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**Research Article**

# Difficulties Encountered and Coping Management of the ARAL Tutors of Key Stage 1 Learners in the Implementation of the ARAL Reading Program in the Schools Division of Zambales

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**ABSTRACT**

The effectiveness of literacy recovery programs lies in the way tutors respond to issues of instructions, organizing features, and learners. However, there is scant empirical evidence that ARAL tutors have been spared from implementation tasks, especially in the public schools implementing the ARAL Reading Program in the primary grades. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the demographic profile of ARAL tutors, difficulties and coping management in implementing ARAL Reading Program, differences of difficulties and coping management to be implemented when grouped according to respondents, the relationship between difficulties and coping management in implementing ARAL Reading Program, and enhancement program for Key Stage 1 learners in the Schools Division of Zambales. The findings emphasize the need for all-around institutional support such as provision of additional resources, in-service training and professional development, alleviation from workload, attendance of learners, collegial mentoring, and/or contextualized creativity in teaching. The efforts, therefore, involve designing/adopting the evidence-based Program ARISE for quality practice for enhanced performance of tutors and sustainable literate recovery based on interschool and interdivisional cooperation.

***Keywords****: ARAL Reading Program, Coping Management, Instructional Challenges, Learner Interest, Program ARISE, Tutor Preparedness, Tutor Workload*

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## Introduction

Reading is a key ability and an important basis for learning, especially for Key Stage 1 (Grade 1-3) learners. Reading struggles are also affecting the other subjects for the students. Studies show that introducing learners to literature and the right pedagogy early on is an opportunity for them to be able to read (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2020).

Reading remains a problem for young students in the Philippines. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) have reported learners who find it challenging to read fluently, to decode, and to understand the texts. These require extended reading interventions, sufficient learning materials, and facilitation. Republic Act No. 12028 ordered ARAL Program while DepEd Memo No. 064 s. 2025 ordered DepEd to implement fully said program. In the Schools Division of Zambales, ARAL Reading Program teachers do supplementary reading intervention on top of their usual teaching to Key Stage 1 learners. However, different reading level, lack of teaching resources, lack of time for tutoring, and student engagement may influence the implementation of reading interventions.

While prior studies were done on reading issues and literacy solutions, little research has explored the ARAL tutors' experiences and the problems and techniques in operating the program. Similarly, little local evidence of such experiences in the Schools Division of Zambales is also lacking and hence requires additional examination.

Therefore, this study aimed to assess the problems and coping methods experienced by ARAL Tutors of Key Stage 1 Learners in the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program in the Schools Division of Zambales. The results may help improve the implementation of the curriculum and assist the tutors and reading interventions to the learners.

## Statement of the Problem

This study determined the difficulties encountered and the coping management of the ARAL tutors of Key Stage 1 learners in the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program in the Schools Division of Zambales. The findings of this study would also serve as a basis for developing a program to effectively implement ARAL Reading program.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. How may the difficulties encountered by ARAL Tutors in the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program be described in terms of:
   1.1 Instructional Materials;
   1.2 Workload;
   1.3 Tutor Preparedness; and
   1.4 Learners' Interest?
2. How are the coping management utilized by the ARAL Tutors to address difficulties in the implementation of the Reading Program be described as to:
   2.1 Instructional Materials;
   2.2 Workload;
   2.3 Tutor Preparedness; and
   2.4 Learners' Interest?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the different types of difficulties encountered by ARAL Tutors in implementing ARAL Reading Program and their coping management?
4. What program can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study was grounded in three complimentary theories: Social Cognitive Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory (Bandura, Albert, 1986; Piaget, Jean, 1952) and Transactional Theory of Reading (Rosenblatt, Louise, 1978, 1994; Vygotsky, Lev, 1978). These theories provide a holistic view on the difficulties of ARAL tutors and coping management, and the successful execution of ARAL Reading Program.

Bandura's (1986) SCT (Social Cognitive Theory) views learning through observation, modeling, personal variables, behavior, and environment. The theory's key premise, self-efficacy, refers to the beliefs of a person about his/her ability to accomplish effectively certain tasks. Self-confidence, the ability to teach, and the supportive environment affect the processes of coping by the tutors of the ARAL Reading Program. Through observation and modeling, tutors learn excellent instructional

strategies to cope with problems and enhance student participation.

The constructivism theory was created by Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978) and emphasized learning as an active process in which constructive information results from experiences and social interaction. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development emphasizes the role of guiding and scaffolding in learning. In ARAL Reading Program, tutors fast-track reading using learner-based activities, formative assessment, guided reading, and collaboration to meet varying learners' reading ability.

The Transactional Theory of Reading (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1994) posits that reading is an active transaction between the reader and the text, in which the meaning is derived from the reader's experiences, background knowledge, and emotions. ARAL Reading Program instructors foster the connections of the texts with the readers' experience through reflection, conversation, and culturally responsive texts. These tactics boost reading comprehension, motivation, and engagement.

In general, these theories account for the tutors' self-efficacy, teaching strategies, and student-centered reading in handling problems encountered in the ARAL Reading Program. They give a theoretical framework for studying the issues encountered by ARAL tutors and the strategies they adopt to deliver effective reading education.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptualization of this study was done in the Input-Process-Output Model (IPO). Figure 1. Research paradigm on the difficulties encountered and coping management of ARAL tutors of Key Stage 1 learners in the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program. It contains the personal and professional characteristics of the tutors (sex, age, educational achievement, teaching experience, and number of ARAL classes handled). An issue on instructional materials, workload, tutor readiness, and interest of learners. It is based on the DepEd Memorandum No. 064, s. 2025 and Republic Act No. 12028 policies and recommendations in addressing the learning gap and in enhancing basic reading abilities. Data gathering by survey questions and interview clarifications and data processing using an appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical technique in interpreting the results.

The result is the proposed PROJECT ARISE (ARAL Reading Intervention Support and Enhancement Program) for the better implementation of the ARAL Reading Program through teacher training, instructional support, partnership synergies, and monitoring and evaluation.

## Materials and Methods

In this study, the research design was descriptive and systematically and correctly describes events as they are in the natural setting without any manipulation of variables or any cause-and-effects relationship (McCombes, 2023). It is appropriate in educational research as it describes existing situations, practices, experiences, and perspectives measured using systematic data collection approaches such as questionnaires and surveys and analyzed using descriptive statistical measures such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores (Cohen 2021; Enago Academy 2021).

## Respondents and Location

It was conducted in selected public elementary schools of the Schools Division of Zambales. It aimed particularly at ARAL Tutors of Key Stage 1 learners (Grades 1-3) in the execution of ARAL Reading Program in SY 2025-2026. The respondents were the ARAL Tutors of Key Stage 1 learners together with their usual teaching loads and were identified by their individual School Heads. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used, whereby the respondents were picked purposively due to their attributes that were relevant to the objectives of the study. This sample method was acceptable since they were the tutors who implemented the ARAL Reading Program and were first-hand readers in giving reading intervention to the Key Stage 1 learners. Their experiential perspectives would help the researchers attempt to derive meaningful information on challenges faced and coping management strategies adopted in implementing the program.

The study involved 122 ARAL Tutors from selected public elementary schools using the

ARAL Reading Program for Key Stage 1 learners. The respondents were distributed in the several schools according to the actual number of ARAL Tutors assigned to and handling ARAL reading classes for the duration of the school year. This responsive distribution tapped distinct experiences in the implementation as mediated by these different settings of schools such as size and number of learners that they serve and resources for the implementation. It also collaborated with the school heads and ARAL coordinators to check the count and eligibility of the respondent and their actual participation. The respondents' own experiences contained pertinent information in expressing the problems faced and coping management done in the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program of the location of study.

## Instrument

Data were collected using the researcher-made questionnaire except for the demographic and related information on the obstacles and coping methods of ARAL tutors in the implementation of ARAL Reading Program. Its preparation was based on the provisions of Republic Act No. 12028, DepEd Memorandum No. 064, s. 2025, the aims of the present study, conceptual framework, and real experiences of the ARAL tutors in the Schools Division of Zambales. Content validity was established by experts in terms of the relevance, clarity, appropriateness, and conformity of the items to the aims of the study. Suggestions for modifications were implemented. Pilot testing was undertaken among nonrespondent ARAL teachers to eliminate unclear/redundant items and to test comprehensibility. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with $\alpha \geq 0.70$ regarded satisfactory. Difficulties and coping were measured on a 4-point (Strongly Agree) to 1-point (Strongly Disagree) Likert-type scale. The mean scores were interpreted as follows: 3.26–4.00 (Highly Evident); 2.51–3.25 (Moderately Evident); 1.76–2.50 (Slightly Evident); and 1.00–1.75 (Not Evident). Relationship between problems and coping methods was determined by the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r), interpreted as 0.00–0.19 (very weak), 0.20–0.39 (weak), 0.40–0.59 (moderate), 0.60–0.79 (strong), and 0.80–1.00 (very strong). Significance was set at 0.05 and considered significant if $p \leq 0.05$ (indicating rejection of null hypothesis) and nonsignificant if $p > 0.05$ (indicating failure to reject the null hypothesis).

The ethical considerations involved voluntary involvement, confidentiality, anonymity, scholarly utilization of data, and informed consent. The instrument was validated by experts, piloted, and its dependability was assessed to determine its suitability in generating relevant reliable data to improve ARAL Reading Program implementations.

## Data Collection

The researcher sought permission from Schools Division Office of Zambales and the school heads where the study was conducted. Formal requesting letter describing the purpose, respondents, and significance of the study. The researcher also consulted the school principals and ARAL coordinators to identify the qualified respondents and to schedule the collection of data.
The researcher requested the list of qualified ARAL tutors from the Division and validated the list according to the parameters of the study. The respondents must have been ARAL tutors for at least a semester and must be implementing the program during the study. Respondents required to be directly involved in the ARAL Reading Program and/or have taught ARAL classes at school throughout the school year; respondents who were neither directly involved in nor taught ARAL programs at school were excluded from this study.

## Data Analysis

Data were processed, analyzed, and interpreted by using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. Frequency distribution was used in computing the frequency counts and percentage distribution of the personal and professional profile variables of the respondents. Mean was used to determine the extent of difficulties on instructional materials, workload, preparation of ARAL tutors, and interest of learners and the extent of coping management in implementing the ARAL Reading Program. Additionally, a

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was employed to determine a significant association of the challenges encountered by ARAL tutors and the coping management of ARAL tutors in the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program. This statistical tool established the degree and direction of the linear relationship between the two variables.

## Results and Discussion

### *Perceived Difficulties Encountered by ARAL Tutors in the Implementation of the ARAL Reading Program*

Table 1 shows the summary on the perceived difficulties encountered by ARAL tutors in the implementation of the ARAL reading program.

*Table 1. Perceived Difficulties Encountered by ARAL Tutors in the Inplementation of the ARAL Reading Program*

| | Dimensions | Overall Weighted Mean | Descriptive Equivalent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Instructional Materials | 2.92 | Agree that there is a Challenge |
| 2 | Workload | 2.97 | Agree that there is a Challenge |
| 3 | Tutor Preparedness | 2.81 | Agree that there is a Challenge |
| 4 | Learners' Interest | 3.15 | Agree that there is a Challenge |
| | **Grand Mean** | **2.96** | **Agree that there is a Challenge** |

Table 1 shows that the most challenging to ARAL tutors were the interest of the learners (M = 3.15, Rank 1), followed by workload (M = 2.97), instructional materials (M = 2.92), and tutor preparation (M = 2.81). A composite mean of 2.96 indicates that the respondents acknowledged that they encountered obstacles in the implementation of ARAL Reading Program in Schools Division of Zambales. The top-rated learner's interest underscores a challenge in the translation of interest and the implication of the struggling readers. This is in line with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory where motivation and self-efficacy count on learning and with Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory that underlines meaningfulization between the reader and texts. Environmental and pedagogical issues included workload and instructional materials, although tutor preparedness was a minor issue. These results also share similarities with the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky emphasizing developmentally appropriate education, guided learning, and scaffolding. zsIn fact, these findings strengthen the reading intervention programs by emphasizing learner engagement, appropriate instructional materials, appropriate level of workload, adaptive instructional strategies, and prepared tutors, as highlighted by Tolentin (2023), De Ocampo, et al. (2024), Heraña & Azarias (2024), and Soria (2024).

### *Perceived Coping Management Utilized by ARAL Tutors in Adressing Difficulties in the Implementation of the ARAL Reading Program*

*Table 2. Perceived Coping Management Utilized by ARAL Tutors in Adressing Difficulties in the Implementation of the ARAL Reading Program*

| | Dimensions | Overall Weighted Mean | Descriptive Equivalent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Instructional Materials | 3.21 | Agree |
| 2 | Workload | 3.26 | Strongly Agree |
| 3 | Tutor Preparedness | 3.34 | Strongly Agree |
| 4 | Learners' Interest | 3.42 | Strongly Agree |
| | **Grand Mean** | **3.31** | **Strongly Agree** |

As can be shown in Table 2, ARAL instructors firmly agreed that they used coping methods in delivering the ARAL Reading Program (M = 3.31). In the first strategy, this was followed by readiness of tutors (M = 3.34), workload (M = 3.26), and teaching materials (M =

3.21). A consideration of the above findings indicates that instructors emphasized interest, preparedness, and workload while resolving implementation issues. The high rating of learner interest is reflective of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of interest, efficacy, and learning and Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory that relies on meaningful reader-text interrelationships. The rating for tutor preparedness and instructional adaptation also backs Piaget and Vygotsky's theories focusing on developmentally appropriate instruction catering to guided learning and scaffolding. The little lower score on teaching materials reflects the continuing need for proper institutional support and availability of reading materials. These findings are in line with Aguirre (2024), Heraña and Azarias (2024), Requilme (2024), and Olvido et al. (2024), who underscored responsive teaching practices, contextualized materials, learner involvement, and professional development in enhancing reading intervention programs.

***Test of Relationship between the Difficulties Encountered by ARAL Tutors in Implementing ARAL Reading Program and their Coping Management***

*Table 3. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation to test Relationship between the Difficulties Encountered by ARAL Tutors in Implementing ARAL Reading Program and their Coping Management*

| Sources of Correlations | | Difficulties Encountered | Coping Management | Decision/ Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Difficulties Encountered** | Pearson Correlation | 1 | 0.198* | **Very Low Positive Correlation (Ho is Rejected)** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.029 | |
| | N | 122 | 122 | |
| **Coping Management** | Pearson Correlation | 0.198* | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.029 | | |
| | N | 122 | 122 | |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

These results showed a weak non-significant positive correlation between the obstacles faced by ARAL teachers and their coping methods ($r = 0.198$, $p = 0.029$). Since $p < 0.05$ (the level of significance), the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, higher obstacles were weakly related to stronger coping attempts. This study aligns with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and illuminate's challenges and coping further by suggesting that people modulate their behavior toward their obstacles in their environment. In addition, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory advocates collaboration and social support, Rosenblatt's transactional theory focuses on meaningful interaction of the readers/texts. From these views, the conclusion may be drawn that tutors would be able to deal with implementation constraints through pedagogical flexibility, involvement of learners, and mutual assistance. However, the small link suggests that obstacles alone are not enough to explain the teachers' coping. However, other elements potentially affecting coping pooling were not specifically addressed such as administrative support, the availability of learning materials, cooperativeness of parents, and professional growth. The results are consistent with Baluyot (2026), Carreon et al. (2026), Bisayam and Pagnas (2026), Requilme (2024), and Tolentin (2023) that reading intervention programs are strengthened by instructional adaptability, teamwork, proper resources, and institutional support.

*Table 4. Program ARISE: ARAL Reading Intervention Support and Enhancement Program*

| Key Area | Objective | Specific Program | Success Indicator | Time Frame |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learners' Interest and Engagement | Increase learners' participation, attendance, and motivation in the | Project READ+ (Reading Engage- | Increased learner attendance, active participation, improved reading perfor- | Whole School Year |

| Key Area | Objective | Specific Program | Success Indicator | Time Frame |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ARAL Reading Program. | ment through Attendance and Development Plus). | mance, and reduced absenteeism during ARAL sessions | |
| Instructional Materials Development | Improve the availability and quality of contextualized ARAL reading materials. | Project READ Resource Hub | Functional repository of validated reading materials, increased utilization of localized materials, reduced shortage of instructional resources | First Semester with continuous updating |
| Tutor Preparedness | Strengthen tutors' competence in implementing evidence based reading interventions. | ARAL Tutor Capability Enhancement Program | Increased instructional competence, improved implementation fidelity, enhanced tutor confidence, and successful classroom observations | Quarterly |
| Workload Management | Reduce workload related stress while maintaining quality implementation of the ARAL Reading Program. | Project BALANCE (Balanced Academic Load through Administrative and Collaborative Engagement) | Improved work life balance, timely submission of reports, increased teacher satisfaction, reduced workload related concerns | Whole School Year |

Project ARISE (ARAL Reading Intervention Support and Enhancement Program) shall be systematically conducted in collaboration with due application of evidential approach to enhance the ARAL Reading program of the learners in the Key Stage 1. The program shall be guided by the four operational characteristics indicated from the study, which included learners' interest, instructional materials, tutors' preparedness, and workload management. The four components must be Project READ+, ARAL Reading Resource Hub, Project BALANCE (Breaking Overload and Lestering Away by Nurturing & Caring of Everybody), and ARAL Tutor Empowerment Program.

Project READ+ (Reading Engagement through Attendance and Development Plus) is the first component that will address the problem of student interest and engagement. It will feature reading camps, storytelling, peer-assisted reading, reading games, learner recognition, and parent engagement activities. These activities shall boost attendance and reading interventions as well as encourage and practice.

The second is the ARAL Reading Resource Hub would address the reading materials/journal concerns. It shall enhance the development, localization, validation, duplication, digitalization, and sharing of quality reading resources. This repository shall contain local stories, leveled reading passages, understanding activities, and stories with QR codes and other print and digital reading materials which tutors may access depending on the reading needs of the learners.

The ARAL Tutor Capability Enhancement Program will enhance tutor preparedness through professional development and technical assistance. Training, coaching, mentorship, demonstration teaching, Learning Action Cell sessions, collaborative lesson planning, and classroom observation with feedback shall enhance tutors' instructional competence, confidence, and use of appropriate reading strategies.

The fourth component, Project BALANCE (Balanced Academic Load through Administrative and Collaborative Engagement), shall address the workload problems of the ARAL tutors. It shall facilitate smooth scheduling, collaborative planning of lessons and resources, ease of record keeping, standardization of report forms, and equitable comparting of workload. School administrators shall give enough time and coordination between tutors to conduct ARALs and instructional duties. Monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance shall be conducted on the four components. The effectiveness of the program shall be measured

by learner attendance and involvement, reading progress, use of instructional resources, tutor development, and feedback on workload. Monitoring and evaluation findings will be shared for program adjustments and enhancements.

In this regard, Project ARISE shall offer a comprehensive support system to ARAL tutor challenges and to improving reading interventions to Key Stage 1 learners through the joint implementation of Project READ+ and the ARAL Reading Resource Hub, the ARAL Tutor Capability Enhancement Program and Project BALANCE.

## Conclusion

Based on the foregoing results of the study, the researcher concluded that:

1. The ARAL -respondents agreed that there were difficulties in the implementation of the ARAL reading program in terms of learners' interest, followed by workload, instructional materials and least on tutor preparedness they however strongly agreed the coping management they utilized in addressing difficulties in the implementation of the ARAL reading program in terms of learners' interest, followed by tutor preparedness, workload; while they agreed on the aspect of instructional materials.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of ARAL tutor-respondents on the difficulties they encountered in the implementation of the ARAL reading program in terms of instructional materials, workload, tutor preparedness, and learners' interest when they are grouped according to sex, age, highest educational attainment, length of teaching experience, and number of key stage 1 ARAL reading program classes handled.
3. There is very low positive correlation between the difficulties encountered by ARAL tutors in implementing ARAL reading program and their coping management.
4. The proposed program was derived to strengthen the effective implementation of the ARAL Reading Program among Key Stage 1 learners.

## Recommendation

In view of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommended.

1. The Schools Division Office, in collaboration with school administrators and curriculum implementers, may establish a centralized ARAL Reading Resource Hub that can intensify the development, reproduction, localization, and equitable distribution of printed and digital reading materials.
2. School administrators may implement a balanced workload management plan that may strengthen teacher wellness initiatives, collaborative task sharing, and flexible scheduling to reduce work related fatigue while sustaining the quality of ARAL Reading Program implementation.
3. The Schools Division Office may provide continuous capability building programs, mentoring, coaching, demonstration teaching, and Learning Action Cell sessions that can enhance tutors' competence and confidence in delivering evidence based structured reading interventions.
4. Schools may strengthen partnerships with parents, guardians, and community stakeholders and can implement attendance monitoring, home visitation, learner recognition, and motivational reading activities to encourage regular participation and improve learners' continuity in the ARAL Reading Program.
5. ARAL tutors may collaborate with fellow teachers and curriculum specialists in developing localized and contextualized reading materials that can make reading activities more meaningful, culturally relevant, and responsive to learners' needs.
6. ARAL tutors may adopt competency based instructional planning and can focus on the most essential foundational reading skills to maximize learning outcomes within the available intervention time.
7. School heads may encourage collaborative lesson planning sessions and can provide standardized ARAL lesson plan templates to help tutors prepare organized and efficient instructional activities before each intervention session.

8. School administrators may institutionalize mentoring and coaching programs where experienced teachers can provide technical assistance, instructional guidance, and practical recommendations to support ARAL tutors in addressing implementation difficulties
9. ARAL tutors may implement simple learner recognition activities and can regularly acknowledge learners' reading progress through certificates, praise, progress charts, or other positive reinforcement strategies that encourage continuous participation and confidence.
10. ARAL tutors may diversify instructional strategies by incorporating interactive, differentiated, and learner centered reading activities that can sustain learners' motivation, active participation, and interest throughout the implementation of the ARAL Reading Program.
11. The developed program to strengthen the effective implementation of the ARAL Reading Program among Key Stage 1 learners in the Schools Division of Zambales may be reviewed and critiqued for future adoption, with due consideration given to the provision of a dedicated budget allocation to support its implementation, sustainability, and continuous improvement.
12. Further studies in determining the difficulties encountered and coping management of the ARAL tutors of key stage 1 learners in the implementation of ARAL reading program in the Schools Division of Zambales may be conducted involving other variables to further validate results obtained from this study.

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