize that targeted interventions combining collaboration and contextualized materials are essential for Grade 3 learners who struggle in reading. Po et al. (2025) further highlight that tiered instruction fosters engagement and deeper understanding. These findings affirm that the UNAWA reading program, when adapted into detailed lesson plans, provides learners with concrete and enjoyable ways to strengthen their reading skills.

In Table 4, the number of learners who achieved an independent reading level increased to three, despite one learner still reaching frustration at Grade 1. At Grade 2, four learners were instructional, and one attained independence. A major improvement is evident at Grade 3 compared to the pretest, as two learners reached independence and none fell into frustration. This progress reflects the effectiveness of structured activities such as echo reading, guided questioning, and collaborative tasks, which promote fluency, comprehension, and word recognition in meaningful contexts. Research supports that language-rich, guided reading interventions significantly enhance literacy outcomes for struggling readers (Downing et al., 2023). Similarly, leveled literacy interventions have been shown to improve performance among learners with reading difficulties when instruction is scaffolded and consistent (Wanzek, 2021). Furthermore, fostering engagement and collaboration aligns with principles of Universal Design for Learning, which emphasize accessibility and motivation in literacy instruction (Smart Learning Environments, 2022). Examined alongside the raw average score in Table 5, the

posttest demonstrates that learners can perform better with structured guidance and supportive teaching strategies.

Table 5 reveals in detail how well the Grade 3 learners performed in the posttest. The increase in scores at the Grade 3 reading level indicates an improvement in reading comprehension, with the average score reaching the independent level. Achieving independence or instructional status at Grade 3 suggests that this tier is already within the learners' Zone of Proximal Development, meaning reinforcement and structured practice can help them attain their proper reading level (Arshad & Chen, 2009). Although Learner 3 remains at the frustration level in Grade 1, the slight increase in average score indicates potential progress with targeted interventions. Research shows that leveled literacy interventions and scaffolded instruction significantly improve outcomes for struggling readers (Wanzek, 2021). Moreover, literacy programs enriched with language and delivered consistently foster fluency and comprehension, even for learners with persistent difficulties (Downing et al., 2023). These findings underscore the importance of reinforcement, practice, and deeply rooted lesson plans to address severe reading challenges.

The results shown on Table 6 suggest that teachers have a clear perception of the success of the UNAWA reading program in developing literacy skills and motivating learners, which are critical building blocks for academic success. The perfect scores in these areas reinforce the program's alignment with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes scaffolding and student engagement, as well as research that highlights the importance of motivation in reading development (Pressley & McCormick, 1995). The slightly lower scores in competency development, fluency, and teacher capacitation may reflect challenges in differentiated instruction or other contextual factors; however, these results still fall within the "Very High" category, suggesting no critical areas of weakness. Overall, the findings affirm that the program's objectives are pedagogically sound and contextually relevant, effectively addressing literacy development for Grade 3 learners while simultaneously promoting teacher growth.

Table 7 findings suggest that teachers hold a high opinion of interactive and visual methods, such as picture clues and Directed Reading Thinking Activities, as these have been consistently proven effective. This aligns with the work of Palincsar and Brown (1984), who emphasized the efficacy of reciprocal teaching and guided reading strategies, and with Pressley and McCormick (1995), who highlighted the importance of employing multiple teaching strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners. The relatively lower ratings for differentiated instruction and material diversity may reflect the inherent challenges of tailoring materials to heterogeneous groups of learners. Despite these challenges, the "Very High" ratings overall indicate that the instructional strategies used in the UNAWA reading program are pedagogically sound and play a significant role in the literacy development of Grade 3 learners.

Table 8 implies that teachers place a high value on authentic and diagnostic types of assessments, such as information obtained from the Phil-IRI, classroom observations, and interviews with learners. This finding aligns with the perspectives of Black and Wiliam (1998), who emphasized the importance of formative assessment in the learning process. It also resonates with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the significance of contextual and interactive forms of evaluation. Although inventories and pencil-and-paper tests received slightly lower ratings, this may suggest that such assessments are less effective in domains like reading comprehension or learner interest. Nevertheless, the consistently "Very High" ratings indicate that the assessment techniques employed in the UNAWA reading program are not only comprehensive but also effective in supporting literacy development.

The results in Table 9 indicate that teachers appreciate interactive and engaging interventions, particularly those that foster curiosity, phonemic awareness, and oral language skills. This finding is consistent with Piaget's Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes learning through exploration and play, as well as Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, which highlights the importance of active participation in learning. Moreover, the perfect ratings for interventions targeting phonemic awareness align with the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (2000), which recognized phonological awareness as a fundamental skill in developing reading fluency. Although the Read Aloud and Ask intervention received a slightly lower rating, it still falls within the "Very High" category, suggesting no significant weakness in the program's interventions. Overall, these results affirm

that the intervention activities of the UNAWA reading program are effective, contextually appropriate, and supportive of literacy development among Grade 3 learners.

These findings In Table 10 suggest that teachers view the UNAWA reading program as an effective and comprehensive approach to addressing literacy challenges among Grade 3 learners. The high ratings for intervention activities and assessment methods highlight the program's strength in employing interactive and engaging approaches, consistent with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Learning Theory and the principles of formative assessment emphasized by Black and Wiliam (1998). Although instructional strategies received slightly lower ratings, they still fall within the "Very High" category, suggesting no major weaknesses. Overall, the results affirm that the UNAWA reading program is holistic, contextually appropriate, and effective in meeting the literacy needs of Grade 3 learners.

The comparison of pretest and posttest scores in Table 11 highlights a consistent improvement in the overall performance of Grade 3 learners with reading difficulties. The increase in the group average from 12 to 15 shows that the intervention strategies effectively enhanced reading comprehension. This finding is consistent with studies demonstrating that structured, language-rich reading programs significantly improve literacy outcomes for struggling learners (Downing et al., 2023). Similarly, leveled literacy interventions have been shown to yield measurable gains in comprehension when instruction is scaffolded and consistently applied (Wanzek, 2021). Although Pupil 3 remains the lowest performer, the modest increase from 8 to 10 suggests potential progress with targeted reinforcement, aligning with socio-cultural theories of literacy development that emphasize scaffolding and guided practice (Arshad & Chen, 2009). Overall, the results validate the effectiveness of the UNAWA reading program in addressing reading challenges and fostering comprehension growth.

The paired t-test in Table 12 further demonstrates that the UNAWA reading program had a significant positive impact on the reading comprehension of Grade 3 learners. This finding aligns with research showing that structured, language-rich interventions can substantially improve reading outcomes for struggling learners (Downing et al., 2023), while leveled literacy approaches provide measurable gains in comprehension when consistently applied (Wanzek, 2021). Moreover, the program's design reflects principles of scaffolding and accessibility, consistent with socio-cultural theories of literacy development (Arshad & Chen, 2009). Overall, the analysis validates the effectiveness of the UNAWA reading program in addressing reading difficulties and fostering comprehension growth.

CONCLUSION

The pretest results confirmed that the pupils had poor reading skills, and most of them were at the frustration level in Grade 3. This resulted in the alignment of the UNAWA reading program to their appropriate level. After the implementation, the posttest results showed significant progress, with many pupils moving from a frustration level at the Grade 3 tier to the instructional and independent level. This result aligned with the teachers' evaluations of the program, with very high ratings, citing its clear objectives, varied instructional strategies, engaging activities, and effective assessment tools.

These results are aligned with the studies and literature cited. The utilization of reading programs, such as UNAWA, greatly helps in improving the reading skills of the pupils, especially those with reading difficulty. Since the participants of this study are Grade 3 pupils with reading difficulty, they require an extra and more tailored instructional strategy, as proven by several studies. UNAWA was proven to be effective in supporting the reading skills of the Grade 3 pupils.

It can be concluded that the data produced by this study show that pupils struggling with reading are almost always present in every school, no matter the number. The presence and utilization of reading interventions like UNAWA are proven to play an important role in supporting the reading skills of struggling readers. The usual and traditional way of teaching no longer works as effectively as before, due to the extensive needs of the pupils. Hence, a new and more flexible approach is needed, in the form of the UNAWA reading program.

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