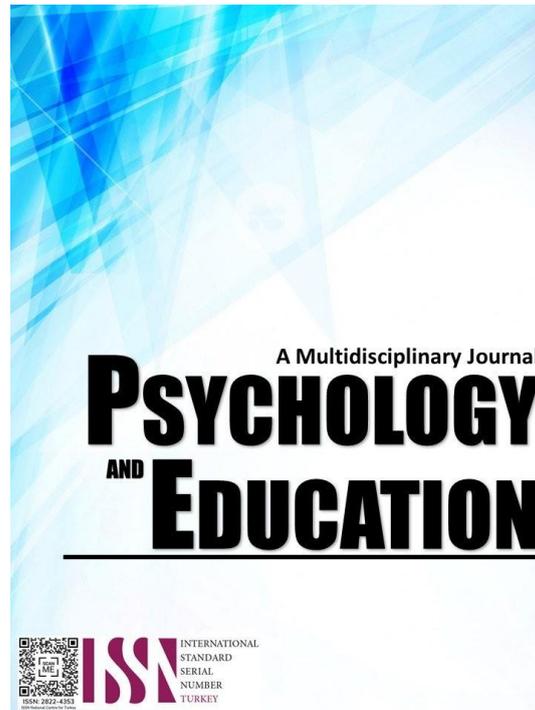


**EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
EXTENDED SCHOOL CLOSURES DURING THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND GRADE 9 STUDENTS'
READING COMPREHENSION PROFICIENCY**



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Exploring the Relationship Between Extended School Closures During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Grade 9 Students' Reading Comprehension Proficiency

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the relationship between extended school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic and grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency at Morong National High School. A pre-test was conducted among seven hundred eighteen (718) Grade 9 students enrolled in the current school year. The Pre-test captured data that identified their reading comprehension proficiency. The data collected were analyzed using paired t-tests or repeated-measures ANOVA, to compare the pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores within the same group of students. This analysis will determine if there are significant improvements or declines in reading comprehension proficiency during the extended school closures. The results revealed a drastic increase in the number of students experiencing frustration with reading comprehension. It suggests that the pandemic and the changes in educational settings like remote learning, and disrupted routines may have negatively impacted students' reading comprehension proficiency. The shift to online learning, the potential lack of access to resources, and changes in the learning environment could have contributed to this decline in reading comprehension. Overall, this study provides insights into the significant increase in the number of students struggling with reading comprehension which implies a potential learning loss during the pandemic. These results highlight the urgent need for intervention and support in improving reading comprehension. Regularly monitoring students' academic progress by both teachers and parents, as well as proper assessments can help educators identify struggling students and implement timely interventions to support their learning needs. This study contributes to the existing literature and highlights the importance of teachers regularly assessing students' reading comprehension progress as a vital factor in promoting reading proficiency. Ongoing assessment allows teachers to tailor instruction, provide timely feedback, and implement targeted interventions, ultimately supporting students' growth as proficient readers. By using evidence-based assessment practices, teachers can play a pivotal role in fostering students' reading comprehension development and academic success.

Keywords: *teacher's support, parent involvement, remote learning resources, reading comprehension proficiency, assessment, intervention*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted education systems worldwide, leading to widespread school closures and a shift towards remote learning. Grade 9 students, who are at a crucial stage in their academic journey, have experienced significant disruptions in their education due to these extended closures. One area of concern is the impact of these closures on students' reading comprehension proficiency. Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that plays a vital role in academic success across various subjects. It involves understanding and interpreting written texts, extracting meaning, and making inferences. Grade 9 is a critical stage where students typically build upon their reading skills and comprehension abilities, preparing them for higher levels of education.

Extended school closures and the subsequent shift to remote learning have introduced various challenges that can affect students' reading comprehension. The absence of face-to-face instruction, reduced interaction with peers and teachers. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges and

disruptions to the global education landscape. School closures, as a result of necessary safety measures, have become a prevailing reality in efforts to curb the spread of the virus. These extended closures have necessitated a shift to remote learning approaches, transforming the educational experiences of students across the world. In particular, grade 9 students, who are at a critical stage in their academic journey, have been significantly impacted by these unprecedented circumstances. One area of concern that emerges from this shift to remote learning is the effect on grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency.

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that serves as a cornerstone for academic success across various subjects and is vital for future educational pursuits. During the formative years of grade 9, students typically build upon their reading skills and advance their comprehension abilities, preparing them for higher levels of education and their roles as informed citizens. However, the abrupt transition to remote learning, characterized by reduced face-to-face instruction, limited interaction with peers and teachers, and challenges in accessing resources, has introduced unique obstacles to the development of reading



comprehension skills among grade 9 students.

While numerous studies have examined the impact of extended school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic on students' academic achievement, limited research has specifically focused on the relationship between these closures and grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency. Understanding this relationship is crucial for comprehending the full extent of the challenges faced by grade 9 students and for developing targeted strategies to mitigate any negative effects on their reading comprehension abilities.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between extended school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic and grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency. By examining the changes in reading comprehension proficiency among grade 9 students during the pandemic, we seek to provide insights into the impact of these closures on their academic development. Additionally, we aim to identify factors such as the duration of closures, the availability of remote learning resources, the extent of teacher support, and the level of parental involvement that may influence students' reading comprehension outcomes during this period.

The findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the educational implications of extended school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results will inform educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in developing effective interventions and support systems that can enhance grade 9 students' reading comprehension skills, minimize learning gaps, and promote educational continuity during and beyond times of crisis.

In summary, this research seeks to bridge the gap in understanding the relationship between extended school closures and grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency during the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining this relationship and identifying influential factors, the study aims to provide valuable insights to support the development of strategies that promote reading comprehension skills among grade 9 students, ensuring their educational success and future prospects.

Research Questions

This study's primary purpose is to explore the relationship between extended school closures during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency. Specifically, this

study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How does the duration of extended school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic relate to changes in grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency in terms of:
 - 1.1 remote learning resources;
 - 1.2 teacher support; and
 - 1.3 parental involvement?
2. What is the difference in grade 9 students' reading comprehension scores before and after extended school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. To what extent do factors such as access to remote learning resources, teacher support, and parental involvement during extended school closures influence grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency?

Literature Review

Remote Learning Resources

Availability of digital resources: Students' access to computers, tablets, and the internet can determine their ability to engage in remote learning activities, access digital reading materials, and participate in virtual discussions related to reading comprehension. Quality of online materials: The availability of high-quality digital reading resources, such as e-books, online articles, and educational websites, can enhance students' exposure to diverse texts and support their reading comprehension development. On the study of Özkara, Y. in 2021, "The Role of Technology in Reading Comprehension during the COVID-19 Pandemic", he investigates the role of technology in supporting reading comprehension during the COVID-19 pandemic. It discusses how remote learning resources and digital tools can facilitate students' engagement and development of reading.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement in reading comprehension plays a crucial role in supporting and enhancing a child's literacy development. Numerous studies have shown that when parents actively engage with their children's reading activities and create a literacy-rich environment at home, it positively impacts their reading comprehension skills and overall academic achievement. In the study of Chiu, M. M., & McBride-Chang, C. in 2006 entitled "Gender, Context, and Reading: A Comparison of Students in 43 Countries", it does emphasize the importance of parental support and home literacy practices in influencing reading achievement across different countries.

Teacher Support

Teacher support is a critical factor in influencing grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency, particularly during extended school closures and remote learning periods. Research and educational literature have examined the role of teacher support in promoting reading comprehension skills and student learning outcomes. Assessing students' progress in reading comprehension is a crucial factor that plays a significant role in improving their reading proficiency. Teachers' ability to effectively assess students' reading comprehension skills helps identify areas of strength and areas that require further development. The article written by "Hudson, R. F., Lane, K. L., & Pullen, P. C. in 2005 entitled "Reading Fluency Assessment and Instruction: What, Why, and How?", it discusses the significance of assessing reading fluency, which is a critical component of reading comprehension. It emphasizes the role of assessment in informing effective instruction to improve students' overall reading proficiency.

Overall, the literature highlights the importance of teachers regularly assessing students' reading comprehension progress as a vital factor in promoting reading proficiency. Ongoing assessment allows teachers to tailor instruction, provide timely feedback, and implement targeted interventions, ultimately supporting students' growth as proficient readers. By using evidence-based assessment practices, teachers can play a pivotal role in fostering students' reading comprehension development and academic success.

Methodology

Considering the complexity of the topic and the need for thorough analysis, a mixed-methods research approach was utilized. This approach combines both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between extended school closures and grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency.

Quantitative research is a systematic empirical approach used to investigate and analyze phenomena through the collection and analysis of numerical data. It involves the use of structured data collection instruments, such as surveys, questionnaires, and standardized tests, to measure variables and establish statistical relationships between them. The primary goal of quantitative research is to provide objective and quantifiable insights into patterns, trends, and associations within a specific population or sample.

By utilizing a quantitative research approach with a pre-test and post-test design, one can effectively assess how extended school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic impact grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency over time. This approach will provide valuable data to understand the effects of remote learning and identify any significant changes in reading comprehension skills during this period.

On the other hand, qualitative research is a systematic approach used to explore and understand complex phenomena through the collection and analysis of non-numeric data. Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research seeks to gain insights into the meaning, experiences, perspectives, and context of the research participants. It employs flexible data collection methods to gather rich, descriptive information, allowing researchers to explore the depth and nuances of the studied phenomenon.

Participants

The participants were Grade 9 students, who are enrolled in the School Year 2022-2023. There were 718 students being tested and 525 students were identified under frustration level.

Instruments of the Study

Data Collection:The data for this study was collected through a Phil-IRI pre-test that was administered to the participants to gather information on the level of reading comprehension.

Data Analysis: Appropriate statistical techniques, such as paired t-tests or repeated-measures ANOVA, to compare the pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores within the same group of students will be used to summarize the data. This analysis will determine if there are significant improvements or declines in reading comprehension proficiency during the extended school closures.

Moreso, by using the qualitative research method in this study, the researcher can explore the experiences and perceptions of grade 9 students, teachers, and parents during extended school closures and gain valuable insights into how these closures may have impacted reading comprehension proficiency. Qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration and nuanced understanding of the topic, providing valuable context and meaning to the findings.



Procedure

Define the target population. The researcher first determines the specific group of students for the study. Some factors that have been considered are grade level, subject area, and any other relevant characteristics.

Determine the sample size and sampling method. The researcher then decides on the number of participants to include in the survey. Selecting an appropriate sampling method to ensure the sample is representative of the target population. Purposive sampling was used as a technique. Purposive sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling technique where researchers purposefully select participants who possess specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research objectives. It allows researchers to focus on individuals or groups that can provide the most informative and relevant data for the study's research questions.

Administer the pre-test. Since there is an existing standardized reading piece with questions, the researcher can now administer it to the sample participants. Online platforms, such as Video Conferencing Tools, ie, Platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams enable live virtual classes and real-time interactions with teachers; and Mobile Apps like Educational apps cater to different subjects, including reading comprehension, and can be accessed via smartphones or tablets, can be used.

Collect and analyze the data. Once the pre-test and post-test responses have been collected, compiling data for analysis is next. Using statistical software or tools to analyze the quantitative data, such as calculating frequencies, and means, or conducting correlation analyses. For qualitative data from open-ended questions, the researcher can perform content analysis to identify common themes or patterns.

Interpret and report the findings. Analyzing the results and interpreting the data to explore the relationship between extended school closures during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency are the last steps. Summarizing the findings and drawing conclusions based on the data analysis shall follow. Considering the presentation of results through descriptive statistics, tables, charts, or qualitative summaries will be the final step.

Ethical Considerations

The study will ensure the confidentiality of the participants' information. The study will also obtain

informed consent from the participants and adhere to the ethical guidelines of the school.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Pre-Test Results of the Level of Reading Comprehension of Grade 9 Students Before and After the Pandemic*

Grade Level	Enrollment			No. of Student Tested		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Grade 7	486	438	924	435	414	849
Grade 8	471	468	939	429	440	869
Grade 9	429	403	832	385	376	761
Grade 10	386	432	818	383	431	814
Total	1172	1741	3513	1632	1661	3293

Independent			Instructional			Frustration		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
61	89	150	153	182	335	221	143	364
124	203	327	158	143	301	143	98	241
115	172	287	259	189	448	13	13	26
94	132	226	262	280	542	27	19	46
394	596	990	832	794	1626	404	273	677

Table 2. *Pre-Test Results of the Level of Reading Comprehension of Grade 9 Students Before and After the Pandemic*

Sections	Number of Students					
	Enrollment as of August			Non-reader		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Atom	15	31	46	0	0	0
Base	13	31	44	0	0	0
Calcium	28	22	50	0	0	0
Density	32	21	0	0	0	0
Energy	29	22	51	0	0	0
Force	27	22	49	0	0	0
Gravity	29	22	51	0	0	0
Hydrogen	30	19	49	0	0	0
Isotopes	29	20	49	0	0	0
Joule	27	21	48	0	0	0
Kinetics	31	19	50	0	0	0
Lithosphere	27	19	46	0	0	0
Molecules	26	23	49	0	0	0
Newton	27	23	50	0	0	0
Thallium	20	23	43	0	0	0
Total	390	338	675	0	0	0



Frustration			Level of Reading						Total number of			
Male	Female	Total	Instructional		Independent		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0	0	0	0	0	0	15	31	46	15	31	46	
0	0	0	0	0	0	13	31	44	13	81	44	
24	17	41	4	5	9	0	0	0	28	22	50	
26	20	46	1	1	2	0	0	0	27	21	48	
4	0	4	7	3	10	18	18	36	29	21	50	
25	21	46	2	1	3	0	0	0	27	22	49	
27	19	46	1	3	4	0	0	0	28	22	50	
29	18	47	1	1	2	0	0	0	30	19	49	
27	16	43	1	4	5	0	0	0	28	20	48	
22	18	40	4	0	4	1	0	1	27	18	45	
29	18	47	1	1	2	1	0	1	31	19	50	
26	19	45	1	1	2	0	0	0	27	22	49	
18	19	37	8	3	11	1	0	1	27	22	49	
25	22	47	2	1	3	0	0	0	27	23	50	
18	18	36	2	5	7	0	0	0	20	23	43	
300	225	525	35	29	64	49	80	129	384	334	718	

The table reveals the drastic increase in the number of students experiencing frustration with reading comprehension (from 26 to 525). It suggests that the pandemic and the changes in educational settings (e.g., remote learning, disrupted routines) may have negatively impacted students' reading comprehension proficiency. The shift to online learning, the potential lack of access to resources, and changes in the learning environment could have contributed to this decline in reading comprehension.

Learning loss: The significant increase in the number of students struggling with reading comprehension implies a potential learning loss during the pandemic. Learning loss refers to the knowledge and skills that students may have missed out on or forgotten due to disruptions in their education. The situation indicates that a large number of students have not made the expected progress in reading during the pandemic.

Need for intervention and support: The increase in the number of students at the frustration level highlights the urgent need for intervention and support in improving reading comprehension. Educators and schools may need to implement targeted strategies to address this issue, such as providing remedial programs, individualized attention, or additional resources to help students catch up on their reading skills.

Importance of monitoring progress: The pre-test data showing the number of students under frustration level during and after the pandemic highlight the importance of regularly monitoring students' academic progress. Such assessments can help educators identify struggling students and implement timely interventions to support their learning needs.

Overall Assessment: The increase in the number of students under the frustration level after the pandemic indicates the potential adverse effects the pandemic had on students' reading comprehension and emphasizes the need for focused efforts to address the

challenges and facilitate their educational recovery.

Table 3. Post-Test Results of the Level of Reading Comprehension of Grade 9 Students for the School Year 2022-2023

Section	Number of Students Enrollment as of August			Non-Reader			Frustration		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
A	15	30	45	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	13	31	44	0	0	0	0	0	0
C	24	22	46	0	0	0	9	5	14
D	31	19	50	0	0	0	10	4	14
E	27	20	47	0	0	0	1	0	1
F	27	21	48	0	0	0	8	6	14
G	26	22	48	0	0	0	3	0	3
H	29	20	49	0	0	0	6	4	10
I	28	20	48	0	0	0	8	0	8
J	27	22	49	0	0	0	6	3	9
K	30	17	47	0	0	0	9	4	13
L	26	20	46	0	0	0	7	5	12
M	26	22	48	0	0	0	4	3	7
N	25	23	48	0	0	0	2	2	4
T	20	21	40	0	0	0	81	40	121

Section	Instructional			Independent			Total number of Students being diagnosed
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
A	0	0	0	15	30	45	45
B	0	0	0	13	31	44	44
C	8	7	15	5	10	15	44
D	9	9	18	11	6	17	49
E	6	2	8	20	18	38	47
F	7	4	11	12	11	23	48
G	12	12	24	11	10	21	48
H	10	9	19	11	10	21	49
I	8	9	13	11	7	18	48
J	10	19	19	11	10	21	49
K	8	6	14	13	6	19	46
L	11	5	16	8	10	18	46
M	14	13	27	8	6	14	48
N	11	13	24	12	7	19	47
T	9	10	19	3	7	10	41
	127	109	236	163	177	340	697

The data provided indicates the significant progress and improvement in the reading comprehension skills of Grade 9 students. It means that most of the students have moved out of the frustration level and are likely at higher levels of reading comprehension. This indicates that the teacher's support and regular assessments have been effective in helping students improve their reading comprehension skills. It has been discussed in the article written by "Hudson, R. F., Lane, K. L., & Pullen, P. C. in 2005 entitled "Reading Fluency Assessment and Instruction: What, Why, and How", the significance of assessing reading fluency, which is a critical component of reading comprehension. It emphasizes the role of assessment in informing effective instruction to improve students' overall reading proficiency.

Moreso, parental involvement in reading comprehension plays a crucial role in supporting and enhancing a child's literacy development. Parental involvement in supporting and encouraging students'

reading habits at home can significantly contribute to improved reading comprehension proficiency. Parents can engage in shared reading, and discussions about reading materials, and promote a positive attitude towards reading.

Overall, the literature highlights the importance of teachers regularly assessing students' reading comprehension progress as a vital factor in promoting reading proficiency. Ongoing assessment allows teachers to tailor instruction, provide timely feedback, and implement targeted interventions, ultimately supporting students' growth as proficient readers. By using evidence-based assessment practices, teachers can play a pivotal role in fostering students' reading comprehension development and academic success

Conclusion

Effective use of technology and the availability of high-quality digital reading materials can positively impact students' engagement with reading and their overall comprehension skills. However, challenges related to technology access, internet connectivity, and varying levels of digital literacy must also be considered in addressing disparities in reading comprehension proficiency during remote learning. Studies have shown that during extended school closures, students with limited access to remote learning resources, lower-quality instruction, and limited parental involvement may experience a decline in reading comprehension proficiency. On the other hand, students with better access to resources, strong teacher support, and active parental involvement tend to experience more positive academic outcomes.

The importance of teacher support is a key determinant in shaping students' reading comprehension proficiency. Teachers who employ evidence-based instructional practices, offer personalized feedback, and differentiate instruction to meet individual needs can have a positive impact on students' reading comprehension skills. By fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment, teachers can empower students to become proficient readers and critical thinkers. Indeed, this outcome reflects positively on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies employed and indicates that the students have made considerable progress in their reading comprehension during the period of support and assessment.

It's important to note that the impact of these factors can vary depending on the individual student's circumstances, the level of support they receive, and

the specific strategies employed by teachers and parents. Collaboration between educators and families to ensure equitable access to resources, effective instructional practices, and strong parental involvement can play a vital role in supporting grade 9 students' reading comprehension proficiency during extended school closures.

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