

## Reading Skills of Learners

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### Abstract

This study aimed to determine the level of reading skills of 136 Grade 1 learners in a small division in Central Philippines for School Year 2022-2023. Using a descriptive research design, the study assessed learners' performance in four reading domains—letter names, letter sounds, syllabication, and word formation—and examined differences according to sex, parents' educational attainment, family income, and number of siblings. A validated reading assessment instrument was administered individually, and data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results revealed that learners performed below expected levels across all domains, with word formation showing the most severe deficits. Parents' educational attainment emerged as the only statistically significant factor, with learners from higher-educated households consistently outperforming their counterparts. No significant differences were found for sex, family income, or number of siblings. Based on these findings, a comprehensive reading intervention plan emphasizing systematic phonics instruction, multisensory approaches, and family literacy programs was developed.

**Keywords:** *Reading skills, grade 1 learners, intervention plan, early literacy, parents' educational attainment*

### Bio-Profile:

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## Introduction

### Rationale

Literacy is widely conceptualized as the capacity to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute using printed and written materials in different situations (UNESCO, 2013). This study is based on United Nations Sustainable Goal 4: Quality Education. As such, the goal seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". In the Philippines, Literacy remains a top concern for the Department of Education because early literacy achievement has long been recognized as a key factor in overall educational outcomes. In the writer's case, as a pre-elementary teacher working in the mountainous area of Talisay City, I witnessed many Grade 1 students having difficulty identifying letters of the alphabet, understanding phonics, and reading words. These observations have been instrumental in conducting this study. However, despite a long-standing literacy program, the lack of basic reading skills among beginners has persisted in the basic education sector, especially in small and rural school divisions, where access to expert reading support programs is restricted.

The global and national reports indicate a critical reading crisis (UNICEF, 2022; OECD, 2019). The UNICEF report showed that the majority of Filipino students are not achieving the minimum reading proficiency by the end of primary grades. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 report, administered by the OECD, Filipino learners have the lowest reading comprehension proficiency in the world, with 80% not meeting the minimum proficiency level. DepEd introduced the ECARP (Every Child a Reader) Program through DepEd Order No. 12, s. In 2015, the issuance of DepEd Order No. 54, which emphasized explicit instruction on letters, names, letter sounds, syllabication, and word building, marked the launch of the MATATAG curriculum in 2023 for the early grades. Phil-IRI, in the chosen district, shows that the majority of Grade 1 students are at the frustration level. These need to be resolved through this diagnostic study.

Nonetheless, actual classroom conditions under these policy contexts reflect the continuing learning gaps. Many Grade 1 learners entering formal education lacked sufficient print experiences; this would certainly lead to difficulties in acquiring letter-name and letter-sound knowledge. These learning difficulties are also influenced by socio-demographic variables: sex, parents' highest educational attainment, household income, and number of siblings, which are factors for the degree of print exposure at home (Mioza & Montero, 2019; UNICEF, 2022). These are exacerbated by learning disruptions brought about by COVID-19, which delayed the acquisition of these basic skills due to the extended modular and distance-learning mode, leaving a growing number of non-readers rejoining the formal classroom setting in face-to-face classes.

With these premises, the purpose of this study was to assess the reading skills of Grade 1 learners in letter names, letter-sounds, syllabication, and word formation, by sex, parents' highest educational attainment, household income, and number of siblings. Determining significant differences in these reading performances would provide evidence for developing a context-based, responsive intervention program for the targeted schools within a small division in Central Philippines.

### Literature Review

Early reading development among learners is strongly influenced by foundational literacy skills, particularly alphabet knowledge, phonics, and phonological awareness. Research shows that early letter-name knowledge serves as a strong predictor of later reading achievement, as it supports decoding and symbol recognition, especially when reinforced through explicit instruction and repeated practice (Larsen et al., 2024). Similarly, knowledge of letter sounds is essential in phonics instruction, enabling learners to connect letters to sounds and achieve fluent word recognition (Ehri et al., 2018). Word formation, including blending and segmenting sounds, further strengthens decoding abilities and predicts future reading comprehension, while syllabication enhances learners' ability to read multisyllabic words with accuracy and fluency (Kilpatrick, 2015; Joshi et al., 2020). These findings emphasize the importance of early assessment and systematic instruction in developing critical reading skills, particularly for struggling learners.



Beyond instructional factors, home and socio-demographic influences significantly shape learners' reading outcomes. Socioeconomic status, family income, parental education, and family size all affect access to literacy resources, parental involvement, and the quality of the home learning environment (Duncan et al., 2019; Davis-Kean et al., 2019; Downey et al., 2017). Additionally, differences in reading performance based on sex suggest that female learners often demonstrate stronger early reading skills than males, highlighting the need for differentiated instruction (Logan & Johnston, 2018). Effective early reading intervention programs, particularly those that are assessment-driven and targeted, have been shown to mitigate these disparities and improve literacy outcomes (Vaughn et al., 2019). Overall, literacy is recognized as a fundamental right and a foundation for lifelong learning, underscoring the need for early, equitable, and data-informed reading instruction supported by both schools and families (UNESCO, 2017).

Local studies in the Philippines consistently reveal that many Grade 1 learners struggle with foundational reading skills such as letter recognition, phonics, word formation, and syllabication, largely due to limited early literacy exposure and insufficient instructional support. Learners from low-income families and those with less educated parents tend to demonstrate weaker reading performance, often linked to limited access to reading materials, reduced parental involvement, and inadequate home literacy practices (Lacdao, 2019; Dizon, 2020; Manalili, 2018). Difficulties in decoding, blending, and recognizing letter sounds are common, especially among pupils from larger families where parental attention is divided. Studies further highlight that gaps in early reading are worsened by factors such as large class sizes, lack of instructional materials, and limited one-on-one teaching time, emphasizing the need for early diagnostic assessment and systematic phonics-based instruction to address these challenges (Reyes, 2019; Santos, 2021).

Moreover, learner-related and contextual variables such as sex, family size, and home environment significantly influence reading development. Female learners generally outperform males in reading accuracy and fluency, while boys are more prone to decoding and attention difficulties, suggesting the need for sex-responsive instructional strategies (Velasco, 2020). The number of siblings also affects literacy outcomes, as children from larger families often receive less individualized support and have lower reading competence (Torres, 2022). Meanwhile, targeted school-based interventions, including phonics drills, syllabication exercises, and data-driven remediation programs, have been shown to significantly improve reading skills, particularly among struggling and disadvantaged learners (Garcia, 2019; Bautista, 2021; Navarro, 2020). Overall, these findings underscore the importance of early, systematic, and context-sensitive reading interventions, along with strong collaboration between schools and families, to enhance literacy development among young learners.

Despite these barriers, evidence shows that targeted and systematic reading interventions significantly improve learners' literacy outcomes. Phonics-based instruction, syllabication drills, and structured remediation programs have been effective in enhancing decoding, word recognition, and overall reading proficiency, particularly among struggling and low-income learners (Ramos, 2019; Padilla, 2021; Vergara, 2020). Parental involvement, when strengthened through training and home-school partnerships, further enhances reading development, while community-based initiatives and access to supplementary reading materials also contribute positively. Factors such as parental education, family income, sibling size, and sex continue to influence both baseline performance and response to intervention (Delos Reyes, 2022; Soriano, 2020; Morales, 2018). Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of early diagnostic assessment, teacher training, and the implementation of structured, data-driven, and context-responsive reading programs to address literacy gaps and support sustained reading development among young learners (Fuentes, 2020; De Leon, 2021).

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

This dissertation is grounded in Linnea Ehri's (2005, 2014, 2020) Phase theory of reading development. Ehri is a Distinguished Professor Emerita of Educational Psychology at the City University of New York, and her alphabetic-phase theory describes the stages children progress through to become word readers. Ehri's research presents a clear, coherent model of beginning reading acquisition, and the fundamental idea is her proposition that skilled word reading—and hence reading—is the ability to decode individual words accurately and fluently both in isolation and in text, thus liberating working memory for the task of meaning construction. Her ground-breaking



research on orthographic mapping-the mental process by which readers link a word's spelling, pronunciation, and meaning in memory-is a critical aspect of present-day models of reading development, and her influential work has shaped the delivery of evidence-based reading instruction around the world.

Ehri's Phase Theory proposes four reading stages: pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic, full alphabetic, and consolidated alphabetic phases, in which children are considered to learn to read words through these stages. In the pre-alphabetic phase, little or no alphabetic knowledge is acquired, and readers use only visual cues, such as logograms or environmental print. In the partial alphabetic phase, the reader starts to know letter names and some letter-sound correspondences and makes only partial letter-sound correspondences (the first and last letters of a word). Children are considered to have moved to the full alphabetic phase when they have a full understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences and decoding. Thus, children can construct whole-word forms in memory through orthographic mapping. Finally, in the consolidated alphabetic phase, children are to know some large spelling units, such as morphemes or syllables, thereby enabling them to read multi-syllable words more economically.

### Objectives

This study aimed to determine the reading skills of Grade 1 learners in the identified schools in a small division in Central Philippines for School Year 2022–2023. Specifically, this study sought to determine: 1) the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, Parents' Highest Educational Attainment, Parents' Average Family Income; and number of siblings is the level of reading skills of Grade 1 learners in terms of letter names, letter sound, syllabication, and word formation; and 2) if a significant difference exists in the reading skills of Grade 1 learners when grouped according to the aforementioned variables.

### Methodology

This section discusses the methods used to gather and analyze data based on the specific predetermined objectives. This outline includes research design, subject-respondents, research instruments, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, data analysis, and statistical methods.

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to determine the level of reading skills of Grade 1 learners in selected schools in a small division in Central Philippines for the School Year 2022–2023, focusing on letter names, letter sounds, syllabication, and word formation, as well as differences across groups based on selected profile variables. Descriptive research, as defined by Loeb (2017), systematically describes population characteristics, establishes relationships among variables, and assesses current conditions. Quantitative data were collected using a reading assessment tool, and learners' performance was analyzed with statistical measures such as frequency, percentage, and mean to compare results across profile groups. This design was most appropriate because it describes existing conditions without manipulating variables, providing accurate baseline data to identify learning gaps and inform the development of a contextualized, evidence-based reading intervention plan that reflects the learners' actual reading skills in the selected schools.

### Respondents

The respondents in this study were Grade 1 learners enrolled in the identified schools in a small division in Central Philippines during School Year 2022–2023. A total of 208 Grade 1 learners with eight (8) sections were used as a population. From this population, a sample size of 136 learners was computed using Cochran's sample size formula for proportions at the 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, assuming a proportion of 0.50 to obtain a large enough sample. The calculated sample was corrected with the finite population correction, and a final sample of 136 respondents was selected. This was then proportionally allocated to the eight (8) sections, with each section considered a stratum. The number of respondents per section was determined based on the proportion of its population to the total population, after which simple random sampling was used within each section to identify the actual respondents. This sampling procedure ensured that all eight sections were fairly represented and that the sample accurately reflected the true distribution of Grade 1 learners in the population.



## Instrument

The researcher developed a two-part instrument to assess the reading skills of Grade 1 learners, with Part I collecting respondents' profiles on sex, parents' education, family income, and number of siblings for grouping purposes, and Part II comprising a 32-item reading skills assessment covering letter names, letter sounds, syllabication, and word formation, arranged from least to most complex to measure early reading development accurately. Learners' performance was quantified using Mean Percentage Scores (MPS) and interpreted on a scale from "Outstanding" to "Did Not Meet Expectations" to identify strengths, difficulties, and inform an evidence-based reading intervention plan. To ensure validity, the instrument was evaluated by three expert validators—a district supervisor and two master teachers—using Carter and Scates' nine criteria, resulting in a validity index of 4.22, indicating excellent content validity. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha with a pilot group of 30 non-respondent learners, yielding a coefficient of 0.880, interpreted as good, confirming the instrument's internal consistency and suitability for the study.

## Procedure for Data Collection

The study targeted Grade 1 learners in a small division in the central Philippines for the school year 2022–2023, with a representative sample selected through stratified random sampling to ensure inclusion from different schools. Two questionnaires were developed: one to gather respondents' profiles, including sex, parents' education, family income, and number of siblings, and another to assess reading skills in letter names, letter sounds, syllabication, and word formation. A pilot test was conducted to ensure clarity and comprehension, and revisions were made based on feedback. After obtaining permission from educational authorities and informed consent from participants, the questionnaires were administered in a suitable location, with instructions emphasizing privacy and confidentiality, and researchers available to address queries.

Collected data were coded and entered into statistical software for analysis. Descriptive statistics summarized respondents' profiles, while mean percentage scores determined their level of reading skills. Inferential statistics, including Independent Samples T-tests, were used to examine significant differences across groups based on identified variables. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, ensuring voluntary participation, privacy, and anonymity in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Names and identities were not recorded, data were kept confidential with access limited to the researcher, and all electronic and printed data were securely discarded after analysis to prevent unauthorized access.

## Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective No. 1 used a descriptive-analytical scheme and frequency count and percentage scoring to describe the characteristics of the respondents and the existing conditions relevant to the variables under investigation. Objective No. 2 used a descriptive-analytical scheme and mean to determine the level of reading skills of Grade 1 learners. Objective No. 3 used a comparative-analytical scheme and independent-samples T-test to determine whether there is a significant difference in the level of reading skills of Grade 1 learners when grouped according to the aforementioned variable.

## Ethical Considerations

Participants' personal demographic information results were collected and were noted in the data capturing sheet. Informed consent via verbal communication was elicited with the respondents. They read and understood the provided information and can ask questions. Moreover, their participation was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw without giving any reasons. The respondents were assured that there would be no risks of harm will experience before, during, or after participating in the research. The data and information used in the study were treated with strict confidentiality. No statement regarding the participant's identity was disclosed unnecessarily in this study. After the data gathering, since there was no need, debriefing was not done by the researcher anymore, as cited in the Data Privacy Act.



## Results and Discussions

This section summarizes the study's findings, which come from careful data gathering, in-depth analysis, and thoughtful interpretation. After this, meaningful conclusions were drawn from the initial phase, offering valuable insights.

### Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Sex, Parents' Highest Educational Attainment, Average Family Monthly Income, and Number of Siblings

This section presents the profile of the respondents to provide a clear description of the demographic and socio-familial characteristics of the Grade 1 learners included in the study. These variables include sex, parents' highest educational attainment, average family monthly income, and number of siblings. Establishing the respondents' profiles is essential for understanding the learners' background context and serves as the basis for subsequent analyses of possible differences in reading skills across groups.

**Table 1**

*Profile of the Respondents*

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	65	47.80
	Female	71	52.20
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment	Lower (high school graduate and below)	61	44.90
	Higher (college level and above)	75	55.10
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower (below 18,000)	69	50.70
	Higher (18,000 and above)	67	49.30
Number of Siblings	Few (below 3)	59	43.40
	Many (3 and above)	77	56.60

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of respondents across sex, parents' highest educational attainment, family monthly income, and number of siblings. Results show that most respondents had parents with higher education (55.10%), came from larger families with many siblings (56.60%), and belonged to lower-income households (50.70%). In contrast, fewer respondents had parents with lower educational attainment (44.90%) or came from smaller families (43.40%). The sex distribution was relatively balanced, with slightly more females (52.20%) than males (47.80%), indicating fair representation. Overall, the data reflect diverse yet proportionate demographic backgrounds, providing a solid basis for analyzing patterns in the study.

These demographic characteristics are significant as they may influence learners' experiences, motivation, and academic performance. Higher parental education may provide stronger academic support and richer learning environments, while larger family size may shape independence and resource allocation. Conversely, lower income and lower parental education may indicate the need for targeted instructional support. These findings align with Reyes et al. (2021), who emphasized that socio-demographic factors such as family background, income, and sibling size significantly affect learners' engagement, habits, and academic outcomes.

### Level of Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in the Area of Letter Names, Letter Sound, Syllabication, and Word Formation

This section presents the reading skills of Grade 1 learners, as assessed through their performance in letter names, letter sounds, syllabication, and word formation. The results reflect the level of learners' early literacy development and serve as a basis for identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. These findings provide



essential insights into learners' current reading ability and into the design of appropriate instructional and remedial reading interventions.

**Table 2**  
*Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in Letter Names*

Item	Mean	Interpretation
1. Present a book to the pupil. Say, "This is a book. Can you point to the front cover of this book?" The pupil should correctly identify and point to the front cover. The expected response is the learner pointing to the front cover.	100.00	Outstanding
2. Open the same book and ask, "Where do we start reading on this page?" Show the page image below. The learner should point to the top-left of the page.	100.00	Outstanding
3. Ask, "Can you show me the back cover of the book?" The learner should point to the opposite side of the front cover.	100.00	Outstanding
4. Show this sentence on a chart or board: "The dog runs fast." Ask, "Can you point to the first word in this sentence?" The learner should point to "The."	65.44	Did Not Meet Expectation
5. Present this mixed row of letters: a, T, b, C, d, E. Ask, "Which ones are uppercase letters?" The learner should identify T, C, and E.	62.50	Did Not Meet Expectation
6. Show this letter: B. Ask, "What letter is this?" Expected response: B.	60.29	Did Not Meet Expectation
7. Show this letter: m. Ask, "What letter is this?" Expected response: m.	60.29	Did Not Meet Expectation
8. Show the sequence: A, B, __, D. Ask, "Which letter is missing?" Expected response: C.	74.26	Did Not Meet Expectation
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>73.40</b>	<b>Did Not Meet Expectation</b>

Table 2 shows the Grade 1 learners' reading skills in letter names, with an overall mean of 73.40, interpreted as Did Not Meet Expectation. Learners performed exceptionally well in identifying basic book parts, with Items 1, 2, and 3 obtaining perfect mean scores of 100.00 (Outstanding), indicating strong print awareness and familiarity with book-handling conventions. This suggests that learners have been adequately exposed to early literacy practices, particularly in recognizing how books are organized and used. However, despite this strength, learners demonstrated difficulty in more advanced letter recognition tasks.

The lowest mean scores were recorded in Items 6 and 7, reflecting challenges in identifying uppercase and lowercase letters in isolation. These difficulties may stem from limited exposure to letter-focused activities, insufficient phonics instruction, or lack of reinforcement at home, particularly among learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. ضعف in letter identification can hinder decoding, phonics development, and reading fluency, while also affecting learners' confidence and motivation. Consistent with Larsen et al. (2024), these findings highlight that while print awareness develops early, alphabet knowledge remains a critical predictor of reading success, emphasizing the need for explicit, systematic, and multisensory instruction in letter names and sounds.

**Table 3**  
*Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in Letter Sounds*

Item	Mean	Interpretation
1. Show a flashcard of the letter "Mm." Ask, "What sound does this letter make?" The learner should say "/m/."	99.26	Outstanding
2. Show this picture set: sun, table, fish. Ask, "What is the first sound in 'sun'?" Expected answer: "/s/."	99.26	Outstanding
3. Present these letters: B, S, M. Say the sound "/b/" and ask, "Which letter makes this sound?" Expected response: B.	83.09	Satisfactory



4. Say the word "cat." Ask, "What is the first sound in 'cat'?" Expected response: /k/.	94.85	Outstanding
5. Show pictures of a dog and a ball. Ask, "Which picture starts with the /d/ sound?" Expected response: Dog.	61.03	Did Not Meet Expectation
6. Say the sounds /s/ /u/ /n/. Ask, "What word do these sounds make when we put them together?" Expected response: sun.	52.94	Did Not Meet Expectation
7. Say the word "hat." Ask, "Can you break this word into its sounds?" Expected response: /h/ /a/ /t/.	55.15	Did Not Meet Expectation
8. Say the word "dog." Ask, "What is the last sound you hear in 'dog'?" Expected response: /g/.	50.00	Did Not Meet Expectation
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>70.35</b>	<b>Did Not Meet Expectation</b>

Table 3 presents the Grade 1 learners' letter-sound reading skills, with an overall mean of 70.35, interpreted as Did Not Meet Expectation. Learners showed strong performance in identifying initial sounds, with Items 1 and 2 obtaining a mean of 99.26 (Outstanding) and Item 4 scoring 94.85 (Outstanding). These results indicate that learners are proficient in recognizing common consonant sounds and determining initial sounds in familiar words, reflecting emerging phonemic awareness and the effectiveness of early phonics instruction focused on basic sound recognition.

However, learners struggled with more complex phonological tasks, particularly in identifying final sounds, as shown by Item 8 with a mean of 50.00 (Did Not Meet Expectation). This difficulty may be due to limited exposure to phoneme segmentation activities and insufficient emphasis on final sound recognition, which requires higher cognitive processing. ضعف in this area can negatively affect decoding, spelling, and overall reading development. Consistent with Piasta et al. (2025), these findings highlight that while initial sound recognition develops earlier, skills such as identifying final sounds and segmenting phonemes remain challenging, underscoring the need for explicit, systematic, and multisensory phonics instruction to strengthen foundational literacy skills.

**Table 4**

*Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in Syllabication*

Item	Mean	Interpretation
1. How many syllables are there in the word banana?	100.00	Outstanding
2. Which is the correct syllabication of the word table?	57.35	Did Not Meet Expectation
3. The word pencil can be syllabicated into:	53.68	Did Not Meet Expectation
4. How many syllables does the word butterfly have?	100.00	Outstanding
5. Choose the correct syllable break for flower.	50.00	Did Not Meet Expectation
6. Which is the correct syllabication for the word coconut?	61.03	Did Not Meet Expectation
7. How many syllables does the word computer have?	100.00	Outstanding
8. The word schoolbag is divided into:	47.79	Did Not Meet Expectation
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>67.41</b>	<b>Did Not Meet Expectation</b>

Table 4 presents learners' performance in syllabication, with an overall mean of 67.41, indicating that they Did Not Meet Expectations. The highest mean score of 100.00 (Outstanding) was obtained in Items 1, 4, and 7, indicating that learners could correctly determine the number of syllables in familiar multisyllabic words such as banana, butterfly, and computer. These high scores indicated strong recognition of rhythm and segmentation for familiar vocabulary words that are commonly taught in early literacy classes. The high performance also suggests that learners benefit from repeated exposure to these words in both oral and written formats. These items reflect ease



of recall and pattern recognition, showing that learners can successfully segment syllables in highly familiar contexts.

The lowest mean score is for Item 8, with a mean of 47.79 (Did Not Meet Expectation), indicating learners' difficulty syllabifying the word 'schoolbag'. These difficulties may be attributed to consonant clusters within words, which can challenge beginning readers' word segmentation. Another possible explanation is that the lack of experience with compound words may make it difficult for learners to recognize a word's natural division points. Phonological awareness instruction that focuses on segmenting consonant blends and polysyllabic words is lacking, which may explain why many learners have difficulty with these words. These findings have implications because ineffective syllabication may affect how easily students decode and recognize words in text. Weak syllabication skills will likely lead to decreased reading stamina and will likely cause the student to pause throughout the text. Cognitive load will likely increase, leading to difficulties with reading comprehension. The more challenging the reading task is (at higher grades), the greater the negative consequences will be for students who cannot effectively syllabicate; therefore, direct modeling and sustained practice involving clapping, chunking, and various syllable segmentation tools are crucial for building strong syllabication. Another study by Dizon (2020) reported that Grade 1 Filipino students experienced difficulty syllabifying unfamiliar and polysyllabic words, especially those containing consonant blends or compound word structures. Dizon further cited poor phonological instruction and lack of practice in breaking down word structures as explanations. Dizon's findings support the present results, showing that learners require direct, scaffolded instruction to improve their syllable-segmentation skills. The study emphasized the importance of systematic phonological exercises to help beginning readers overcome segmentation barriers and improve overall reading proficiency.

**Table 5**  
*Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in Word Formation*

Item	Mean	Interpretation
1. Show the word "the" on a flashcard. Ask, "Can you read this word?" Expected response: "the."	40.44	Did Not Meet Expectation
2. Show the invented word "mip." Ask, "Can you read this word?" Expected response: "mip."	54.41	Did Not Meet Expectation
3. Show the word choices: cat, lat. Ask, "Which one is a real word?" Expected answer: cat.	37.50	Did Not Meet Expectation
4. Show the word "dog." Ask, "Can you read this word?" Expected response: "dog."	54.41	Did Not Meet Expectation
5. Show the words: bat, dog. Ask, "Which word rhymes with 'hat'?" Expected response: bat.	54.41	Did Not Meet Expectation
6. Present word family words like "man," "can," "fan." Ask the learner to read each word aloud.	54.41	Did Not Meet Expectation
7. Show the invented word "tup." Ask, "Can you read this word?" Expected response: "tup."	36.76	Did Not Meet Expectation
8. Show the words: sun, map, ten. Ask, "What is the first sound in 'sun'?" Expected response: /s/.	53.68	Did Not Meet Expectation
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>45.37</b>	<b>Did Not Meet Expectation</b>

Table 5 presents the reading skills of Grade 1 learners in word formation, with an overall mean of 45.37, indicating that they Did Not Meet Expectation. The highest mean observed was 54.41 (Did Not Meet Expectation), appearing in Items 2, 4, 5, and 6, indicating that learners had minimal mastery in reading invented words, real words, and basic CVC words. The means indicated that nascent skills were evident, but students were far below expectations on both the blending and decoding items. These items demonstrated weaknesses in basic phonics skills. They indicate that learners lack the skill of applying letter-sound associations to decode both new and familiar words. These students did not master automatic decoding, which would have led to fluency. The lowest mean found was Item 3 (Did Not Meet Expectation; M=37.50). Item 3 demonstrated that learners have difficulty distinguishing between real and fake words. Learners may have difficulty discriminating real words due to limited vocabulary, limited exposure to print,



and a lack of opportunities to decode words that require semantic analysis. Weak phonological mappings may also be another cause. The learners have not internalized the organization of real words. Identifying real words also suggests problems with comprehension skills; learners are unable to use perceived letter patterns to construct meaning. These problems could be grave due to their impact on future reading fluency and comprehension; they can influence the student's spelling skills, vocabulary acquisition, and exposure to new reading texts. This low performance underscores the need for explicit phonics instruction, guided reading sessions, and repeated exposure to word families to improve decoding and word recognition skills.

This corresponds to findings from Ness & Southall (2019), who found that beginner readers find unfamiliar words and the task of deciding whether words are real very challenging because their knowledge of phonics relationships is limited. Their results pointed towards limited phonological awareness and minimal vocabulary experience as reasons for poor word recognition skills. Ness and Southall highlighted that structured phonics programs and guided decoding practice significantly improve learners' performance on word-formation tasks. Their conclusions reinforce the need for systematic instruction to address the gaps identified in the current study.

**Comparative Analysis in the Level of Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in the Area of Letter Names, Letter Sound, Syllabication, and Word Formation when grouped according to the aforementioned Variables**

This section presents an analysis of significant differences in reading skills among Grade 1 learners, grouped by the selected profile variables: sex, parents' highest educational attainment, average monthly family income, and number of siblings. Inferential statistical tools were employed to determine whether the observed variations in reading performance across groups are statistically significant. The results of this analysis provide empirical bases for accepting or rejecting the study's null hypotheses and for drawing meaningful implications for early literacy instruction and learner support programs.

**Table 6**

*Difference Between the Level of Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in Letter Names when grouped according to the aforementioned Variables*

Variable	Category	N	Mean	t-value	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Sex	Male	65	74.96	.752	.453	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	71	71.97				
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	61	66.15	-3.335	.001	0.05	Significant
	Higher	75	79.30				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	69	70.91	-1.280	.203	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	67	75.97				
Number of Siblings	Few	59	73.43	.014	.999	0.05	Not Significant
	Many	77	73.38				

Table 6 examines differences in Grade 1 learners' letter-name reading skills based on sex, parents' educational attainment, family income, and number of siblings using an independent-samples t-test at a 0.05 level of significance. Results show that sex ( $p = .453$ ), family income ( $p = .203$ ), and number of siblings ( $p = .999$ ) all have p-values greater than 0.05, indicating no significant differences across these variables. This means that learners perform similarly in letter-name recognition regardless of gender, economic status, or family size, suggesting that these factors do not significantly influence this aspect of reading ability.

In contrast, parents' highest educational attainment shows a significant difference ( $p = .001 < 0.05$ ), with learners from more educated parents ( $M = 79.30$ ) outperforming those from less educated parents ( $M = 66.15$ ). This indicates that parental education plays a crucial role in developing letter-name knowledge, likely due to greater involvement in literacy activities and more supportive home learning environments. These findings align with studies by Silinskas et al. (2020) and Niklas et al. (2020), which highlight parental education as a strong predictor of early



literacy skills, while the influence of sex, income, and family size becomes less significant when foundational literacy support is present.

**Table 7**

*Difference Between the Level of Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in Letter Sounds when grouped according to the aforementioned Variables*

Variable	Category	N	Mean	t-value	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Sex	Male	65	68.96	-.672	.503		Not Significant
	Female	71	71.62				
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	61	64.02	-2.980	.003	0.05	Significant
	Higher	75	75.50				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	69	67.72	-1.359	.176		Not Significant
	Higher	67	73.06				
Number of Siblings	Few	59	67.50	-1.268	.207		Not Significant
	Many	77	72.53				

Table 7 presents differences in Grade 1 learners’ letter-sound reading skills based on sex, parents’ educational attainment, family income, and number of siblings using an independent-samples t-test at a 0.05 level of significance. Results show that sex ( $p = .503$ ), family income ( $p = .176$ ), and number of siblings ( $p = .207$ ) all have p-values greater than 0.05, indicating no significant differences across these variables. This suggests that learners demonstrate similar levels of phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondence regardless of gender, economic status, or family size.

However, a significant difference was found in parents’ highest educational attainment ( $p = .003 < 0.05$ ), with learners from more educated parents ( $M = 75.50$ ) outperforming those from less educated parents ( $M = 64.02$ ). This indicates that parental education plays a vital role in the development of phonological skills, likely due to more supportive and literacy-rich home environments. These findings are consistent with studies by Silinskis et al. (2020) and Georgiou et al. (2023), which highlight that parental involvement in literacy activities strongly influences children’s phonemic awareness, while factors such as sex, income, and family size have less impact compared to home literacy experiences.

**Table 8**

*Difference Between the Level of Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in Syllabication when grouped according to the aforementioned Variables*

Variable	Category	N	Mean	t-value	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Sex	Male	65	65.54	-.750	.455		Not Significant
	Female	71	69.12				
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	61	61.72	-2.182	.031	0.05	Significant
	Higher	75	72.03				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	69	64.38	-1.291	.199		Not Significant
	Higher	67	70.52				
Number of Siblings	Few	59	64.79	-.962	.338		Not Significant
	Many	77	69.42				



Table 8 presents differences in Grade 1 learners' reading skills in syllabication, grouped by sex, parents' highest educational attainment, average monthly family income, and number of siblings. The independent samples t-test was applied to determine whether significant differences exist between the mean scores of each category under the different profile variables, using a 0.05 level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The decision rule states that the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected if the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference; otherwise, the null hypothesis is accepted. This statistical tool is appropriate for comparing independent groups and determining whether observed mean differences reflect true population-level differences.

The results show no significant difference in syllabication skills by sex ( $p = .455$ ), average family income ( $p = .199$ ), or number of siblings ( $p = .338$ ), leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis for these variables. These results suggest that there is no difference between males and females, learners from high- and low-income families, and learners from large and small families in their ability to segment syllables into words. In contrast, a significant difference was found in relation to parents' highest educational attainment ( $p = .031 < 0.05$ ), with learners whose parents have higher educational attainment ( $M = 72.03$ ) outperforming those whose parents attained lower education levels ( $M = 61.72$ ). Therefore, these demographic variables did not influence task performance, and we can conclude that the null hypothesis is rejected for these variables. Parental education seems to be the determining factor in learners' phonological awareness and ability to segment multisyllabic words, likely due to greater literacy experience and a cognitively richer language environment at home. These findings concur with current research on the effect of parental education on children's phonological development. Kim (2020) found that children with more highly educated parents are better at syllable segmentation and phonological processing because these parents provide more language-rich opportunities at home. Also, Korpilahti et al. (2020) found that parental education was a predictor of children's ability to isolate and manipulate syllables. The lack of significant differences in sex, income, and sibling number is consistent with studies showing that syllabication skills are shaped more by literacy exposure than by demographic variables alone.

**Table 9**

*Difference Between the Level of Reading Skills of Grade 1 Learners in Word Formation when grouped according to the aforementioned Variables*

Variable	Category	N	Mean	t-value	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Sex	Male	65	41.96	-.882	.379		Not Significant
	Female	71	48.49				
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	61	31.23	-3.605	.000	0.05	Significant
	Higher	75	56.87				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	69	40.65	-1.300	.196		Not Significant
	Higher	67	50.22				
Number of Siblings	Few	59	45.64	.063	.950		Not Significant
	Many	77	45.16				

Table 9 presents differences in Grade 1 learners' word-formation reading skills, grouped by sex, parents' highest educational attainment, average monthly family income, and number of siblings. The analysis used an independent-samples t-test with a significance level of 0.05 ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) to determine whether mean differences between categories are statistically significant. Under this criterion, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected when the p-value is below 0.05, indicating that the groups differ significantly in their level of word-



formation skills; otherwise, the null hypothesis is accepted. This method is suitable for detecting differences in decoding and word-recognition abilities across demographic groups.

The results reveal no statistically significant differences in word formation by sex ( $p = .379$ ), average family income ( $p = .196$ ), or number of siblings ( $p = .950$ ); thus, the null hypotheses for these variables are accepted. This indicates that these demographic factors do not meaningfully influence children's ability to read real and invented words, recognize rhyming patterns, or decode word families. However, a highly significant difference emerged for parents' highest educational attainment ( $p = .000 < 0.05$ ), with learners from higher-educated parents ( $M = 56.87$ ) performing markedly better than those from lower-educated parents ( $M = 31.23$ ). Therefore, for this profile variable, the null hypothesis can be rejected. This means that parents' education has a significant influence on early decoding skills, suggesting that more educated parents may provide greater word recognition, phonics instruction, direct instruction, and modeled support within the home.

The present findings are consistent with prior studies on the influence of parents' education on early decoding and word-formation. Georgiou et al. (2023) reported that parents' education was a strong predictor of both real- and pseudoword decoding, with children from literacy-rich environments showing greater phonological and orthographic knowledge.

Additionally, it has been suggested that parents' education influences children's word-reading accuracy and fluency via a mediating mechanism: home literacy practices, which are more frequent in families of highly educated parents (Silinskas et al., 2020). These studies support the results in Table 26, demonstrating that demographic variables such as sex, income, and sibling count exert minimal influence. In contrast, parental education remains a decisive factor in shaping early word-formation abilities.

### Conclusion

The study found that the Grade 1 respondents had a relatively balanced distribution of males and females, with most coming from families where both parents had higher educational attainment, nearly equal representation of lower- and higher-income families, and predominantly large families. Across the four reading skill domains—letter names, letter sounds, syllabication, and word formation—learners generally did not meet expectations, showing partial strengths in areas such as book handling, initial sound identification, and counting syllables, but weaknesses in naming specific letters, final sounds, blending, actual syllabication, and word formation, particularly with pseudowords and sight words. When analyzed by profile variables, learners with higher-educated parents consistently outperformed others, achieving fairly satisfactory results in some areas, while sex, family income, and number of siblings showed minimal differences, with no groups meeting expectations. Statistically, parental education was the only variable with significant differences across all four domains, highlighting its strong influence on reading skill development, whereas sex, family income, and number of siblings had no significant effect. These findings indicate that intensive, targeted literacy interventions are needed for all learners, with particular support for children of lower-educated parents, focusing on addressing existing deficits rather than tailoring instruction to demographic groups.

### Recommendation

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed to address the lowest-performing areas in Grade 1 reading skills. Teachers should implement systematic, explicit, and multisensory instruction for letter names, particularly for commonly confused letters, using tools such as alphabet flashcards, tracing, clay modeling, songs, chants, and games, with guidance for parents to reinforce learning at home. Phonemic awareness instruction should target final sounds, blending, and segmenting through Elkonin boxes, body movements, and small-group interventions for struggling learners, while syllabication should be taught using visual cues, color coding, and integration into vocabulary instruction. Word formation requires explicit, systematic phonics instruction, daily decodable readers, sight word drills, and interactive activities such as letter tiles to build fluency and decoding skills. Schools should implement intensive reading interventions for learners below grade level and provide family literacy programs, additional instructional resources, reading specialists, smaller class sizes, and extended learning opportunities to support children from less-educated households. Future research could explore longitudinal effects of home literacy practices, test targeted interventions experimentally, and replicate the study across larger samples to strengthen generalizability and inform evidence-based literacy programs.



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### Authorship Contribution Statement

**Francia:** Concept and design, literature review, data collection, analysis, interpretation and editing. **Buquia:** Reviewing, supervision, and material support.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to the conduct, authorship, and publication of this research. All procedures and interpretations were performed independently, and no financial, professional, or personal relationships influenced the results of this study.

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