Research Article

Implementation of Phil-Iri Program and English Competence in Oral Reading of Grade 6 Pupils

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the implementation of the Phil-IRI Program and its impact on the English oral reading competence of Grade 6 pupils in public elementary schools in San Marcelino, Zambales, Philippines. Using a descriptive-correlational approach with 557 pupils and 26 teachers in the district of San Marcelino, Zambales, it assessed oral reading competence levels before and after the program's implementation. Results showed that most pupils were at the instructional level pre-implementation but demonstrated significant improvements post-implementation. The findings highlight the value of regular reading assessments and interventions in addressing reading comprehension challenges. The study recommends ongoing evaluation of reading programs and professional development for teachers to enhance literacy outcomes and instructional effectiveness.

Keywords: *Reading comprehension, Oral reading, English competence, San Marcelino, Zambales, Philippines*

Introduction

Reading comprehension is a critical skill essential for academic success and lifelong learning. While global studies emphasize the intricate balance between cognitive and social factors in literacy (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), comprehension challenges persist, particularly among students in disadvantaged settings. Countries with phonologically regular orthographies, like Italy, report low comprehension levels among younger readers despite improvements in decoding skills (Cecilia et al., 2014). However, these findings underline a key caution: decoding alone is insufficient for effective comprehension (Samuelson & Braten, 2005). This global understanding situates the Philippines' struggle with reading comprehension in a broader context, while pointing to the need for targeted interventions.

In the Philippines, reading comprehension issues are both a symptom and a driver of larger educational challenges. According to the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Philippines ranked the lowest in reading comprehension among 79 participating countries, with a score of 340.

This alarming result highlights systemic deficiencies in literacy education. Programs such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) were designed to address these issues by assessing students' oral and silent reading skills and implementing remedial interventions. Yet, despite such initiatives, many students in public schools continue to exhibit significant deficits in reading fluency and comprehension.

The persistence of these issues suggests a gap in understanding how the Phil-IRI Program is implemented and its actual impact on improving pupils' reading competence. While there is a wealth of international research on effective literacy interventions, localized studies that analyze the efficacy of structured programs like Phil-IRI are limited. Furthermore, most existing studies focus on broad literacy strategies rather than the specific factors affecting oral reading and comprehension in Filipino learners, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

This study is crucial in bridging this gap by examining the implementation of the Phil-IRI Program in the context of Grade 6 pupils in public schools in San Marcelino, Zambales. By evaluating the program's impact on oral reading competence, the study aims to provide a clearer understanding of its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. This localized approach can offer practical insights for educators and policymakers, enabling them to adapt the program to better meet the needs of Filipino learners.

Ultimately, addressing reading comprehension challenges in the Philippines is not merely an educational imperative but also a social and economic one. Low literacy rates are linked to poverty, limited employment opportunities, and social isolation (Bales, 2018; Gunn, 2018). By strengthening interventions like the Phil-IRI Program and understanding their outcomes, this study contributes to the broader goal of empowering Filipino learners, breaking cycles of poverty, and fostering equitable access to quality education.

Methods

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, using survey questionnaires and Phil-IRI materials to assess the implementation of the program and its impact on Grade 6 pupils' oral reading competence. This design allowed the researchers to describe existing reading levels and examine the relationship between the Phil-IRI Program and reading improvements. Descriptive research focuses on observing and interpreting current conditions, while the correlational component identifies associations between variables without manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach provided a holistic understanding of the program's execution and its effects, offering insights for enhancing reading interventions in Philippine public schools.

Participants

The participants of the study were Grade 6 teachers and pupils from 18 elementary schools in the District of San Marcelino, Division of Zambales. A total of 26 teachers and 557 pupils participated, with San Marcelino Elementary School contributing the largest number of respondents, comprising 11.54% of teachers and 28.55% of pupils. This was followed by Laoag Integrated School and San Guillermo Elementary School, which accounted for 7.69% of teachers each and 10.59% and 7.18% of pupils, respectively. Other schools, such as Linasin Elementary School, Pili Elementary School, and Nagbunga Elementary School, also contributed notable portions of the sample, ensuring a diverse representation of respondents. Smaller schools like the United Nation Women Aeta School and Sta. Fe (0-It) Elementary School added further variety to the dataset, reflecting the district's varied educational settings. This distribution allowed the study to capture a comprehensive view of the program's implementation and its impact on different school environments.

Instrument

The questionnaire used in the study was a researcher-made instrument designed to gather data from Grade 6 teachers. To ensure its validity and reliability, the instrument underwent expert review and pilot testing. Three education experts assessed its construct and content validity, ensuring that the items

accurately measured the intended variables. Based on their feedback, adjustments were made to improve clarity and alignment with the study's objectives. A pilot test was then conducted with five teachers not involved in the study to identify any issues with wording or structure. The responses from the pilot test were analyzed, and the instrument was revised accordingly. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using the pilot responses, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.949, indicating strong internal consistency. This process of expert review and pilot testing ensured that the questionnaire was both valid and reliable for the study.

Validation of the Instrument

The research instrument was validated through both construct and content validity to ensure its appropriateness for measuring the intended variables. Initially, the instrument underwent expert review, where three experts in the field of education were consulted to evaluate the consistency and relevance of the items for each variable. Their feedback helped refine and improve the instrument, ensuring that it accurately captured the concepts being studied. To further validate the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with five teachers who were not part of the study sample. These teachers completed the questionnaire, and their responses were used to assess the clarity, coherence, and practicality of the items. The responses from the pilot test were then analyzed, and the instrument was revised based on the feedback to ensure that it was well-understood by the target respondents. To establish the reliability of the instrument, the responses were subjected to a reliability test, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.949. This high alpha value indicated strong internal consistency, suggesting that the items on the questionnaire reliably measure the intended constructs. The process of expert reviews and pilot testing ensured that the instrument was both valid and reliable for the study. Table 1 shows Instrument Reliability Test Result.

Table 1. Reliability Test Result

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.949	11

Data Gathering Procedure

This study followed a systematic process in five phases. In Phase 1, the researcher developed and validated the research questionnaire. Phase 2 involved seeking permission and approval from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent and the principals of the involved schools to conduct the study. In Phase 3, the researcher secured parental consent for the pupil participants and assent from the teacher respondents to ensure ethical compliance. Phase 4 consisted of administering the survey questionnaire to the selected participants, while Phase 5 involved tallying, analyzing, and interpreting the gathered data. The sample size for the study was determined based on the total number of Grade 6 teachers and pupils in the District of San Marcelino, Zambales, with 26 teachers and 557 pupils selected as respondents, representing a diverse cross-section of the population across different schools. The sample size was deemed sufficient to provide a comprehensive and representative picture of the implementation of the Phil-IRI program and its impact on reading competence in the district.

Data Analysis

The gathered data were processed using MS Excel and SPSS software for analysis. To assess the extent of implementation of the Phil-IRI Program in English, a rating scale and verbal interpretation were applied. The statistical tools used for data analysis and hypothesis testing included Frequency and Percent Distribution, which helped determine the frequency counts and percent distribution of respondents' raw scores, and the Weighted/Arithmetic Mean, which was employed to calculate the average of the responses. These methods allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the data and helped interpret the results effectively. Table 2 shows the Rating Scale and Verbal Interpretation of Implementation of Phil – IRI Program.

Table 2. Rating Scale and Verbal Interpretation of Implementation of Phil – IRI Program

Rating Scale	Statistical Limits	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.51 – 4.00	Fully Implemented
3	2.51 – 3.50	Implemented
2	1.51 – 2.50	Partially Implemented
1	1.00 – 1.50	Not Implemented

The analysis also employed Standard Deviation to measure the spread of data and how far the observations deviate from the mean, with the square root of the variance used to calculate it. A T-Test was utilized to compare the means of the pre-test and post-test results of the pupil respondents, assessing the impact of the Phil-IRI Program in English. Additionally, Pearson r was applied to examine the correlation between teachers' readiness (TR) and students' analytical skills (AS), with the corresponding verbal interpretation provided for each statistical result. These tools facilitated a thorough examination of the data to draw meaningful conclusions. The verbal interpretation is shown below:

Table 3. Verbal Interpretation of the Computed Pearson Correlation Coefficient r

Pearson Correlation Coefficient r	Verbal Interpretation
±0.81 to ±1.00	Very High Correlation
±0.61 to ±0.80	High Correlation
±0.41 to ±0.60	Moderate Correlation
±0.21 to ±0.40	Low Correlation
0.00 to ±0.20	Slight Correlation

Source: Basic Statistics by Parreño and Jimenez

Results and Discussion
Profile of the Respondents

Sex: Of the 26 respondents, 20 (76.92%) were female, and 6 (23.09%) were male, indicating that the majority of teachers in San Marcelino District are female. This aligns with Pascual's (2018) finding that female teachers are the majority in the workforce.

Civil Status: The majority of the respondents, 22 (84.62%), were married, while 4 (15.38%) were single, showing that most teachers in the district are married.

Highest Educational Attainment: Most respondents, 19 (73.08%), had earned a master's degree. Three (11.54%) had completed a baccalaureate degree and earned master's units, two (7.69%) had only a baccalaureate degree, and two (7.69%) held a doctoral degree. This suggests that most teachers in the district are pursuing further education for professional advancement.

Major/Field of Specialization: The majority of teachers (53.85%) specialized in General Education, followed by 34.62% specializing in English. Other specializations included Educational Management, Pre-elementary, and Mathematics (3.85% each).

Teaching Position: Most respondents (30.77%) were Master Teacher I, with others holding positions such as Teacher III (26.92%), Master Teacher III (23.08%), Teacher II (11.54%), and Teacher I (7.39%), indicating a well-experienced teaching staff.

Number of Seminars Attended in Reading: The majority (65.38%) attended reading seminars for 1-3 years, with some attending for 4-6 years (15.38%). Only one teacher (3.85%) attended seminars for over 10 years, suggesting a solid background in reading instruction.

School	Teachers		Pupils	
	n	%	n	%
Aglao Elementary School	1	3.85	11	1.97
Baliwet Elementary School	1	3.85	8	1.44
Buhawen Elementary School	2	7.69	13	2.33
Chiang Chio Te Mem. Aeta School	1	3.85	6	1.08
Dalanawan Elementary School	1	3.85	6	1.08
Laoag Integrated School	2	7.69	59	10.59
Lawin Elementary School	1	3.85	12	2.15
Linasin Elementary School	2	7.69	37	6.64
Linusungan Elementary School	1	3.85	27	4.85
Nagbunga Elementary School	1	3.85	38	6.82
Pili Elementary School	2	7.69	47	8.44
Rabanes Elementary School	1	3.85	26	4.67
San Guillermo Elementary School	2	7.69	40	7.18
San Marcelino Elementary School	3	11.54	159	28.55
San Rafael Elementary School	1	3.85	42	7.54
Sta. Fe (0-It) Elementary School	1	3.85	5	0.90
Sta. Fe Elementary School	1	3.85	18	3.23
United Nation Women Aeta School	1	3.85	3	0.54
TOTAL	26	100	557	100

The demographic and professional data presented in the tables provide essential context for understanding the implementation of the Phil-IRI program in San Marcelino District. With 76.92% of teachers being female, this aligns with Pascual's (2018) observation of a predominantly female teaching workforce, which may influence dynamics in teaching and collaboration. The fact that 84.62% of respondents are married highlights potential personal responsibilities that could affect their availability for professional development. The high educational attainment, with 73.08% having earned a master's degree, suggests a well-educated teaching staff committed to professional growth, which is critical for the effective implementation of the Phil-IRI program. Additionally, 53.85% of teachers specialize in General Education, and 34.62% in English, underscoring their expertise in literacy instruction. The distribution of teaching positions, with many respondents holding higher positions such as Master Teacher I and Teacher III, indicates a wealth of experience, which is essential for successful program implementation. Furthermore, the majority of teachers (65.38%) have attended reading seminars for 1-3 years, reflecting a strong commitment to improving reading instruction. These factors collectively contribute to the teachers' ability to effectively implement the Phil-IRI program, which aims to improve students' oral reading skills.

Level of English competence in oral reading of the Grade six pupils before the implementation of Phil – IRI Program in English

The data reveals that the majority of students (38.42%) are at the instructional level, meaning they can read content that is appropriate for their grade independently, without significant difficulty. However, a substantial portion (33.75%) fall into the frustration level, indicating they struggle with reading and may even avoid it, which suggests the need for additional support to engage these students. Meanwhile, 27.83% of the pupils are at the independent level, demonstrating proficiency in reading without teacher assistance. These findings are essential as they align with the research objectives of assessing the initial reading competence of pupils and identifying areas that need improvement. The practical implications of these results are significant: improving oral reading competence not only enhances

fluency but also positively influences overall literacy, including comprehension, vocabulary development, and academic success. The Phil-IRI program's targeted approach can help elevate the reading proficiency of students, especially those at the frustration level, fostering better engagement and learning outcomes in other subjects as well. Table 4 shows the Level of English Level of English competence in oral reading of the Grade six pupils before the implementation of Phil – IRI Program in English.

Table 4. Level of English competence in oral reading of the Grade six pupils before the implementation of Phil – IRI Program in English

Comprehension Level	f	Percentage
Frustration	188	33.75
Instructional	214	38.42
Independent	155	27.83
TOTAL	**557**	**100**

The kids' reading ability was at an instructional level, according to Maranan (2021). The University of Utah (2001) defined instructional reading level as a level where students are not independent but have sufficient understanding for a topic and can access text rapidly and with no or few errors. As learning is necessary for acquiring knowledge, it is important to first understand how well the learners read. This can be done by completing reading inventories in the classroom. A learner's areas of strength and weakness can be determined with the help of the Filipino Informal Reading Inventory (Inding, 2020).

Extent of the Implementation of Phil –IRI Program in English

The Phil-IRI was created as a measuring tool to help teachers create effective reading programs and interventions by providing description and access to learners' reading performances (DepEd Order No. 14, 2018). The success of a reading inventory program's administration in schools determines how well it will be implemented. Table 5 shows the extent of the implementation of Phil – IRI Program in English.

Table 5. Extent of the Implementation of Phil – IRI Program in English

Item Statement	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Decide the reading program's current status.	3.50	0.51	Fully Implemented
2. Check to see if the actions are carried out according to plan.	3.50	0.71	Fully Implemented
3. Track the program's development from the beginning to the end.	3.35	0.49	Implemented
4. Report analysis relative to evaluation report	3.46	0.58	Implemented
5. After the reading session, orient the teachers.	3.42	0.58	Implemented
6. Determine the dangers associated with program implementation	3.19	0.40	Implemented
7. Identify strategies for the program's ongoing improvement.	3.35	0.63	Implemented
8. Discuss the reading program's development with stakeholders and teachers.	3.42	0.64	Implemented
9. Review the schedule of upcoming activities frequently.	3.58	0.51	Fully Implemented
10. Give regular and timely feedback on how intervention actions are doing.	3.38	0.57	Implemented

Item Statement	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
11. Determine the program implementation gaps	3.50	0.58	Implemented
OWM	**3.42**	**0.56**	**Implemented**

The table reveals that the implementation of the Phil-IRI Reading Program in English in the District of San Marcelino, Zambales is fairly robust, with an overall weighted mean (OWM) of 3.42. The program has been fully implemented, particularly in areas such as assessing the current status of the reading program (M=3.50), ensuring actions are carried out according to the plan (M=3.50), and regularly reviewing the schedule of upcoming activities (M=3.58). These results demonstrate that the schools in the district have made considerable efforts in organizing and planning the reading program to ensure its smooth execution.

Additionally, the data indicates that other important aspects of the Phil-IRI program have also been effectively implemented, such as analyzing evaluation reports (M=3.46), orienting teachers and stakeholders after each reading session to discuss the program's progress (M=3.42), and providing regular feedback on intervention actions (M=3.38). The program also tracks its development from start to finish and continually seeks strategies for improvement (M=3.35). However, some areas, such as determining the dangers associated with program implementation, received a slightly lower rating (M=3.19), suggesting there might be room for further attention to potential risks and challenges in the program's execution.

The importance of such programs cannot be overstated, as children who struggle with reading often face difficulties in other academic areas. Reading ability is closely linked to academic achievement, and as Balan et al. (2019) and Daniel et al. (2017) suggest, it plays a critical role in developing efficient study habits. The regular use of Informal Reading Inventories (IRIs) like Phil-IRI is particularly beneficial in improving the performance of struggling readers by gradually exposing them to more complex texts (Baldevarona, 2020). By assessing and addressing individual learners' reading challenges, the program helps teachers identify strengths and weaknesses, offering personalized intervention strategies to meet students'

needs (Inding, 2020; Jolejole-Caube et al., 2019). This approach fosters continuous improvement and measurable progress in reading skills, contributing to better overall literacy outcomes.

Level of English competence in oral reading of the Grade six pupils after the implementation of Phil – IRI Program in English

As shown from the table above, most of the Grade Six pupils belong to independent level (f=349) in oral reading after the implementation of the program. This means that 62.66% of the pupils are proficient in the subject matter, has sufficient previous knowledge, and can access text rapidly and with few errors. There are pupils who belong to instructional level (f=152), it implies that 27.29% of the pupils cannot access texts alone but has sufficient knowledge of the subject, can do it rapidly, and makes few or no mistakes While the rest of the respondents belong to frustration level (f=56), it shows that 10.05% of the pupils lack the necessary baseline knowledge for a subject and/or is unable to meet the accuracy and pace requirements for instruction.

On the basis of comprehension, reading fluency, and word recognition level, Domong-as and Doctor (2019) observed that using guided reading as a form of intervention enhances learner's reading skills from frustrating to instructive and advancing to independent level. An important role of a teacher is to guide the students by thoroughly educating them about their reading level, as well as their reading strengths and shortcomings (Trazo and Abocejo, 2019). Unquestionably, if students are aware of how well they read, the instruction will be much more successful.

Here, intervention programs can be implemented on an individual basis to meet the needs of students who struggle with reading or have reading issues (Saraspe and Abocejo, 2020). With the help of this, reading skills can improve as the development of the learners is assessed.

Significant Difference in English Competence in Oral Reading

The results indicate a significant improvement in English competence in oral reading after the implementation of the Phil-IRI Program, with pupils showing an increase in their comprehension from a pre-implementation mean score of 64.81 (SD=24.83) to a post-implementation mean of 79.81 (SD=19.07), t=-19.499, p<0.05. This demonstrates that the program had a positive impact on students' oral reading proficiency. Teachers can use the data from this evaluation to inform their instructional practices, ensuring that their approach to reading is learner-centered, adaptable, and culturally sensitive. This aligns with the work of Llego (2021), who emphasized that using data from programs like Phil-IRI allows school administrators to design targeted reading campaigns. Phil-IRI's success, as noted by Baldevarona (2020), lies in its ability to progressively improve struggling readers' abilities by exposing them to more challenging texts. The regular use of informal reading inventories (IRIs) helps teachers assess student progress and tailor their instruction to meet individual needs.

The effective implementation of reading programs in schools depends largely on the proficiency of the teachers. As Cabalo and Cabalo (2019) noted, the role of the teacher is crucial in enhancing students' reading performance. The success of reading programs like Phil-IRI is tied to how well teachers are able to apply the program's framework in their classrooms. With ongoing professional development and appropriate policy implementation, teachers can ensure that students develop strong reading skills. The data from the Phil-IRI assessments helps identify specific areas where students struggle, allowing for the development of individualized intervention strategies. As such, the sustained improvement of reading proficiency in students relies on the continuous support of both teachers and school administrators.

The lack of a significant correlation in the study could be attributed to several external factors and limitations in the implementation of the Phil-IRI Program. Variations in students' initial reading levels, learning environments, and personal circumstances may have led to different responses to the program, with some students facing challenges outside of the classroom that hindered their progress. Additionally, inconsistencies in the program's implementation across schools, such as variations in teacher training, time allocated for the program, and fidelity to its structure, may have impacted its effectiveness. Inadequate follow-up and feedback could have further limited the program's ability to adjust to students' needs, while the program's duration may have been too short to yield significant long-term results. These factors suggest that refining the program's implementation, ensuring consistent support, and providing more time for its integration could improve its effectiveness and lead to more meaningful outcomes.

Significant Relationship between Program Implementation and English Competence in Oral Reading

The significant relationship between program implementation and English competence in Oral Reading is presented in Table 6.

Variables		English Competence
Reading Program Implementation	Pearson Correlation	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.550

The table shows no statistically significant correlation between reading program implementation and English competence in Oral Reading. Although non-significant, it can be noted that reading program implementation showed a positive relationship with English competence in Oral Reading. Further study may be conducted to explore more on this area.

The Phil-IRI was created as a tool to help teachers build suitable reading programs and interventions by providing a description and access to learners' reading performances (De-

pEd Order No. 14, 2018). The successful administration of a reading inventory program in schools is critical to its effective implementation. However, difficulties have arisen as the implementation process continues. Despite efforts to provide a complete and thorough reading-based program, external variables continue to have a significant impact on students' preparedness and enthusiasm to engage in reading activities. Recamara (2018) stated that one of the team members who designed the Phil-IRI testing tool discovered that teachers mostly utilize the reading tool as a diagnostic test for documentation. Despite the stated reading challenges and difficulties, no follow-up strategy or extra reading has been implemented. Rivera and Aggabao (2020) stated that teachers must not only identify students who are struggling with reading, but they must also devise the most appropriate reading remediation, which means that they must find a solution after discovering their students' reading weaknesses. Recamara (2018) stated that one of the team members who developed the Phil-IRI testing tool discovered that teachers mostly utilize the reading tool as a diagnostic exam for documentation purposes.

The absence of a significant correlation between the reading program implementation and English competence in Oral Reading can be attributed to several external factors and limitations in the program's execution. Despite the positive relationship observed, it is possible that the lack of follow-up interventions or remedial actions after the initial diagnostic assessments hindered students' progress. As Recamara (2018) highlighted, teachers often use the Phil-IRI primarily as a diagnostic tool for documentation rather than as a means to implement ongoing, targeted interventions. This limited application reduces the program's potential effectiveness in fostering significant improvements in students' reading abilities. Furthermore, external variables such as students' socio-economic background, home environment, and other learning barriers may have also influenced their readiness and enthusiasm for engaging in reading activities, affecting their overall progress. Additionally, the variability in program implementation, including inconsistent teacher training, limited time dedicated to the program, and lack of systematic feedback or follow-up, may have contributed to the lack of a significant correlation. To improve the program's impact, future studies should focus on ensuring more comprehensive teacher support, consistent implementation across schools, and the incorporation of follow-up strategies and interventions tailored to students' specific needs.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that most of the respondents were female, married teachers who had earned their master's degree and specialized in General Education, with the majority holding positions as Master Teacher I and attending seminars on reading for 1 to 3 years. The Grade Six pupils were initially at the instructional oral reading level before the implementation of the Phil-IRI Reading Program. Following the program's implementation, the pupils progressed to the independent oral reading level. The Phil-IRI Reading Program in English was effectively implemented in schools in the District of San Marcelino, Zambales, leading to a significant improvement in the pupils' English competence in oral reading. However, despite this improvement, the study found no statistically significant correlation between the reading program implementation and the pupils' English competence in oral reading.

Acknowledgement

which inspired both faculty and students to aim higher and achieve better outcomes.

Ferdinand V. Tamoria, PhD., Guillermo O. Andres, MBA., and Michael G. Albino, MIT., the panel during the researcher's oral defense, for their comprehensive evaluation of the manuscript and constructive suggestions and criticisms which led to this paper.

Schools Division Office of Zambales, for granting the researcher permission to conduct study and administer questionnaire to the teachers and learners of San Marcelino District.

President Ramon Magsaysay State University, for giving the researcher quality education, along with the honed wisdom and values to make appropriate decisions for the realization of this study.

To all her MAED professors, classmates, and all the graduate school staff who have endowed knowledge and learnings to the researcher as well as provided assistance during the whole time of this study.

To her School Head, Ronilo R. Lara, and to all his colleagues for their support, guidance, and understanding during the completion of this paper.

To all School Heads, Head Teachers, Grade Six Teachers and learners of San Marcelino District, for the support, motivation and dauntlessly responding with my survey questions, to which from them we obtained our essential data necessary for my study.

To her Parents, Richard and Rebecca, and her brother, Enricho Sean, for their undying love and support and compassionate encouragement to complete this paper. And to strive hardest to reach my aspiration; to be proud and continue shinning and become an inspiration to others.

To her Husband, Daniel, and son, Daniel Lourich Jr., for their immeasurable love and support and serving as the researcher's primary reason to continue and be better.

Above all, to the Almighty God, thank You for the guidance, strength, power of mind, protection, and skills and for giving me a healthy life. All of these, I offer to You.

U.L.P

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