

## Learners' Learning Difficulties

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### Abstract

Learners can face various difficulties, including comprehension challenges, attention deficits, language barriers, or learning disabilities. Addressing learning difficulties in early education has become increasingly critical. The study focused on determining the level of learners' learning difficulties in the two districts in an enormous division in Central Philippines during the school year 2022-2023. The data needed for this descriptive-comparative study was collected from 112 teachers using a self-made data-gathering instrument that has passed the stringent test validity and reliability using stratified random sampling, lottery, and Cochran's formula. Overall, learners' learning difficulties resulted in a high level of reading, writing, and numeracy. The study reveals that there is no significant difference in the level of learners' learning difficulties when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables. The study results call for DepEd personnel, various stakeholders, and teachers who are the most potent in teaching learners to provide teaching aids, resources, and assistance through innovations and interventions to address learners' learning difficulties.

**Keywords:** Learners' Learning Difficulties, Teachers, Intervention Plan, Negros Occidental Philippines



## Introduction

### Nature of the Problem

In the Philippine setting, the Department of Education implemented the K to 12 curriculums, which is in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to promote and advance literacy and implement programs that will help learners develop their reading skills. The Department of Education implemented summer reading camps and project D.E.A.R. to strengthen students' reading skills and immediate slow readers. It also launched the "Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Program" last April 10, 2015, to continue strengthening their reading program (Echaure & Torno, 2018).

However, the two large districts reported that the results of the CRLA or Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment, RUNT, or Regional Unified Numeracy Test of Pre-Test were very low, with a high percentage score of full refreshers of 49.05%. Likewise, numeracy results in a percentage score of 29.87%. In 2021 pupils suffer learning loss and learning gaps for learning was done at home. Pupils evidently proved that many of them cannot read, write, and count. For this reason, the DepEd implemented the Intervention Program for Literacy and Numeracy to address pupils with learning difficulties.

Diagnosing difficulties in reading, writing, and numeracy requires various activities. Programs like summer reading Read to Succeed, student book clubs and the Battle of the Books aims to improve reading comprehension. Writing involves putting thoughts onto paper, a keyboard, or a phone pad, while numeracy entails understanding and applying simple numerical concepts. National Numeracy charity emphasizes that numeracy involves applying mathematics in real-world contexts and making informed decisions (National Numeracy). Learning difficulties, if identified at an early stage, might be given possible interventions. The researcher wants to help the teachers understand and identify potential interventions and innovations that will assist learners with learning difficulties and help them become productive learners who have bright and secure futures.

### Current State of Knowledge

Learning difficulties often stem from fundamental cognitive processes such as attention, memory, perception, language, self-regulation, and emotional and motivational factors. They are typically identified during early development (childhood or adolescence) when delays in acquiring essential learning skills become apparent. Deficits in core academic areas like reading and mathematics can lead to long-term challenges in various life aspects (Richmond-Rakerd et al., 2020).

Findings from NICHD-funded Projects. Advancements in preventing and treating learning difficulties promise to enhance the educational, health, social, and civic lives of



affected children, adolescents, adults, and their families. Continued efforts are crucial to developing and refining interventions for struggling or at-risk learners and those with specific learning difficulties. These interventions will be provided in diverse settings by practitioners from various disciplines and need to cater to learners of all ages, from young children to older secondary students, covering a spectrum from prevention to remediation (e.g., general education classrooms and special education services). This special issue aims to fulfill this promise by focusing on projects that inform intervention development and test-specific models for young, struggling learners at risk for or identified with reading disabilities (Miller et al., 2015).

Besides, Accommodating Learning Disabilities in the English Language Classroom emphasizes that it is estimated that ten percent of learners have some learning disability; on average, this is two or three students per classroom (Butterworth & Kavas, 2013). This means that all English language instructors will inevitably encounter students with learning difficulties in their classrooms and could encounter students with learning difficulties in each class. In 2018, we, the authors of this article, conducted a pilot study on learning-disability training for English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. All the participants in our study had previously taught or were currently teaching English in EFL contexts. Most respondents in the survey (83 percent) indicated they were not confident about their abilities to assist students with learning disabilities. Among the study participants who had received training, the majority (52 percent) indicated their training had been relatively brief--lasting a day or less (Sowell & Sugisaki, 2020).

PISA 2018 data reveals that students repeating elementary or junior high grades scored significantly lower in reading, indicating early reading challenges. Additionally, only 31% of Filipino students exhibit a growth mindset, where abilities can improve over time. This contrasts with an OECD average of 63%. Students with a growth mindset, especially girls and advantaged students, tend to perform better in reading.

Gouldthorp et al. (2017) discovered that sequencing ability is significant for understanding their investigation of the impact of sequencing on the reading comprehension of students who were found to produce more accurate sequences. As a result, they have concluded that sequencing is a crucial skill for reading comprehension and has implications for their reading efficiency. More accurate sequences were produced in all conditions of the sequencing tasks (Gouldthorp et al., 2017), promoting reading comprehension skills. In addition, these findings show that students in both groups responded positively to the interventions and were primarily interested in sequencing events. Reading comprehension students discovered that sequencing ability is significant in understanding the material and producing more accurate sequences (Gouldthorp et al., 2017).

## Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is anchored to the Theory of Difficulty by David Perkin, which, according to his book *Making Learning Whole* (2009), has a chapter called "Working on the Hard Parts" in which he stresses the importance of mastering complex skills and



knowledge in order to get to the next level of performance. The TOD is supposed to help these teachers-in-training develop a better curriculum for learning that skill/knowledge (Meagher, 2017).

According to Perkins (2007), concepts are by their very nature challenging to master as they are more abstract rather than concrete, continuous rather than discrete, dynamic rather than mechanism, interactive rather than reparable, conditionally rather than universality, and nonlinearity rather than linearity. The theory of difficulty by David Perkin stresses the importance of mastering complex skills and knowledge in order to get to the next level of performance (Meagher, 2017). In the study of the theory of difficulty by Sara Shabi (2018), she cited a theory of difficulty that identifies learners' characteristic trouble spots for a particular area of instruction.

The theory of difficulty by David Perkins also states that the literature on learning and development offers many ways to understand conceptual difficulties, such as analyzing the problems of virtualized knowledge. Thus, it is the most appropriate theory for this study about learner's difficulties as perceived by teachers. Further, the prevailing theories enable the researcher to understand how learners' difficulties might affect their learning performance.

## **Objectives**

This study aimed to determine the level of learners' learning difficulties in the two districts in an enormous division in Central Philippines during the school year 2022-2023. Specifically, it aimed to determine 1) the level of learners' learning difficulties in reading, writing, and numeracy, 2) the level of learner's learning difficulties when grouped according to demographics, and 3) if there is a significant difference in the level of learners difficulties when grouped according to demographics.

## **Methodology**

The study methodology-related components, such as research design, respondents, research instrument, data collection processes, and ethical issues are described in this part.

## **Research Design**

This study employed the descriptive research design to determine the level of learner learning difficulties. According to Dudovskiy (2017), descriptive research design attempts to determine, describe, or identify characteristics within the field of investigation. This research design is most appropriate for this study as it aids in elaborating the data gathered and making professional judgments. It would be a fitting design for this study because it sought to provide the descriptive nature of the survey as it reports the summary data such as the measure of central tendency including mean, median, mode, deviance from the mean, variation, percentage, and correlation between variables.



## Respondents

This paper used simple random sampling to determine the respondents through the Cochran formula ( $N = 157$ ;  $n = 112$ ).

## Procedures for Data Collection

The data-gathering procedure for the study involved obtaining approval from the 2 district supervisors and 12 principals, of participating schools, securing consent from teacher respondents and distributing and collecting survey questionnaires. The data was then tabulated using Microsoft Excel for analysis and interpretation.

## Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objectives 1 and 2 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean as statistical tools to determine the level of learners' learning difficulties according to the aforementioned demographics. Objective 3 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U Test as statistical tools to determine the difference in the teachers' level of development needs when grouped and compared according to the above-mentioned demographics.

## Ethical Considerations

Protecting human subjects by applying ethical principles is crucial in all research studies, especially qualitative research, due to its in-depth nature (Arifin, 2018). Participants in this study were thoroughly informed about the research purpose and given the freedom to choose whether to participate or decline. Once they were enlightened about the procedures of the entire research, they were encouraged to participate by signing a consent. Likewise, the researcher ensured that the respondents were free of harm due to their physical or psychological participation. In any research undertaking, honesty is one of the primary concerns of the researcher as to the data and results by ensuring that no willful omission of any significant findings or manipulation to favor a specific interest was made.

## Results and Discussion

The data gathered were further treated, presented, analyzed, and interpreted to carry out the objectives of this study.

**Table 1**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties According to Reading*

| Items                                   | Mean | Interpretation |
|-----------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>  |      |                |
| 1. recognizing the given words quickly. | 3.73 | High Level     |
| 2. spelling and sounding out words.     | 3.76 | High Level     |
| 3. recalling words previously studied.  | 3.70 | High Level     |
| 4. observing basic punctuation rules.   | 3.66 | High Level     |



|                                            |             |                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 5. naming words through objects.           | 3.72        | High Level        |
| 6. blending sounds with double consonants. | 3.75        | High Level        |
| 7. comprehending the meaning of the text.  | 3.70        | High Level        |
| 8. reading words fast and fluently.        | 3.73        | High Level        |
| 9. observing correct mechanics in reading. | 3.63        | High Level        |
| 10. completing sentence structure.         | 3.41        | Moderate Level    |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                        | <b>3.68</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 1 summarizes the analysis of the learners' learning difficulties according to reading, getting an overall mean of 3.68, interpreted to mean high level (HL). The result implies that the respondents perceived the learners' learning difficulties in spelling and sounding out words as having great difficulties in reading, specifically spelling and sounding out words, but with less difficulty completing sentence structure. Indeed, spelling words and proper soundings are learning difficulties that might affect learners' reading ability.

**Table 2**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties According to Writing*

| Items                                                           | Mean        | Interpretation    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <b><i>The learners find difficulty in</i></b>                   |             |                   |
| 1. following proper guidelines in writing.                      | 3.64        | High Level        |
| 2. observing and following appropriate strokes for each letter. | 3.66        | High Level        |
| 3. observing basic grammar rules.                               | 3.55        | High Level        |
| 4. focusing on mental tasks during writing.                     | 3.58        | High Level        |
| 5. sequencing stories or events.                                | 3.61        | High Level        |
| 6. observing correct spelling.                                  | 3.66        | High Level        |
| 7. having trouble generating ideas or elaborating on them.      | 3.57        | High Level        |
| 8. fluidity in cursive writing.                                 | 3.51        | High Level        |
| 9. writing simple sentences.                                    | 3.47        | Moderate Level    |
| 10. writing short poems or essays.                              | 3.43        | Moderate Level    |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                                             | <b>3.57</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 2 shows the analysis of the learners' learning difficulties in writing, obtaining an overall mean of 3.57, likewise interpreted to mean HL. The result implies that the learners' learning difficulty in writing depended more on the correctness of the spelling and the appropriate strokes of each letter.

Writing and spelling require close attention to detail. Missing even a single stroke or letter can change the meaning of a word, According to (Critten et al., 2014), spelling errors occur when the speller leaves out one or two letters from the standard spelling of a word. Moreover, this spelling error may be caused by the inconsistency of the sound and the letter system in English, so precision is crucial. Mastering writing strokes and spelling requires patience, perseverance, and consistent practice to develop proficiency. In conclusion, addressing appropriate strokes for each letter and correct spelling as learners encounter difficulties is crucial for fostering proficient handwriting skills and effective



written communication. By providing guidance and support in these areas, educators can help learners overcome challenges and develop strong foundational skills in language and literacy.

They observe and follow appropriate strokes when handwriting is crucial for achieving clear, legible, and efficient handwriting. Handwriting is vital in communication and keeps ideas ready for use—the Stereotypical Perception of Students in Viewing Cursive Writing as a “Hard Skill” to Master. Teachers find that learning to write in cursive is not always accessible to young learners. Most teachers prefer writing that places as little strain on a child’s first efforts to put ideas on paper. Using cursive was not very “ideal” because it was complex and challenging to master (Mariwa, 2021).

**Table 3**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties According to Numeracy*

| Items                                                                                      | Mean        | Interpretation    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>                                                     |             |                   |
| 1. reading and writing numbers and math facts.                                             | 3.68        | High Level        |
| 2. counting numbers in sequential order.                                                   | 3.63        | High Level        |
| 3. understanding math symbols or signs.                                                    | 3.63        | High Level        |
| 4. using skip counting of numbers.                                                         | 3.67        | High Level        |
| 5. understanding the relationship between symbols/words and non-symbolic forms of numbers. | 3.61        | High Level        |
| 6. connecting numerical symbols with their corresponding words.                            | 3.62        | High Level        |
| 7. recognizing patterns and placing things in order.                                       | 3.65        | High Level        |
| 8. solving word problems with ease and speed.                                              | 3.72        | High Level        |
| 9. using visual aids, fingers, and math counters in counting.                              | 3.57        | High Level        |
| 10. memorizing math facts easily.                                                          | 3.61        | High Level        |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                                                                        | <b>3.64</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 3 presents the level of learners' learning difficulties according to numeracy obtaining a mean score of 3.64, interpreted to mean HL. The result implies that the learners experience a high level of learning difficulties in numeracy, specifically solving word problems with ease and speed, which is more difficult because Math word problems require interpreting what is being asked and simplifying that into a basic math equation.

Addressing learners' difficulties in solving word problems efficiently and quickly requires a multifaceted approach considering mathematical and language skills, problem-solving strategies, emotional factors, cultural influences, and instructional methods. By identifying and addressing these factors, educators can help students develop the confidence, skills, and strategies they need to tackle word problems successfully. Developing the ability of individuals to solve problems is one of the fundamental goals of education (Yavuz et al., 2015; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development



[OECD], 2014). Problem-solving is an essential component of mathematics education (Căprioară, 2015). It involves mathematical tasks that have the potential to provide intellectual challenges for enhancing students' mathematical understanding and to develop their ability to find meaningful solutions to problems using practical and timely strategies (Karabacak et al., 2015; Yavuz & Erbay, 2015).

### Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties According to Reading, Writing, and Numeracy when Grouped According to Demographics

**Table 4**

*Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Reading and Groupings by Age*

| Items                                      | Younger     |                   | Older       |                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>     | Mean        | Interpretation    | Mean        | Interpretation    |
| 1. recognizing the given words quickly.    | 3.67        | High Level        | 3.78        | High Level        |
| 2. spelling and sounding out words.        | 3.69        | High Level        | 3.82        | High Level        |
| 3. recalling words previously studied.     | 3.63        | High Level        | 3.76        | High Level        |
| 4. observing basic punctuation rules.      | 3.55        | High Level        | 3.76        | High Level        |
| 5. naming words through objects.           | 3.57        | High Level        | 3.86        | High Level        |
| 6. blending sounds with double consonants. | 3.61        | High Level        | 3.88        | High Level        |
| 7. comprehending the meaning of the text.  | 3.63        | High Level        | 3.76        | High Level        |
| 8. reading words fast and fluently.        | 3.69        | High Level        | 3.76        | High Level        |
| 9. observing correct mechanics in reading. | 3.47        | Moderate Level    | 3.78        | High Level        |
| 10. completing sentence structure.         | 3.43        | Moderate Level    | 3.40        | Moderate Level    |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                        | <b>3.60</b> | <b>High Level</b> | <b>3.76</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 4 illustrates the analysis of the learners' learning difficulties according to reading and groupings by age. Both younger and older groups had a high level of difficulties in reading, with recorded overall mean scores of 3.60 and 3.76, respectively. Spelling and sounding out words, reading words fast and fluently and blending sounds with double consonants were high levels of learners' learning difficulties.

Westwood (2018) discussed several linguistic and cognitive theories that can explain spelling processes for language learners: stage theory, dual-route theory, visual memory, and integration of multiple patterns theory. Reading speed, according to Turna and Guldenoglu (2019), involves automating the word recognition process and reading at the appropriate speed for the level. The new research, led by Dr. Laura Shapiro in the School of Psychology, shows that extra training on how to blend printed letter sounds is most beneficial because this training significantly impacts PA, an essential skill for learning to read. (Aston University, November 27, 2023).

**Table 5**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Writing and Groupings by Age*

| Items | Younger | Older |
|-------|---------|-------|
|-------|---------|-------|



| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>                          | Mean        | Interpretation    | Mean        | Interpretation    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1. following proper guidelines in writing.                      | 3.63        | High Level        | 3.64        | High Level        |
| 2. observing and following appropriate strokes for each letter. | 3.55        | High Level        | 3.76        | High Level        |
| 3. observing basic grammar rules.                               | 3.59        | High Level        | 3.50        | High Level        |
| 4. focusing on mental tasks during writing.                     | 3.59        | High Level        | 3.56        | High Level        |
| 5. sequencing stories or events.                                | 3.53        | High Level        | 3.68        | High Level        |
| 6. observing correct spelling.                                  | 3.65        | High Level        | 3.66        | High Level        |
| 7. having trouble generating ideas or elaborating on them.      | 3.63        | High Level        | 3.50        | High Level        |
| 8. fluidity in cursive writing.                                 | 3.53        | High Level        | 3.48        | Moderate Level    |
| 9. writing simple sentences.                                    | 3.59        | High Level        | 3.36        | Moderate Level    |
| 10. writing short poems or essays.                              | 3.59        | High Level        | 3.28        | Moderate Level    |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                                             | <b>3.59</b> | <b>High Level</b> | <b>3.54</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 5 analyzes the learners' learning difficulties according to writing and groupings by age. Both younger and older groups had a high level of difficulties in writing, with recorded overall mean scores of 3.59 and 3.54, respectively. Observing correct spelling and following appropriate strokes for each letter were the highest learners' learning difficulties.

According to research, cursive writing is a complex and central cultural skill (Kersey & James, 2013; Kiefer et al., 2015), involving many brain systems and the integration of both motor and perceptual skills (Vinci-Booher et al., 2016; Thibon et al., 2018). The skill of cursive writing is often used as a tool for learning (Arnold et al., 2017). Thus, cursive writing has been considered an essential precursor for further academic success (Fears and Lockman, 2018), and the skill is typically acquired during childhood in societies with a strong literary tradition (Kiefer et al., 2015). Children must learn how to coordinate their hand movements accurately and produce the shape of each letter, and it may take several years to master this precise skill (Van der Meer & Van der Weel, 2017). Teaching spelling also supports reading and writing, and vice versa (Adoniou, 2016, p.11), showing how words and language work contribute to vocabulary development.

**Table 6**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Numeracy and Groupings by Age*

| Items                                                                                      | Younger |                | Older |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------------|-------|----------------|
|                                                                                            | Mean    | Interpretation | Mean  | Interpretation |
| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>                                                     |         |                |       |                |
| 1. reading and writing numbers and math facts.                                             | 3.67    | High Level     | 3.68  | High Level     |
| 2. counting numbers in sequential order.                                                   | 3.53    | High Level     | 3.72  | High Level     |
| 3. understanding math symbols or signs.                                                    | 3.51    | High Level     | 3.74  | High Level     |
| 4. using skip counting of numbers.                                                         | 3.61    | High Level     | 3.72  | High Level     |
| 5. understanding the relationship between symbols/words and non-symbolic forms of numbers. | 3.55    | High Level     | 3.66  | High Level     |



|                                                                 |             |                   |             |                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 6. connecting numerical symbols with their corresponding words. | 3.59        | High Level        | 3.64        | High Level        |
| 7. recognizing patterns and placing things in order.            | 3.57        | High Level        | 3.72        | High Level        |
| 8. solving word problems with ease and speed.                   | 3.63        | High Level        | 3.80        | High Level        |
| 9. using visual aids, fingers, and math counters in counting.   | 3.43        | Moderate Level    | 3.70        | High Level        |
| 10. memorizing math facts easily.                               | 3.51        | High Level        | 3.70        | High Level        |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                                             | <b>3.56</b> | <b>High Level</b> | <b>3.71</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 6 analyzes the learners' learning difficulties according to numeracy and groupings by age. Both younger and older groups had a high level of difficulties in writing, with recorded overall mean scores of 3.56 and 3.71, respectively. Reading and writing numbers and math facts and solving word problems with ease and speed were high levels of learners' learning difficulties.

Dela Cruz and Lapinid (2014) also found that learners struggle in translating word problems and experience difficulty in Mathematics due to carelessness, lack of comprehension, interchanging values, and unfamiliar words. Hence, mathematics and reading skills are essential for successful functioning in 21st-century life. (Hine et al., 2016; Joyce, Hine & Anderton, 2017). It is essential that all children, including those with learning difficulties, acquire a solid foundation of essential academic skills across the core subject areas by the early grades.

**Table 7**

*Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Reading and Groupings by Educational Attainment*

| Items                                      | Lower |                | Higher |                |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|----------------|--------|----------------|
|                                            | Mean  | Interpretation | Mean   | Interpretation |
| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>     |       |                |        |                |
| 1. recognizing the given words quickly.    | 3.64  | High Level     | 3.91   | High Level     |
| 2. spelling and sounding out words.        | 3.66  | High Level     | 3.97   | High Level     |
| 3. recalling words previously studied.     | 3.60  | High Level     | 3.91   | High Level     |
| 4. observing basic punctuation rules.      | 3.58  | High Level     | 3.81   | High Level     |
| 5. naming words through objects.           | 3.69  | High Level     | 3.78   | High Level     |
| 6. blending sounds with double consonants. | 3.75  | High Level     | 3.75   | High Level     |
| 7. comprehending the meaning of the text.  | 3.66  | High Level     | 3.78   | High Level     |
| 8. reading words fast and fluently.        | 3.72  | High Level     | 3.75   | High Level     |
| 9. observing correct mechanics in reading. | 3.61  | High Level     | 3.66   | High Level     |
| 10. completing sentence structure.         | 3.43  | Moderate Level | 3.38   | Moderate Level |



|                     |             |                   |             |                   |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>Overall Mean</b> | <b>3.63</b> | <b>High Level</b> | <b>3.77</b> | <b>High Level</b> |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|

Table 7 shows the level of learners' learning difficulties in reading according to their educational attainment. The overall mean scores of 3.63 from the younger and 3.77 from the older respondents were both interpreted as high. Blending sounds with double consonants and spelling and sounding out words were the highest level of learners' learning difficulties.

Westwood (2018) explored various linguistic and cognitive theories regarding spelling processes for language learners, including the stage theory, dual-route theory, visual memory, and integration of multiple patterns theory. Each lesson began with engaging oral and written activities, encouraging active participation. These activities aimed to enhance syllable knowledge, phonics knowledge, phonological awareness, phoneme segmentation, and the spelling of commonly occurring irregular words, often referred to as tricky words.

**Table 8**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Writing and Groupings by Educational Attainment*

| Items                                                           | Lower       |                   | Higher      |                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
|                                                                 | Mean        | Interpretation    | Mean        | Interpretation    |
| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>                          |             |                   |             |                   |
| 1. following proper guidelines in writing.                      | 3.58        | High Level        | 3.75        | High Level        |
| 2. observing and following appropriate strokes for each letter. | 3.63        | High Level        | 3.72        | High Level        |
| 3. observing basic grammar rules.                               | 3.48        | Moderate Level    | 3.69        | High Level        |
| 4. focusing on mental tasks during writing.                     | 3.51        | High Level        | 3.72        | High Level        |
| 5. sequencing stories or events.                                | 3.60        | High Level        | 3.63        | High Level        |
| 6. observing correct spelling.                                  | 3.63        | High Level        | 3.72        | High Level        |
| 7. having trouble generating ideas or elaborating on them.      | 3.49        | High Level        | 3.72        | High Level        |
| 8. fluidity in cursive writing.                                 | 3.46        | Moderate Level    | 3.59        | High Level        |
| 9. writing simple sentences.                                    | 3.51        | High Level        | 3.41        | Moderate Level    |
| 10. writing short poems or essays.                              | 3.40        | Moderate Level    | 3.50        | High Level        |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                                             | <b>3.53</b> | <b>High Level</b> | <b>3.64</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

The level of learners' learning difficulties as perceived by teachers in writing according to highest educational attainment were presented in Table 8. It has an overall mean score of 3.53, interpreted as a high level for lower educational attainment, and 3.64 as a high level for higher educational attainment. Observing correct spelling and following proper guidelines in writing were the highest level of learners' learning difficulties.

According to research, Westwood (2018) emphasized that spelling involves analyzing and coding 'phonemes in spoken words' (phonological word form), 'letter



patterns in written words' (orthographic word form), and 'root words, prefixes, and inflectional and derivational suffixes' (morphological word form) (Bahr, 2015, p. 74). When technology behavior has been practiced by learners for a long period of time, this practice will already turn into their knowledge which may later on affect their writing skills in English (Schindler, Burkholder, Morad and Marsh (2017).

**Table 9**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Numeracy and Groupings by Educational Attainment*

| Items                                                                                      | Lower       |                   | Higher      |                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
|                                                                                            | Mean        | Interpretation    | Mean        | Interpretation    |
| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>                                                     |             |                   |             |                   |
| 1. reading and writing numbers and math facts.                                             | 3.64        | High Level        | 3.75        | High Level        |
| 2. counting numbers in sequential order.                                                   | 3.66        | High Level        | 3.56        | High Level        |
| 3. understanding math symbols or signs.                                                    | 3.60        | High Level        | 3.69        | High Level        |
| 4. using skip counting of numbers.                                                         | 3.64        | High Level        | 3.72        | High Level        |
| 5. understanding the relationship between symbols/words and non-symbolic forms of numbers. | 3.57        | High Level        | 3.69        | High Level        |
| 6. connecting numerical symbols with their corresponding words.                            | 3.60        | High Level        | 3.66        | High Level        |
| 7. recognizing patterns and placing things in order.                                       | 3.60        | High Level        | 3.75        | High Level        |
| 8. solving word problems with ease and speed.                                              | 3.67        | High Level        | 3.81        | High Level        |
| 9. using visual aids, fingers, and math counters in counting.                              | 3.49        | High Level        | 3.72        | High Level        |
| 10. memorizing math facts easily.                                                          | 3.54        | High Level        | 3.75        | High Level        |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                                                                        | <b>3.60</b> | <b>High Level</b> | <b>3.71</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 9 shows the level of learners' learning difficulties as perceived by teachers in numeracy according to educational attainment. It resulted in an overall mean of 3.60, interpreted as a high level for those with lower educational attainment and 3.71 as a high level for those with higher educational attainment. Solving word problems was the highest learners' learning difficulties.

According to Valchez (2017), numeracy skills are basic mathematical skills that include a range of abilities to understand and analyze numerical information and to make the correct conclusions and decisions. Being numerate means learners are encouraged to learn mathematics within the context of practical application, and they are better able to build on the interconnectedness of different types of knowledge they encounter daily (Kus, 2018). Mathematics teachers are in an unending quest to find teaching strategies or methods (Aspirins & Tan, 2018; Coronel & Tan, 2018; Gumban & Tan, 2019; Murillo & Tan, 2019; Dapitan & Caballes, 2019) that would somehow improve the problem-solving skills of the students (Duque & Tan, 2018; Tan & Limjap, 2018) because this is the only way that mathematics performance will also be improved (Dagoc & Tan, 2018; Segumpan & Tan, 2018).



**Table 10**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties Based on Reading and Groupings by Length of Service*

| Items                                      | Shorter LOS |                   | Longer LOS  |                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
|                                            | Mean        | Interpretation    | Mean        | Interpretation    |
| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>     |             |                   |             |                   |
| 1. recognizing the given words quickly.    | 3.69        | High Level        | 4.00        | High Level        |
| 2. spelling and sounding out words.        | 3.72        | High Level        | 4.00        | High Level        |
| 3. recalling words previously studied.     | 3.66        | High Level        | 4.00        | High Level        |
| 4. observing basic punctuation rules.      | 3.62        | High Level        | 3.92        | High Level        |
| 5. naming words through objects.           | 3.70        | High Level        | 3.83        | High Level        |
| 6. blending sounds with double consonants. | 3.70        | High Level        | 4.08        | High Level        |
| 7. comprehending the meaning of the text.  | 3.64        | High Level        | 4.08        | High Level        |
| 8. reading words fast and fluently.        | 3.68        | High Level        | 4.08        | High Level        |
| 9. observing correct mechanics in reading. | 3.55        | High Level        | 4.17        | High Level        |
| 10. completing sentence structure.         | 3.38        | Moderate Level    | 3.67        | High Level        |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                        | <b>3.63</b> | <b>High Level</b> | <b>3.98</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 10 analyzes the learners' learning difficulties based on reading and groupings by length of service (LOS). Both shorter and longer LOS groups had a high level of difficulties in writing, with recorded overall mean scores of 3.63 and 3.98, respectively. Observing correct spelling and following appropriate strokes for each letter were the highest learners' learning difficulties. Spelling and sounding out words and observing correct mechanics in reading were the learners' highest learning difficulties.

According to research, teachers need to be equipped with insight into spelling development and an understanding of the spelling errors that children may produce (Zhang & Treiman, 2020). Westwood, 2018) and the memorization of word lists and weekly testing of words, Herrington & Macken-Horarik, 2015). This rote learning approach has been characterized by a daily activity involving repetitive writing of a list of words, often using a Look-Cover-Write-Check procedure (Herrington & Macken-Horarik, 2015).

**Table 11**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Writing and Groupings by LOS*

| Items                                                           | Shorter |                | Longer |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------------|--------|----------------|
|                                                                 | Mean    | Interpretation | Mean   | Interpretation |
| <i>The learners find difficulty in</i>                          |         |                |        |                |
| 1. following proper guidelines in writing.                      | 3.57    | High Level     | 4.08   | High Level     |
| 2. observing and following appropriate strokes for each letter. | 3.59    | High Level     | 4.17   | High Level     |
| 3. observing basic grammar rules.                               | 3.47    | Moderate Level | 4.08   | High Level     |



|                                                            |             |                   |             |                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 4. focusing on mental tasks during writing.                | 3.52        | High Level        | 4.00        | High Level        |
| 5. sequencing stories or events.                           | 3.59        | High Level        | 3.75        | High Level        |
| 6. observing correct spelling.                             | 3.60        | High Level        | 4.08        | High Level        |
| 7. having trouble generating ideas or elaborating on them. | 3.55        | High Level        | 3.67        | High Level        |
| 8. fluidity in cursive writing.                            | 3.48        | Moderate Level    | 3.67        | High Level        |
| 9. writing simple sentences.                               | 3.43        | Moderate Level    | 3.83        | High Level        |
| 10. writing short poems or essays.                         | 3.37        | Moderate Level    | 3.92        | High Level        |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                                        | <b>3.52</b> | <b>High Level</b> | <b>3.93</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 11 analyzes the learners' learning difficulties according to writing and groupings by LOS. Both shorter and longer LOS groups had a high level of difficulties in writing, with recorded overall mean scores of 3.52 and 3.93, respectively. Observing correct spelling and following appropriate strokes for each letter were the highest learners' learning difficulties. Children can write with different tools, such as keyboards, virtual keyboards, and tablets (Alamargot & Morin, 2015). Incidentally, handwriting samples are scored based on legibility, accuracy, form, spelling, size, spacing, and speed (Feder & Majnemer, 2003; Shah & Gladson, 2015).

Spelling is a transcription skill that facilitates efficient writing when accurate, automatic, and fluent (Limpo et al., 2017). Thus, instructional priorities should take into account each student's strengths and weaknesses as displayed by their application of the phonological, orthographic, and morphological components of spelling in their writing (Daffern, 2017).

**Table 12**

*Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Numeracy and Groupings by LOS*

| Items                                                                                      | Shorter |                | Longer |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------------|--------|----------------|
|                                                                                            | Mean    | Interpretation | Mean   | Interpretation |
| <b><i>The learners find difficulty in</i></b>                                              |         |                |        |                |
| 1. reading and writing numbers and math facts.                                             | 3.69    | High Level     | 3.58   | High Level     |
| 2. counting numbers in sequential order.                                                   | 3.67    | High Level     | 3.33   | Moderate Level |
| 3. understanding math symbols or signs.                                                    | 3.64    | High Level     | 3.50   | High Level     |
| 4. using skip counting of numbers.                                                         | 3.69    | High Level     | 3.50   | High Level     |
| 5. understanding the relationship between symbols/words and non-symbolic forms of numbers. | 3.62    | High Level     | 3.50   | High Level     |
| 6. connecting numerical symbols with their corresponding words.                            | 3.61    | High Level     | 3.67   | High Level     |
| 7. recognizing patterns and placing things in order.                                       | 3.67    | High Level     | 3.50   | High Level     |



|                                                               |             |                   |             |                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 8. solving word problems with ease and speed.                 | 3.68        | High Level        | 4.00        | High Level        |
| 9. using visual aids, fingers, and math counters in counting. | 3.56        | High Level        | 3.58        | High Level        |
| 10. memorizing math facts easily.                             | 3.61        | High Level        | 3.58        | High Level        |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                                           | <b>3.64</b> | <b>High Level</b> | <b>3.58</b> | <b>High Level</b> |

Table 12 analyzes the learners' learning difficulties based on numeracy and groupings by LOS. As in Tables 10 and 11, both longer and shorter LOS groups had a high level of difficulties in writing, with recorded overall mean scores of 3.64 and 3.58, respectively. Reading and writing numbers and math facts, using skip counting of numbers and solving word problems with ease and speed were the highest learners' learning difficulties.

For word problems, students also must locate information in charts or graphs, perform multiple calculations, or use visual representations. Furthermore, word problems may cause difficulty for students because of the language used within word problems (Boonen et al., 2016; Capraro et al., 2012; Fuchs et al., 2018) because students with MD demonstrate lower rates of understanding mathematics vocabulary (Forsyth & Powell, 2017). Solving word problems often proves difficult for students (Krawec, 2014; Powell et al., 2015; Swanson et al., 2014) due to the steps necessary to develop a problem solution.

### Comparative Analysis in the Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties Based on Constructs and Demographics

**Table 13**

*Difference in the Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Reading and Groupings by Demographics*

| Variable               | Category | N  | Mean Rank | Mann Whitney U | p-value | Sig. level | Interpretation  |
|------------------------|----------|----|-----------|----------------|---------|------------|-----------------|
| Age                    | Younger  | 49 | 46.53     | 1055.00        | 0.223   |            | Not Significant |
|                        | Older    | 50 | 53.40     |                |         |            |                 |
| Educational Attainment | Lower    | 67 | 48.37     | 962.50         | 0.412   | 0.05       | Not Significant |
|                        | Higher   | 32 | 53.42     |                |         |            |                 |
| Length of Service      | Shorter  | 87 | 48.16     | 362.00         | 0.086   |            | Not Significant |
|                        | Longer   | 12 | 63.33     |                |         |            |                 |

Table 13 illustrates the comparative analysis of learners' learning difficulties based on reading and three selected demographics. The p-values of 0.223 for age, 0.412 for educational attainment, and 0.086 for length of service were higher than the 0.05 significance level; hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. In plain language, there is no significant difference in learners' learning difficulties in terms of reading and groupings by age, educational attainment, and length of service.



**Table 14**

*Difference in the Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties in Terms of Writing and Groupings by Demographics*

| Variable               | Category | N  | Mean Rank | Mann Whitney U | p-value | Sig. level | Interpretation  |
|------------------------|----------|----|-----------|----------------|---------|------------|-----------------|
| Age                    | Younger  | 49 | 51.11     | 1170.50        | 0.702   |            | Not Significant |
|                        | Older    | 50 | 48.91     |                |         |            |                 |
| Educational Attainment | Lower    | 67 | 48.84     | 994.50         | 0.561   | 0.05       | Not Significant |
|                        | Higher   | 32 | 52.42     |                |         |            |                 |
| Length of Service      | Shorter  | 87 | 48.27     | 371.50         | 0.106   |            | Not Significant |
|                        | Longer   | 12 | 62.54     |                |         |            |                 |

Table 14 illustrates the comparative analysis of learners' learning difficulties in terms of writing and three selected demographics. The p-values of 0.702 for age, 0.561 for educational attainment, and 0.106 for length of service were higher than the 0.05 significance level; hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. In plain language, there is no significant difference in learners' learning difficulties in terms of writing and groupings by age, educational attainment, and length of service.

The teacher respondents' perception of the extent of learning difficulties in English among Grade 7 students is generally in the "difficult" level as indicated by the grand overall weighted mean of 3.47, with writing and comprehension having the highest weighted mean of 3.61 and oral language fluency having the lowest overall weighted mean 3.31 in the study of Paragas in 2013 but no significant difference were found in terms of all profile variables.

**Table 15**

*Difference in the Level of Learners' Learning Difficulties Terms of Numeracy and Groupings by Demographics*

| Variable               | Category | N  | Mean Rank | Mann Whitney U | p-value | Sig. level | Interpretation  |
|------------------------|----------|----|-----------|----------------|---------|------------|-----------------|
| Age                    | Younger  | 49 | 46.89     | 1072.50        | 0.285   |            | Not Significant |
|                        | Older    | 50 | 53.05     |                |         |            |                 |
| Educational Attainment | Lower    | 67 | 48.64     | 981.00         | 0.495   | 0.05       | Not Significant |
|                        | Higher   | 32 | 52.84     |                |         |            |                 |
| Length of Service      | Shorter  | 87 | 50.58     | 471.50         | 0.588   |            | Not Significant |
|                        | Longer   | 12 | 45.79     |                |         |            |                 |

Table 15 analyzes learners' learning difficulties in terms of numeracy and three selected demographics. The p-values of 0.285 for age, 0.495 for educational attainment, and 0.588 for length of service were higher than the 0.05 significance level; hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. In plain language, there is no significant difference in



learners' learning difficulties in terms of numeracy and groupings by age, educational attainment, and length of service.

Overall, the study suggests that, according to teachers' perceptions, there is no discernible variance in the extent of learning difficulties among pupils across reading, writing, and numeracy domains. This finding implies that teachers perceive similar challenges pupils face across these fundamental academic skills. Further research could comprehensively explore the factors contributing to this perceived uniformity and investigate effective strategies to address these shared difficulties.

### **Conclusion**

In general, pupils experienced high levels of learning difficulties in reading, writing, and numeracy, and when grouped according to the aforementioned demographic variables. Learners experiencing difficulties in spelling, sounding out words, and observing correct mechanics in reading often require targeted support and interventions that address underlying factors such as phonological awareness, orthographic awareness, and morphological awareness. By providing explicit instruction, multisensory learning experiences, and early intervention, educators can help learners overcome these challenges and develop essential literacy skills. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment that celebrates individual strengths and progress is vital to promoting the success of all learners. Teachers are encouraged to actively engage in seminars and training that will help them acquire new teaching skills to give adequate instructions. The researcher is advised to share the study's findings and connect with DepEd personnel, LGUs, and stakeholders to implement the reading, writing, and numeracy program to promote quality instruction and to share their resources to improve the teaching and learning process. Future research should explore additional factors affecting learners' learning difficulties.



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