



Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading

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Abstract:

This study aimed to determine the difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in District V in a highly urbanized city in Central Philippines for the School Year 2023-2024. Data needed for this study was collected from 40 Grade 1 teachers using a self-made data-gathering instrument that has hurdled the rigorous tests of validity and reliability. The results showed that grade one learners who struggled with teaching beginning reading were typically handled by older respondents, who had lower educational attainment, and had received more literacy training, and had taught longer. Further analysis showed that Grade 1 teachers faced moderate challenges across all areas of teaching, beginning reading, with varying levels of difficulty. Among these areas, phonemic awareness was the least challenging, indicating that teachers were relatively more adept at helping students recognize and manipulate sounds in words. Phonics presented a moderate level of difficulty, suggesting that while teachers could teach students to connect sounds to letters and blend them, it remained a notable challenge. Fluency also fell into the moderate difficulty category, with teachers finding it somewhat challenging to help students read smoothly and with expression. Vocabulary instruction was similarly moderately difficult, as teachers worked to introduce and contextualize new words for their students. However, comprehension was identified as the area with the highest level of difficulty, reflecting the complex nature of helping early readers understand and interpret text. Moreover, no significant difference was found in the level of difficulty faced by Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension when grouped and compared according to the variables. It suggested that teachers, regardless of their age, educational background, experience level, or training, faced similar challenges, implying that other factors could have contributed to their difficulties.

Keywords: Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers, teaching beginning reading

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

The K-12 Basic Education Program emphasized the importance of literacy skills development, recognizing reading as a cornerstone of learning. However, in the Philippines, reading habits play a vital role in pupils' reading skills and academic performance. Still, pupils are at a frustration level wherein they can only recognize and decode words without comprehension (Francisco & Madrazo, 2019). In response to the pupils' poor reading skills, the Department of Education issued DEP Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019 will make every learner a proficient reader, and schools nationwide are tasked with developing their reading skills. There is a need to strengthen every learner's reading proficiency and nurture a culture of reading, a requisite skill in all content areas (Cabalo & Cabalo, 2019). DepEd's Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) seeks to equip learners with essential reading skills, support teacher effectiveness, and foster a culture of reading within educational institutions.

Early detection of potential reading difficulties is essential to provide grade 1 teachers with the best opportunity to assess and, hopefully, address the difficulties in beginning reading. The district may conduct training to enhance the teaching of beginning reading pedagogy. Teacher's performance and address challenges encountered by grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading (Hinson, 2023).

As a school reading coordinator, the researcher noticed that the result of the Beginning of the School Year Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (BOSY CRLA) conducted this school year 2023-2024 showed a significant increase of 220 full refreshers who need direction instruction of phonics patterns from previous grades out of the total of 375 enrollees of grade 1 pupils for the school year 2023-2024. It is also notable that the following factors greatly affect the reading performance of pupils and cause difficulty for teachers in teaching beginning reading: phonics awareness, phonics fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.



These instances motivated the researcher to conduct this study to determine the difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading: phonic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, which could be a basis to give recommendations and craft a proposed intervention plan that could address the existing problem in the difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading (Salutin & Maguate, 2023).

Current State of Knowledge

Phonics teaching involves building blocks, starting with vowel digraphs before diphthongs. Short-vowel CVC words are taught, followed by blends, consonant digraphs, and long-vowel words with silent e. Vowel digraphs are then taught, followed by diphthong instruction. Strengthening phonics skills prepares students for better reading, spelling, and word decoding (Shaehare, 2021). In addition, it was revealed in the study that pupils lack the knowledge of blending sounds within words, and there are also signs of interferences in the ability of the pupils to read words fluently. The following words came from a teacher: The reading ability of pupils in this school is low because teachers do not teach them how to blend sounds with words.

Digraphs aid in recognizing and decoding foreign words, which is important for developing children's early reading skills. Children can increase their reading fluency and deconstruct complex phonological patterns by comprehending ordinary digraphs. By strengthening a child's confidence and overall reading comprehension, incorporating digraphs into phonics training provides a solid basis for more advanced literacy skills (Kokotree, 2023).

Wong (2024) states that teaching digraphs and blends in early education are crucial for developing strong reading and spelling skills. Effective teaching strategies by teachers, including multisensory methods and engaging activities, can help students overcome challenges and build a solid foundation for literacy success. Mastering these phonetic building blocks improves learners' reading fluency, spelling accuracy, and academic confidence. The secret to helping kids read more fluently is for the teachers to help them master digraphs. In English words, common digraphs like "sh," "ch," and "th" are frequently seen. Children spend less time sounding out each letter when they can easily recognize these patterns. Instead, they concentrate on comprehending what they read and swiftly identifying the digraphs

Teachers must teach children digraphs and pair them with their sounds using multisensory learning methods like play dough, sand, chalk, or storybooks. Encourage them to identify digraphs in words and read aloud. The goal is to develop automatic recognition and reading fluency by pairing one sound with two adjacent letters. Early years education teachers focus on visual recognition of digraphs to produce corresponding sounds, such as blending each letter individually in words like "ship" or encoding letters like "s" and "h" when spelling a sound. A great practice to show a child this can be found in the reading scheme phonographic. Encourage the youngster to draw a square and then a triangle, labeling each form; the same goes for the letters s and h. Next, ask the youngster to explain what you think the square with the triangle on top depicts. She has taken two things and blended them to create something entirely new, and she will volunteer "a house." This happens when you combine the letters s and h, which stand for the sound a librarian makes when you squeal excessively! It's just about matching the digraphs with their sounds once they grasp the basic idea (Scorziello, 2021).

The need to get to the root cause of reading difficulties to comprehensively analyze the situation is highly determined (Fulgencio & Maguate, 2023). Educators must revisit the traces of developing reading comprehension skills for their learners down to the beginning reading stage. It is believed that the vital element in the acquisition of this useful and advanced information is the ability to decode and comprehend this information, starting from the most basic reading competencies such as the ability to identify letter names, identify letter sounds, discriminate initial sound, read familiar words and read oral passage. Without developing these basic reading competencies, the rippling problematic effects may be seen (Bolton & Ramos, 2021).

Reading fluency is one of the fundamental core abilities that must be developed to become proficient in reading, along with other skills like vocabulary, comprehension, and phonemic awareness (Silvano, 2022). Moreover, evidence-based instruction and motivational strategies develop students' reading fluency. These techniques include students reading an ability-suitable text repeatedly for a predetermined amount of time, having a fluent reader serve as an example for a pupil who is working on fluency, using methodical word error correction techniques, having students read aloud incorrectly, and including motivational techniques (Padeliadu et al., 2021).

Biermann (2024) states that compound words are crucial in enhancing your child's vocabulary and comprehension of language systems. Children learn to think critically and solve problems as they discover, build, and break down complex words. Children find recognizing and understanding new words easier when they can break down compound words into their components. Comprehension is essential for academic, professional, and personal development (Jayme & Maguate 2023). It links passive and active readers. It entails asking questions, envisioning, and comprehending context. Understanding requires reading fluency since word decoding errors might cause understanding loss. Strong reading comprehension abilities can be developed by concentrating on fundamental



skills like visual perception, processing speed, auditory analysis, sound mixing, memory, and concentration. Academic achievement can be hampered by a child's lack of these skills (Keyser, 2021).

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is anchored on Perkin's educational theory, the theory of difficulty, which states that learning is a consequence of deep thinking. People learn much of what they have a reasonable opportunity and motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) to learn.

In any attempt to define challenge, difficulty or challenge one inevitably starts to discuss its potential causes. The threshold concepts framework suggests challenging content as a potential cause of difficulty. Perkins (2007) defines a 'strong theory of difficulty' as one which 'identifies learners' 19 characteristic trouble spots for a particular area of instruction and includes some causal analysis of why they occur toward improving teaching and learning'.

He distinguishes between a theory of difficulty, which 'defines the design challenge,' and a complete theory of pedagogy, which then tackles the challenge through the teaching-learning process (Perkins, 2007). However, Perkins (2007) also points out that the two are linked in the sense that it may be hard to identify whether the difficulties students are facing are a result of 'the knottiness of the content' or 'the naughtiness of slack instruction.'

Perkins (2007) raises several points that are important for my research. Firstly, he suggests that several theories of difficulty may apply concurrently and urges teachers to focus on difficulties relating to content (which we might influence) rather than 'projecting the difficulty on the students or the conditions' (which may be outside our control). This poses the need for teachers to focus on improving the difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading and how they could conduct an intervention plan for pupils' progress in reading. He also warns against 'shallow' theories of difficulty, which are 'over general,' or look at the topic and symptoms without locating the cause or where the solutions involve "formulaic fixes." One of the problems with the notion in terms of how it informs pedagogy is that a teacher needs a theory of difficulty that belongs to their own topic (Perkins, 2007). Thus, the difficulties encountered by grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading should be identified and processed to be able to provide appropriate intervention plans for pupils' reading development.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in a District in a highly urbanized city in Central Philippines for the School Year 2023-2024 as basis for an intervention plan. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: 1) what is the level of difficulty of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading according to the area of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension; and 2) the significant difference in the level of difficulty of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading when grouped and compared to the aforementioned variables.

Methodology

This section presents the discussion of the research methodology used, the subjects and respondents of the study, the research instruments used, the validity and reliability of the instruments, the procedure for data gathering, and the statistical tools and procedure for data analysis.

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive research design, which aimed to determine the difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in a district in one of the highly urbanized cities in Central Philippines for the school year 2023-2024 as the basis for an intervention plan. Descriptive design describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon being studied. It answers questions about how, when, and why the characteristics occurred. It is a study that depicts the participants accurately. More simply, descriptive research is all about describing people who participate in the study, and it can be done using observation, case study, or survey (Huber, 2019). A descriptive research design is appropriate for this study as it aims to systematically describe the situation of the population, leading to the answers as to what, when, where, and how, which are all specific answers to the study. This method is mainly applicable to this study because it describes the present condition of the teachers.

Study Respondents

The study's respondents were the 40 Grade 1 teachers in a District in a highly urbanized city in Central Philippines. Since the target respondents were quite manageable, purposive sampling was utilized. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling (Nikolopoulou, 2022)

Instruments



The study used a self-made instrument to gather baseline-data. The questionnaire had two parts. Part 1 contained queries on respondents' profiles, such as age, highest educational attainment, length of service, and literacy training, to establish the demographic profile of the respondents. Part 2 is the questionnaire proper that dealt with the difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in beginning reading according to the areas above. The respondents were asked to rate each item using the five-point Likert scale, which contained the following scores: 5 (Always), 4 (Often), 3 (Sometimes), 2 (Rarely), 1 (Almost Never). The research instrument was subjected to validity (4.96-excellent) and reliability (0.994-good). All of them were interpreted as worthy and good; respectively.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher sent a letter of request to conduct the study to the Schools Division Superintendent, giving him a heads-up on the mechanics and purpose of the study. The approved letter was attached to the letter addressed to the school principal to inform them about the forthcoming survey and finally seek permission from the head teacher of the school to administer the research instrument and conduct the study. After the request was granted, the survey questionnaire was administered to grade 1 teacher through Google Forms. The respondents were guaranteed the confidentiality of the data gathered. The data gathered from the respondents' responses were tallied and tabulated using the appropriate statistical tools. The raw data were transformed into numerical code guided by a coding manual. This allowed computer processing, statistical derivations, and tabular presentation.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective No.1 used a descriptive-analytical scheme and mean to determine the level of difficulties faced by Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading according to the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Objective No.2 used a descriptive-analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine the significant difference in the level of difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading when grouped and compared to the variables.

Ethical Consideration

Ensuring the protection of human subjects by adhering to ethical principles is essential in all research studies. The principle of voluntary participation ensures that individuals are not forced or pressured into joining a study (Bhandari, 2023). Regarding informed consent, participants are provided with full information about the research procedures and potential risks before agreeing to take part. As such, participants were entirely enlightened about the procedures of the entire research and were encouraged to participate by signing consent. Additionally, several safeguards will be in place to minimize harm in a research protocol that involves vulnerable participants or sensitive topics (Peter, 2015). As to the confidentiality of the results, the participants identifying information were kept confidential and not made available to anyone who was not directly involved in the study. In terms of anonymity, a stricter standard was established for the participants to remain anonymous in this research study.

Results and Discussion

This section deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data gathered to carry out the objectives of this study. All these were made possible by following certain appropriate procedures so as to give the exact data and solution to each specific problem.

Table 1
Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Phonemic Awareness

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I have difficulties in teaching learners to:		
1. say new spoken words when two or more sounds are combined.	2.65	Moderate level
2. add or substitute individual sounds in simple words to make new words.	2.57	Moderate level
3. identify the initial/final sound, specifically critical letters (b, d, h, n, p, q, g).	2.55	Moderate level
4. change the beginning or ending sound of the new words.	2.55	Moderate level
5. identify the number of syllables in a given word.	2.30	Low level
6. supply rhyming words in response to spoken words.	2.60	Moderate level
7. combine new spoken words with two or more syllables.	2.60	Moderate level
8. segment a two-syllable word into its syllabic parts.	2.47	Low level
Mean	2.53	Moderate level



The study's second objective was to determine the level of difficulties faced by Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading according to phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Table 1 shows the data on the level of difficulties grade 1 teachers have in teaching beginning reading in phonemic awareness, revealing an overall mean of 2.53, interpreted as a "moderate level." More so, the least difficulty was found in item 5, "identify the number of syllables in a given word," with a lowest mean of 2.30, interpreted as "low level." In contrast, it showed that grade 1 teachers have the greatest difficulty in item 1, "say new spoken words when two or more sounds are put together," with the highest mean of 2.65, interpreted as "moderate level." This implies that first-grade teachers need help teaching students to say new spoken words when two or more sounds are put together. At the same time, they have ease teaching children to identify the number of syllables in a given word. Grade 1 teachers need to strengthen students' mastery of phonological awareness skills because it is essential for reading. Students must know the letter sounds and combinations to read or spell the printed words.

This was supported by Joseph (2018), who stated that the study's findings showed that students' capacity to blend sounds within words is lacking. There are indications that their ability to read words fluently is being interfered with. The teacher said that Students in this school need better reading comprehension because they need to teach them how to combine sounds to form words. In support of this conclusion, Joseph (2018) points out that a deficiency in processing a language's phonological elements is the most frequent reason for challenges in developing early word-reading skills.

Another study by Mengistie et. al. (2020) based on findings, reading methods were applied more frequently by English language teachers from children's improved use of phonemic awareness techniques from one lesson to the next. Researchers found that children used the reading techniques during the pre-, during, and post-reading phases. During the pre-reading phase, the instructor provided cues to the kids so they could methodically match letters to sounds. She used a phonemic technique and instructed them to identify the initial letter to practice reading the sounds of the letters. Both individually and in small groups, utilizing phonetic hints.

Table 2
Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Phonics

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I have difficulties in teaching learners to:		
1. give the name and sound of each letter.	2.32	Low level
2. identify individual letters and recognize reversals.	2.52	Moderate level
3. blend specific letters to form syllables and words.	2.50	Moderate level
4. combine diphthongs, a sound formed by combining two vowels in a single syllable ("oy" or, "as in "boy" or "coin and "ow or "o as in "cloud" or "cow").	2.82	Moderate level
5. produce the beginning letter/sound of the name of each picture.	2.27	Low level
6. repeat CVC pattern	2.45	Low level
7. identify the short and long vowel sounds.	2.80	Moderate level
8. the common digraphs include ch, sh, th, wh, ph, and ck.	2.97	Moderate level
Mean	2.58	Moderate level

The data on the level of difficulties grade 1 teachers had in teaching beginning reading in phonics revealed an overall mean of 2.58, which is interpreted as a "moderate level." Moreover, the least difficult part of item 5 was "produce the beginning letter or sound of the name of each picture," with the lowest mean of 2.27, which is interpreted as "low level." Furthermore, the highest difficulty on item 8 was "articulate the common digraphs, including ch, sh, th, wh, ph, and ck," with the highest mean of 2.97, interpreted as "moderate level."

This implied that grade 1 teachers had difficulty teaching beginning reading with common digraphs, wherein two or more consonants blended to form a single sound. At the same time, grade 1 teacher respondents find it easy to teach children to produce the beginning letter or sound of the name of each picture. However, most English words include these two-letter pairings in them, so students must comprehend this. Students who comprehend the connection between these digraphs and sounds will be able to read new words.

This was supported by Kokotree (2023), who states that digraphs aid in the recognition and decoding of foreign words, which is important for the development of early reading skills in children. Children can increase their reading fluency and deconstruct complex phonological patterns by comprehending ordinary digraphs. By strengthening a child's confidence and overall reading comprehension, the incorporation of digraphs into phonics training provides a solid basis for more advanced literacy skills.

According to Wong (2024), teaching digraphs and blends in early education is crucial for developing strong reading and spelling skills. Effective teaching strategies by teachers, including multisensory methods and engaging



activities, can help students overcome challenges and build a solid foundation for literacy success. Mastering these phonetic building blocks leads to improved reading fluency, spelling accuracy, and academic confidence in learners.

Table 3
Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Fluency

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I have difficulties in teaching learners to:		
1. read aloud grade-one level text at approximately 60 words per minute.	2.77	Moderate level
2. read grade one-level text with an accuracy rate of 95-100%.	2.90	Moderate level
3. express grade-level words, phrases, or sentences with appropriate speed, accuracy, and expression.	3.00	Moderate level
4. read with proper phrasing and expression.	3.00	Moderate level
5. apply punctuation functions when reading aloud.	2.90	Moderate level
6. identify some common sight words.	2.67	Moderate level
7. read with automaticity 100 grade 1 sight words	2.87	Moderate level
8. recognize and comprehend grade-level words rapidly and effortlessly.	2.95	Moderate level
Mean	2.88	Moderate level

The table presented the difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of fluency, revealing an overall mean of 2.88, interpreted as a "moderate level." More so, the least difficulty was identified in item 6, "identify some common sight words," with the lowest mean of 2.67, interpreted as "moderate level." In contrast, the most serious difficulty was found in items 3 ("express grade-level words, phrases, or sentences with appropriate speed, accuracy, and expression") and 4 ("read with proper phrasing and expression"), with the highest mean of 3.00, interpreted as "moderate level."

This implies that grade 1 teachers need to improve their teaching pedagogy, specifically teaching involving speed and accuracy with correct usage of punctuation functions, to improve the reading level of pupils. However, they could easily teach pupils to identify common sight words based on their grade level. This highlights the importance of fluency in beginning reading, which creates a link between word recognition and understanding. It gives pupils time to concentrate on the ideas presented in the text. They are able to draw connections between the information they are reading and what they already know. As such, students can concentrate on understanding.

This was anchored on the study of Silvano (2022), who states that, along with vocabulary, comprehension, and phonemic awareness, reading fluency is one of the essential core skills that must be cultivated to become successful in reading.

According to the study conducted in Zambia, students must reach a specific fluency level in order to succeed in their reading improvement for proficient reading. This could be accomplished using ORF assessment, which is a dependable method for assisting teachers in differentiating between fluent and non-fluent readers and providing guidance for instruction. Most students' low comprehension skills may result from teachers' failure to evaluate oral reading fluency and to provide clear directions for reading fluency. Thus, an all-encompassing reading curriculum must incorporate reading evaluations that gauge students' proficiency at the start of the course to assist educators in identifying the fluency teaching needed that best suits the needs and skills of the students. (Rasinski, 2004; Tindal et al., 2016).

Table 4
Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Vocabulary

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I have difficulties in teaching learners to:		
1. identify, give the meaning of, and use compound words in sentences.	3.05	Moderate level
2. identify the meaning of words through context clues.	2.87	Moderate level
3. identify and use synonyms and antonyms.	2.72	Moderate level
4. illustrate words to describe concrete experiences.	2.87	Moderate level
5. use new words learned through stories in your own speech.	2.95	Moderate level
6. apply words that are important to daily life, like names of persons, animals, things, places, and events	2.72	Moderate level
7. use familiar objects and events in both general and specific languages.	2.70	Moderate level
8. use words with different roles in sentences (for example, some words — nouns—name things and some words—pronouns— replace naming words)	3.02	Moderate level
Mean	2.86	Moderate level



The data on the difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in vocabulary revealed an overall mean of 2.86, interpreted as "moderate level." Moreover, the slightest difficulty in item 7 is "use familiar objects and events in both general and specific language," with the lowest mean of 2.70, interpreted as "moderate level." The highest difficulty on item 1 is "identify, give the meaning of, and use compound words in sentences," with the highest mean of 3.05, interpreted as "moderate level." This implies that grade 1 teachers commonly experienced difficulty in teaching, identifying and giving the meaning of, and using compound words in sentences, as this was dictated by their level of vocabulary skills, wherein the reading comprehension of pupils depends on vocabulary because most words in the text are meaningless to readers without a basic understanding of them. Teacher respondents find it easy to teach the use of familiar objects and events in both general and specific language. However, grade 1 teachers need to provide more activities and enhance their pedagogy in teaching vocabulary to improve children's skills in vocabulary. For students to communicate effectively, they need to know the meaning of the word.

This was anchored on the statement of Biermann, J. (2024), who states that compound words have a crucial role in enhancing your child's vocabulary and comprehension of language systems. Children learn to think critically and solve problems as they discover, build, and break down complex words. Children find it easier to recognize and understand new words when they can break down compound words into their individual components.

The of learning compound words in English teaching faces several challenges, including a lack of student motivation, insufficient time, and difficulty in recognizing specific learning problems. Students often perceive English as difficult due to its unique nature, leading to missed classes and less attentiveness. Insufficient time also contributes to the failure to develop lesson plans and recognize the challenges students face. To overcome these issues, teachers should use creativity, identify limitations, and work together to find solutions. Pratama et al., (2018).

Table 5
Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Comprehension

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I have difficulties in teaching learners to:</i>		
1. identify essential details in grade-level narrative.	3.02	Moderate level
2. organize the sequence of events in the story read.	3.00	Moderate level
3. predict the possible ending of the story	2.77	Moderate level
4. give a reaction to an event or issues listened to.	2.80	Moderate level
5. infer important details from informational texts.	2.97	Moderate level
6. present the relationship of events to one's experiences.	2.85	Moderate level
7. draw the cause and effect of events in the texts read.	2.87	Moderate level
8. use the problem and solution strategy in the text read.	2.90	Moderate level
Mean	2.90	Moderate level

The data on the level of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of comprehension revealed an overall mean of 2.90, interpreted as "moderate level." Moreover, the least difficulty was on item 3, "predict the possible ending of the story," with the lowest mean of 2.77, interpreted as "moderate level." The highest difficulty level was on item 1, "identify important details in grade-level narrative," with a mean of 3.02, interpreted as "moderate level."

This implied that first-grade teachers commonly have difficulty teaching their students to identify important details in a grade-level narrative. Word reading, or the ability to interpret the symbols on a page, and language comprehension, or the capacity to comprehend the meaning of words and sentences, are the two interrelated skills required to begin reading with comprehension. At the same time, grade 1 teachers find it easy to predict the possible ending of the story. However, they must develop students' comprehension abilities according to their grade level and ability to identify essential details in grade-level narratives. The capacity to read a text, comprehend its meaning, and process it is known as reading comprehension.

This was supported by Keyser, A. (2021), who states that. Comprehension is essential for academic, professional, and personal development. It links passive and active readers. It entails asking questions, envisioning, and comprehending context. Understanding requires reading fluency since word decoding errors might cause understanding to be lost. Strong reading comprehension abilities can be developed by concentrating on fundamental skills like visual perception, processing speed, auditory analysis, sound mixing, memory, and concentration. Academic achievement can be hampered by a child's lack of these skills.

Cubillas et al. (2023) state that teachers must increase and enhance their knowledge and skills in this area because some students struggle with reading comprehension. According to the World Bank report "Education in Indonesia: From Crisis to Recovery," Indonesian students' reading comprehension is appallingly inadequate. The



researchers concluded that the students' reading comprehension is still below average based on their observations made at school. The child's lack of interest in reading the book and the teacher's boring method of teaching reading were the causes of this. Due to this circumstance, the children were unable to understand the reading materials, which made it difficult for them to understand the reading content.

Table 6
Difference in the Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Phonemic Awareness when Grouped according to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	18	20.36	195.500	0.945	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	22	20.61				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	30	21.72	113.500	0.251	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	10	16.85				
Number of Literacy Trainings	Less	10	18.40	129.000	0.509	0.05	Not Significant
	More	30	21.20				
Length of Service	Shorter	19	19.71	184.500	0.683	0.05	Not Significant

Objective number 4 aimed to determine the significant difference in the level of difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading when grouped and compared to the variables. The difference in the level of difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of phonemic awareness when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables of age obtained a p-value of 0.945, highest educational attainment obtained 0.251, number of literacy trainings obtained 0.509, and length of service obtained 0.683, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in teachers' level of difficulties in teaching beginning reading in the area of phonemic awareness when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, literacy training, and length of service is accepted.

This implied that the level of difficulty of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of phonics awareness, when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, literacy training, and length of service, has insufficient data to rule out the null hypothesis and come to the conclusion that the groups are not the same. This does not imply that the groups share the same characteristics.

Consistent with earlier research that found no relationship between teaching performance and age or the duration of the teaching service time (Fauziah et al., 2019; Palar, et. al., 2011; Pome and Feri 2018). In comparison to those who have only recently started working, those with a longer work history will be more skilled (Pome and Feri 2018). But as they get older, their performance will deteriorate as well (Robbins & Judge, 2014). People lose some of their ability, endurance, and memorization as they age. Their quality won't increase without the tools of self-development gained via experiences, education, and training.

Table 7
Difference in the Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Phonics when Grouped according to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	18	21.25	184.500	0.712	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	22	19.89				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	30	21.67	115.000	0.272	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	10	17.00				



Number of Literacy Trainings	Less	10	19.20	137.000	0.683	Not Significant
	More	30	20.93			
Length of Service	Shorter	19	20.66	196.500	0.935	Not Significant
	Longer	21	20.36			

The difference in the level of difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of phonics when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables of age obtained a p -value of 0.712, whereas according to highest educational attainment obtained a p -value of 0.272. However, the number of literacy trainings obtained a p -value of 0.683, and the length of service obtained 0.935, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis states that there is no significance in the level of difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of phonics when grouped and compared according to the variables of age, highest educational attainment, number of literacy trainings, and length of service.

This implied that the aforementioned variables do not affect the level of difficulty of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of phonics when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, number of literacy trainings, and length of service.

This was supported by other research, however, which noted a variety of variables that characterized the efficacy and skills of the teachers and resulted in a distinct teaching performance. Less experienced teachers are not always ineffective at any stage of their teaching careers, and vice versa (Kanto, et al., 2020; Kini and Podolsky, 2016; Nuraini et al., 2019). Beyond the first few years, observable teacher traits like education and experience do not seem to be associated with increased output.

Table 8
Difference in the Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Fluency when Grouped according to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	18	21.06	188.000	0.785		Not Significant
	Older	22	20.05				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	30	20.40	147.000	0.925	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	10	20.80				
Number of Literacy Trainings	Less	10	17.60	121.000	0.363		Not Significant
	More	30	21.47				
Length of Service	Shorter	19	19.63	183.000	0.654		Not Significant
	Longer	21	21.29				

The difference in the level of difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of fluency when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables of age obtained a p -value of 0.785, whereas according to highest educational attainment obtained a p -value of 0.925, the number of literacy trainings obtained a p -value of 0.363, and the length of service obtained a p -value of 0.654, which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis states that there is no significance in the level of difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of fluency when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables of age, highest educational attainment, number of literacy trainings, and length of service.

This implied that the aforementioned variables do not affect the level of difficulty of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of fluency when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, number of literacy trainings, and length of service.

This was supported by the study of Vanderstel (2014), demographics, including socioeconomic status, family structure, education level, culture, technology usage, transience, race, spirituality, and crime rate, significantly



impact a student's daily life and character. Teachers must understand these factors to teach students at their highest potential and develop further within the classroom.

According to the results of the current study in the Turkish Journal, teachers who work longer hours become less honest and receptive to new ideas. Among other things, teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience place a higher priority on feeling accomplished than do those with 6 to 15 years and those with 16 years or more. One could argue that the feeling of success stems from being receptive to new experiences (NieU & Zacher, 2015); however, this seems to wane with time.

Table 9

Difference in the Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Vocabulary when Grouped according to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	18	20.39	196.000	0.957		Not Significant
	Older	22	20.59				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	30	21.05	133.500	0.605	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	10	18.85				
Number of Literacy Trainings	Less	10	17.80	123.000	0.398		Not Significant
	More	30	21.40				
Length of Service	Shorter	19	18.74	166.000	0.363		Not Significant
	Longer	21	22.10				

The difference in the level of difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of vocabulary when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables of age obtained a *p*-value of 0.957, whereas according to highest educational attainment obtained a *p*-value of 0.605, while number of literacy trainings obtained a *p*-value of 0.398 and length of service obtained 0.363, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis states that there is no significance in the level of difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of vocabulary when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment. The number of literacy trainings and length of service are accepted.

This implied that age, highest educational attainment, number of literacy trainings, and length of service do not affect the level of difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of vocabulary.

This was supported by the study of Mockler (2020), The results of this study indicate that while beginning teachers are performing on par with or even better than more experienced educators, overall teaching standards may be higher. Better professional development and support are therefore required to raise the standard of instruction for all teachers, not just those who are starting their careers. As an alternative to "formal, one-size-fits-all 'in-service' or conference-style" instruction.

Table 10

Difference in the Level of Difficulties of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Beginning Reading in Comprehension when Grouped according to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	18	21.47	180.500	0.633		Not Significant
	Older	22	19.70				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	30	21.22	128.500	0.501	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	10	18.35				
Number of	Less	10	21.45	140.500	0.766		Not Significant



Literacy Trainings	More	30	20.18			
	Shorter	19	19.26			
Length of Service	Longer	21	21.62	176.000	0.523	Not Significant

The difference in the level of difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in comprehension when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables of age obtained a p -value of 0.633, whereas according to highest educational attainment obtained a p -value of 0.501, while the number of literacy trainings obtained a p -value of 0.766 and a p -value of 0.523 for length of service, which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis states that there is no significance in the level of difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of comprehension when grouped and compared according to age; the highest educational attainment number of literacy trainings and length of service are accepted.

These were supported by consistent earlier research that found no relationship between teaching performance and age or the duration of the teaching service period (Fauziah, et al., 2019; Palar, et. al., 2011; Pome and Feri, 2018). In comparison to those who have only recently started working, those with a longer work history will be more skilled (Pome and Feri 2018). But as they get older, their performance will deteriorate as well (Robbins & Judge, 2014).

Conclusions:

In conclusion, the level of difficulties of Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading according to the area of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension are in moderate level. Also, there is no significant difference in the level of difficulties of grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading in the area of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension when grouped according to the aforementioned variables. Therefore, this study calls to improve reading comprehension in Grade 1 students, teachers differentiated instruction to address varying skill levels, built vocabulary gradually using engaging methods, and integrated decoding with comprehension activities. Then, to support their children's reading comprehension, parents established a daily reading routine, engaged in discussions about stories, built vocabulary through context, and created a reading-friendly environment. Next, teachers integrate effective strategies, including using visual and kinesthetic tools, modeling and practicing skills, integrating technology, and providing individualized support to improve the phonemic awareness skills of grade 1 learners. Lastly, it is recommended that schools should provide visual aids to enhance grade 1 learners' understanding and learning materials in performing hands-on activities that support interactive activities that can make learning more engaging and memorable and strengthen vocabulary.

Acknowledgment

If someone has accomplished their desired goals, they might be considered successful. Successful people consider success to be synonymous with wealth. However, success entails more than just wealth. Being wealthy cannot compare to the enormous happiness that comes from achieving your goals. One must work hard and have a strong sense of dedication in order to succeed in any area of life. Chances will present themselves, but you have to choose your route to achievement. You must overcome obstacles in order to succeed. Success is defined as achieving your goals and being content; it is a product of hard work; thus, this final book is presented. Let this acknowledgment be a testament of my thankfulness to the following people who in one way or another have contributed in making this study possible.

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