

Enhancing Reading Performance through the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class Among Junior High School

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Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class in improving the reading comprehension performance of junior high school learners in Gutalac II District. The study aimed to determine the learners' initial reading comprehension level, assess the impact of the peer-led intervention, and identify the significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores after participation in the remedial reading program. The study was anchored on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the Simple View of Reading, which emphasize social interaction, guided learning, decoding, and linguistic comprehension in literacy development. A quantitative pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test research design was employed. The respondents consisted of 170 struggling readers selected through total enumeration and purposive sampling from participating schools. Data were gathered using a standardized multiple-choice reading comprehension assessment adapted from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). The intervention involved structured peer-assisted reading sessions that included guided reading, vocabulary development, fluency exercises, comprehension checks, and motivational activities. Statistical analysis utilized descriptive statistics, Cohen's d , and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test to determine the significance and magnitude of the intervention's effect. Findings revealed that all learners were initially classified at the frustration reading level prior to the intervention. After the implementation of the SIR Remedial Class, learners demonstrated significant improvement in reading comprehension, with a large effect size ($d = 1.1178$) and a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. The results confirmed that peer-assisted and student-led reading interventions effectively improve reading comprehension, particularly in educational settings with limited resources. The study concluded that the SIR Remedial Class is a practical and sustainable literacy intervention that promotes collaboration, student leadership, and improved academic performance. It recommended the continued implementation of peer-assisted reading programs, provision of additional reading resources, teacher training on remedial reading strategies, and further studies involving larger samples and longer intervention periods. The study supports SDG 4 – Quality Education by promoting inclusive and equitable literacy development among struggling learners through structured reading interventions. It also aligns with SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals by encouraging collaborative learning and peer mentoring within the school community. The study contributes to educational and community sustainability by strengthening literacy practices, fostering student leadership, and providing sustainable support mechanisms for struggling readers in resource-limited schools.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning, Junior High School Learners, Literacy Intervention, Peer Tutoring, Reading Comprehension, Reading Fluency, Remedial Reading, Students-Initiative Reading (SIR), Student-Led Intervention

1. Introduction

The study investigated the influence of the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class on the reading performance of junior high school learners in Gutalac II District. The intervention aimed to improve learners' reading comprehension and fluency through student-led remedial instruction and peer tutoring. Addressing reading difficulties is essential because poor literacy skills negatively affect academic performance and lifelong learning opportunities. The study explored how peer tutoring can support reading development, particularly in situations where teacher-led interventions are limited. Research highlights the importance of remedial reading programs in improving literacy among struggling readers. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978) emphasized the significance of peer interaction in cognitive development. Toulia et al. (2023) identified peer tutoring as an effective strategy for enhancing reading comprehension, while Lewin et al. (2024) found that structured peer-assisted learning significantly improves students' reading abilities.

Existing literature consistently emphasizes the effectiveness of peer-assisted and remedial reading interventions in improving literacy skills. Studies show that collaborative learning environments foster reading comprehension, fluency, engagement, and retention among struggling readers. Peer tutoring promotes active participation and encourages learners to construct meaning through social interaction and guided assistance. Serrano and Cruz (2023) reported that peer mentorship and group reading sessions improve comprehension and engagement among struggling readers. Cabardo (2024) further explained that remedial reading interventions incorporating peer support contribute to long-term gains in reading

comprehension and fluency. Lewin et al. (2024) also supported the effectiveness of structured peer-assisted learning strategies in literacy improvement. Toulia et al. (2023) emphasized that peer tutoring fosters inclusion and collaborative learning experiences. The literature also supports the role of structured reading practice, vocabulary development, fluency exercises, and comprehension checks in improving literacy outcomes. These findings validate the use of organized peer-led interventions such as the SIR Remedial Class for struggling readers.

At the local level, learners in Gotalac II District demonstrated significant reading comprehension difficulties, with all identified participants categorized at the frustration level before the intervention. This reflects the urgent need for effective literacy interventions in schools with limited educational resources. Nationally, the Department of Education (2023) reported that many Filipino learners in public schools continue to struggle with basic reading skills, negatively affecting their overall academic performance. Cabardo (2024) noted that limited vocabulary exposure and insufficient comprehension training contribute to low reading competency among secondary learners. Globally, peer-assisted learning and collaborative literacy interventions are increasingly recognized as effective approaches for addressing reading difficulties. Research from Toulia et al. (2023) and Lewin et al. (2024) demonstrated that peer tutoring and peer-assisted reading strategies contribute to improved literacy development and learner inclusion across educational settings.

The study was anchored on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the Simple View of Reading. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration within the learner's "zone of proximal development." This theory supports the implementation of peer tutoring and student-led reading sessions, where learners receive assistance from more capable peers in a supportive environment. The Simple View of Reading proposed by Gough and Tunmer (1986) explains that reading comprehension results from the interaction between decoding skills and linguistic comprehension. Learners categorized at the frustration level may experience deficiencies in one or both components, highlighting the need for structured remedial interventions that focus on vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension skills. These theoretical perspectives provide the conceptual foundation for the SIR Remedial Class by emphasizing guided social learning, collaborative engagement, and structured reading support as mechanisms for improving literacy performance.

Despite the growing body of research supporting remedial reading interventions and peer-assisted learning, the effectiveness of student-led remedial reading programs in rural and resource-limited school settings remains underexplored. Existing studies commonly focus on teacher-led or technology-based reading interventions, while the role of student initiative and peer mentorship in addressing reading difficulties receives limited attention. This study addressed this research gap by evaluating the effectiveness of the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class in improving reading comprehension among struggling learners. Through pre-test and post-test assessments and structured peer-led reading sessions, the study examined whether student-led interventions can provide sustainable and effective literacy support in educational environments with limited teacher availability. The findings aimed to contribute to the development of literacy improvement strategies and provide evidence-based support for the institutionalization of peer-assisted reading programs in schools.

The study aligns primarily with SDG 4 – Quality Education by promoting inclusive and equitable quality education through interventions that improve literacy and reading comprehension among struggling learners. The SIR Remedial Class supports access to foundational literacy skills, which are essential for academic achievement and lifelong learning. The study also relates to SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities because it addresses literacy gaps among learners experiencing reading difficulties, particularly in resource-constrained educational settings. By implementing peer-assisted learning strategies, the intervention provides additional educational support for disadvantaged students. In addition, the research supports SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals through collaborative learning and peer mentoring. The student-led approach encourages cooperation among learners, teachers, and school stakeholders to improve educational outcomes and sustain literacy development initiatives.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by promoting sustainable literacy interventions that can be implemented even in schools with limited teacher availability and educational resources. The peer-assisted model provides a practical and long-term strategy for improving reading comprehension among struggling learners. The research also contributes to community and institutional sustainability by fostering collaboration, leadership, responsibility, and shared learning among students. Student mentors develop leadership and communication skills while supporting the academic growth of their peers. This collaborative learning culture strengthens school-based literacy initiatives and promotes continuous academic support systems. Furthermore, the study supports socio-economic sustainability because improved literacy skills enhance students' academic performance and future opportunities. Strengthening reading comprehension contributes to better educational outcomes, which may positively influence learners' long-term personal and professional development.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test research design to assess the effectiveness of the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class. The design measured learners' reading comprehension before and after exposure to the intervention to determine whether significant improvement occurred. The intervention focused on peer-assisted and student-led remedial reading sessions that included guided reading, vocabulary development, fluency exercises, and comprehension checks. Student mentors followed a standardized lesson plan to maintain consistency in instruction throughout the implementation of the program.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Gutalac II District among junior high school learners identified as struggling readers. The intervention was implemented within the district's educational setting using structured peer-led reading sessions. The locale was selected because of the identified literacy challenges among learners and the need for effective remedial reading interventions in schools with limited teacher availability and educational resources.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of junior high school learners from Gutalac II District who were identified as struggling readers based on their initial reading assessment. These learners demonstrated difficulties in reading comprehension and were categorized as needing remedial reading support. Student mentors who served as proficient readers and facilitated the peer-led remedial sessions also participated in the intervention process.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study involved 170 struggling readers selected through total enumeration from participating schools. Purposive sampling was also utilized in identifying learners who demonstrated difficulties in reading comprehension and qualified for participation in the intervention. Student mentors were chosen based on their reading proficiency and ability to assist struggling learners during the remedial reading sessions.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used in the study was a standardized multiple-choice reading comprehension test administered before and after the intervention. The instrument was adapted from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), a validated assessment tool developed by the Department of Education for evaluating reading proficiency and monitoring student progress. The test provided reliable graded reading passages and comprehension questions designed to assess learners' reading comprehension levels. The pre-test established the learners' baseline reading performance, while the post-test measured improvements after participation in the SIR Remedial Class.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data gathering began with the administration of a pre-test to determine the learners' initial reading comprehension levels. Following the baseline assessment, the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class was implemented through structured peer-led reading sessions conducted in small groups. The sessions included guided reading activities, vocabulary enhancement exercises, fluency drills, comprehension checks, interactive reading tasks, and feedback sessions. Motivational strategies such as goal-setting, reading challenges, and recognition of student achievements were also integrated to encourage active participation and sustained learner engagement. After the intervention period, a post-test was administered using the same standardized reading comprehension assessment to measure learners' progress and determine the effectiveness of the remedial reading program. The study also ensured compliance with ethical standards established by the Department of Education and school administration. All collected information was treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes. Hard copy data were shredded, while electronic files were permanently deleted after the completion of the study to ensure compliance with data protection and ethical standards.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The study employed quantitative data analysis techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage, were used to analyze and compare learners' pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores. These statistical measures provided an overview of learners' reading performance before and after the intervention. To determine whether significant differences existed between the pre-test and post-test results, inferential statistical tests were utilized. A paired sample t-test was initially identified to measure the statistical significance of changes in reading comprehension performance. Additionally, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed to compare related samples and determine the significance of score differences after the intervention. Cohen's d was also calculated to assess the strength and magnitude of the intervention's effect on learners' reading improvement.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Reading Comprehension Performance of Learners

3.1.1 Initial Reading Comprehension Level of the Learners

The findings revealed that all 170 learners were classified under the frustration reading level before the implementation of the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class. None of the participants reached the instructional or independent reading levels, indicating that all learners experienced serious difficulties in reading comprehension prior to the intervention. The result highlights a significant literacy gap among the learners and demonstrates the urgent need for structured reading interventions. This finding is consistent with the Department of Education's report that many Filipino learners in public schools struggle with basic reading skills, affecting their academic performance (Department of Education, 2023). Cabardo (2024) explained that limited vocabulary exposure and insufficient comprehension training contribute to low reading competency among secondary learners. The findings also support the Simple View of Reading theory, which states that reading comprehension depends on both decoding and linguistic comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). The results validate the need for interventions such as the SIR Remedial Class to provide meaningful and guided reading practice through peer support.

3.1.2 Effect of the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class

The study found that the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class had a strong positive effect on learners' reading comprehension. The computed Cohen's d value of 1.1178 indicated a large effect size, showing that the intervention significantly improved learners' reading performance after participation in the peer-led remedial reading sessions. The large effect size confirms the effectiveness of student-led and peer-assisted reading instruction in improving comprehension skills. This finding supports the study of Serrano and Cruz (2023), which emphasized that peer mentorship and group reading activities improve engagement, comprehension, and retention among struggling readers. Cabardo (2024) also noted that remedial reading programs using peer support strategies result in significant and lasting improvements in reading comprehension and fluency. Furthermore, the findings align with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which explains that learning occurs through social interaction within the learner's "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978). The success of the SIR Remedial Class demonstrates that peer-led learning can serve as an effective literacy intervention, particularly in resource-limited educational settings.

3.1.3 Difference Between Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

The results showed a statistically significant difference between the learners' pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores after participating in the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test produced a Wilcoxon Z -value of -10.188 and an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000, which is lower than the 0.05 significance level. The mean rank increased from 21.81 during the pre-test to 84.47 during the post-test, indicating substantial improvement in learners' reading comprehension performance following the intervention. The statistically significant improvement confirms that the SIR Remedial Class effectively enhanced the learners' reading comprehension skills. The findings demonstrate that peer-assisted and student-led interventions can positively influence literacy outcomes, especially in schools with limited educational resources. Serrano and Cruz (2023) explained that peer-mediated reading programs improve learning through social interaction and collaborative meaning-making. Similarly, Cabardo (2024) found that consistent remedial reading activities significantly improve comprehension and reading fluency among junior high school learners. The results also align with the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), which emphasizes the integration of decoding and linguistic comprehension in achieving reading comprehension. The improvement in learners' performance suggests that the SIR sessions successfully strengthened both components, enabling learners to transition from basic word recognition to meaningful comprehension.

3.2 Implications of the Intervention

The findings of the study demonstrated that the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class served as an effective intervention for struggling readers in Gutalac II District. Learners who initially exhibited severe reading comprehension difficulties showed notable improvement after participating in structured peer-led remedial sessions. The intervention also promoted active participation, collaboration, and independent learning among students. The results suggest that student-led and peer-assisted interventions can provide sustainable literacy support in schools with limited teacher supervision and instructional resources. The findings reinforce the importance of guided social interaction, collaboration, and peer mentoring in literacy development. The study further supports the application of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the Simple View of Reading in improving reading comprehension through collaborative and structured learning experiences.

3.3 Reflection on the Findings

The study revealed that the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class significantly improved learners' reading comprehension, as reflected by the large effect size and highly significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores. The intervention also fostered greater academic confidence, collaboration, and engagement among learners through peer-assisted learning activities.

The findings strengthen existing theories on peer-assisted learning and sociocultural approaches to literacy development by showing that learners benefit from collaborative and supportive learning environments. The study demonstrated that student-led teaching strategies can function as sustainable models for improving literacy in public schools with limited teaching personnel. The experience also emphasized the importance of integrating peer mentoring and student leadership into reading programs to strengthen literacy practices and promote long-term reading development among learners.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class significantly improved the reading comprehension of struggling learners in Gutalac II. Before the intervention, all participants were classified at the frustration reading level, indicating serious comprehension difficulties and the need for structured reading support. After the implementation of the SIR Remedial Class, learners demonstrated significant improvement in reading performance, as shown by the large effect size and statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. The findings confirmed that student-led and peer-assisted reading interventions are effective strategies for improving comprehension skills, particularly in educational settings with limited resources. The results further support the principles of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the Simple View of Reading, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, guided social interaction, and comprehension development in literacy learning.

The study recommends the continued implementation of the Students-Initiative Reading (SIR) Remedial Class as a regular intervention program for struggling readers due to its positive impact on reading comprehension. Teachers are encouraged to support peer-assisted and student-led reading activities both inside and outside the classroom to strengthen learners' confidence, engagement, and comprehension skills. Schools may also provide additional reading materials, comprehension exercises, and guided practice activities suited to learners' reading levels. The Department of Education and school administrators may conduct training programs and seminars on remedial reading strategies, peer tutoring, and literacy intervention techniques to further support struggling readers. Parents and guardians are likewise encouraged to monitor and support reading activities at home. Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving larger sample sizes, longer intervention periods, and different grade levels to further validate the effectiveness of the SIR Remedial Class and examine its influence on other literacy skills such as vocabulary, fluency, and academic achievement.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This study complied with recognized ethical standards for human-participant research by ensuring voluntary participation with informed consent, the right to withdraw without penalty, and strict confidentiality through anonymous, secure, and aggregated data handling. Given the focus on psychological well-being, procedures were non-invasive, and safeguards were observed to minimize discomfort, with guidance to appropriate support services when needed, and required institutional permissions were secured for instrument use and access to academic records.

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