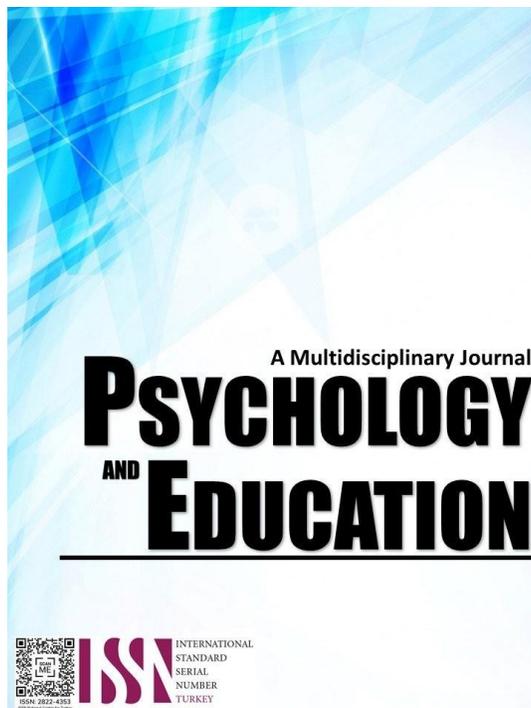


# PROBLEM COMPREHENSION SKILLS AND ITS RELATION TO STUDENTS' MATHEMATICS PERFORMANCE: BASIS FOR ENHANCEMENT PLAN



**PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL**

Volume: 33

Issue 7

Pages: 761-767

Document ID: 2025PEMJ3200

DOI: 10.70838/pemj.330704

Manuscript Accepted: 02-19-2025

## Problem Comprehension Skills and its Relation to Students' Mathematics Performance: Basis for Enhancement Plan

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore the significant relationship between students' mathematical problem comprehension skills and their mathematics performance in terms of measuring central tendency, organizing data in a frequency distribution table, drawing conclusions from graphic and tabular data, and using appropriate graphs to organize data. This study is conducted to come up with an effective enhancement plan to help students improve their problem comprehension skills in Mathematics. This study starts by randomly selecting Grade 7 students from the different schools under Manjuyod District I in the Division of Negros Oriental. This study used a descriptive-correlational design and gathered data through surveys and tests as well as documents pertaining to the mathematics performance of the students. The surveys and tests were for the students while the school registrar and class advisers were for the documents pertaining to the mathematics performance such as Forms 9 and 10 of the students. It examined the students' profile in terms of age, sex, living with at home, parents' educational level, and employment status. It also assessed the students' comprehension skills in measuring central tendency, organizing data, drawing conclusions, using appropriate graphs, and solving word problems. Furthermore, it investigated the students' level of mathematics performance and the significance of demographic factors on their problem comprehension skills and mathematics performance. The findings revealed that most of the students surveyed were 57 % female and 74% stayed with their parents. The students' comprehension skills in measuring central tendency were found to be fairly satisfactory (mean=78.496; SD=16.214), for improvement in organizing data (mean=78.496; SD=16.214), drawing conclusions (mean=67.168; SD=11.297), using appropriate graphs (mean=73.805; SD=13.250), however, did not meet expectations. It implies that mathematical problems comprehension skills are low. The level of mathematics performance of Grade 7 students was found outstanding (mean=90.327; SD=3.247). Age (F-value=2.428; p-value=0.031), sex (F-value=2.428; p-value=0.031), living with parents at home (F-value=2.428; p-value=0.031) and employment status of parents (F-value=2.428; p-value=0.031) were found to have significant impact on problem comprehension skills related to measuring central tendency and drawing conclusions from graphic and tabular data. Moreover, the educational level of parents (F-value=0.932; p-value=0.425) significantly affected mathematics performance. The study also found a significant relationship (Pearson Correlation=0.189; p-value=0.045) between competency in measures of central tendency and their overall mathematics performance. Based on the results, this study recommends an enhancement plan to improve students' mathematical comprehension skills by incorporating more interactive and real-life applications of mathematical concepts in the curriculum.

**Keywords:** *math word problems, comprehension skills, students' mathematics performance, relatedness*

### Introduction

Comprehension has been the key to unlock essential information from any written texts. Without it, reading becomes useless. No learning was materialized without the presence of comprehension. All activities required a written text can only be done after the occurrence of comprehension because it aided in deciphering meaning from what was read, manipulate ideas, information, and breakdown data to solve problems (Artzt and Thomas, 2012). Therefore, comprehension was imperative in problem-solving so that learners would solve problems correctly and appropriately.

It has been observed that mathematics performance of students was declining at an alarming rate. In the 2017 - 2018 National Achievement Test, the Mean Percentage Score (MPS) of one of the secondary schools of Manjuyod District I was only 29.91%. Moreover, the MPS of the grade 7 in the same district during the school year 2021-2022 First Periodical Examination was only 14.29%. This decline is not only observed in the local scenario, but also in the international setting. With these alarming results, the researcher was motivated to conduct the study to help teachers in improving their comprehension to answer Math problems as well as to help them improve their academic performance. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) examines students' knowledge in reading, mathematics, and science. In the 2018 results, the Philippines ranked second lowest in mathematics and science among all PISA participating countries (Ratzel San Juan, Philstar.com, 2019).

As observed in the day-to-day instruction, students experience difficulty most especially in solving word problems in mathematics. Because comprehension plays a vital role in deciphering intrinsic and extrinsic information to be able to correctly and meaningfully solve word problems, it becomes a daily struggle for both the teachers and students. If this problem will not be addressed accordingly, it would have a negative impact to the students most of all.

Therefore, to address the above scenario, this study is hereby conducted to assess the problem comprehension skills and its relation to

mathematics performance of the Grade 7 students in Manjuyod District 1 for School Year 2022-2023 as basis for enhancement plan.

## Methodology

This study used the descriptive-correlational design to determine the relationship between problem comprehension skills and mathematics performance in Mathematics of Grade 7 Students of the Department of Education - Division of Negros Oriental, Manjuyod District I. The researcher chose to conduct this study by establishing the profile of the students in terms of: (a) age (b) sex (c) living with at home (d) educational level and employment status of parents (e) the level of students' mathematical problem comprehension skills in terms of competencies such as Measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode), Organizes data in a frequency distribution table, draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data and measures of central tendency and variability and uses appropriate graphs to represent organized data. Moreover, the difference between the level of problem-solving skills when grouped by profile and the relationship between their problem comprehension skills and their mathematics performance are also described. This study used a self-made questionnaire method in gathering data. The instrument consists of two parts. The first part is the demographic profile of the students and the second part is the test proper with the competency Drawing conclusion from graphic and tabular data and measures of central tendency and variability (M7SP-IVj-2). The grades of Grade 7 students in the SY 2022-2023 were also gathered as basis to determine their Mathematics performance.

The researcher made use of stratified random sampling in selecting the respondents of the study. There were 113 Grade 7 students who were taken using Slovin's Formula. Below was the distribution of respondents of the study.

*Table 1. Distribution of the respondents of the Study*

<i>Schools</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>
School A	40	26	29
School B	32	20	23
School C	85	54	61
Total	157	100	113

The following steps were followed by the researcher upon the conduct of the study.

First, the researcher wrote a letter requesting permit from the Schools Division Superintendent of Negros Oriental Division to conduct the instrument to the Grade 7 students of Manjuyod District I. The, the researcher channeled the approved letter to the district supervisor and the heads of the different schools.

After the approval of the letters, the researcher conducted the instrument to the identified respondents of the study. Maximum of one month was allotted to retrieve copies of the instrument from the advisers of the respondents. Tabulation, computation, analysis, and interpretation of the data will follow which will serve as bases in drawing conclusions and recommendations of the study.

For the Grades in mathematics of the respondents, the researcher wrote a letter to the District Registrar asking permission allowing to have a copy of School Form (SF) 9 and School Form (SF) 10 for the performance of the respondents in Mathematics.

The following tools were used by the researcher as per advised by the statistician to answer specific statement of the problem.

To determine the profile of the respondents in terms of age sex, living with at home, educational level and employment status of parents, the frequency and percentage count distribution were used.

To determine the level of students' mathematical problems comprehension skills in terms of the following competencies such as measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode), organizes data in a frequency distribution table, draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data and measures of central tendency and variability and uses appropriate graphs to represent organized data, the mean and standard deviation were used.

In determining the performance of students in Mathematics, the data were taken from the Registrar's Office of the schools of Manjuyod District I, the mean and standard deviation were used.

To determine the significant difference between the students' mathematical problems comprehension skills when grouped by profile in the following competencies such as measure of central tendency, organizes data in a frequency distribution table, draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data and measures of central tendency and variability and uses appropriate graphs to represent organized data, the t-test and ANOVA were used.

To determine the significant difference between the students' level of Mathematics performance when grouped according to their profile, the t-test and ANOVA was used. To determine the significant relationship between the problem comprehension skills of students and their performance in mathematics, Pearson-r was used.

## Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows that 46 or 41% ages 11-13 years old, 57 or 50% ages 14-16 years old and 10 or 9% ages 16 and above. There were 49 or 43% males and 64 or 57% were females. There were 83 or 74% who were staying from their parents, 7 or 6% stayed with their



brothers or sisters, 8 or 7% stayed in their grandparents, 4 or 3% stayed in their aunts/uncles, 2 or 2% stayed in their guardians and 9 or 8% stayed in their extended family members.

Table 2. Socio-demographic Profile of Students

Profile Of The Students		Frequency	Percentage
Age	11-13	46	41
	14-16	57	50
	16 and above	10	9
Total		113	100
Sex	Male	49	43
	Female	64	57
Total		113	100
Who is with at home	Parent	83	74
	Brothers/Sisters Only	7	6
	Grandparents	8	7
	Aunts/Uncles	4	3
	Guardians	2	2
	Extended Family Members	9	8
Total		113	100
Educational level of Parents	No formal schooling	5	5
	No Formal Schooling but able to read and write	14	12
	Elementary level	33	29
	Elementary graduate	28	25
	High school level	11	10
	High school graduate	14	12
Total	After high school education	8	7
Total		113	100
Employment Status of Parents	Government	7	6
	Permanent/Regular	7	6
	Private Permanent/Regular	5	4
	Private Contractual	2	2
	Self-Employed	80	71
	Not Employed	12	11
Total		113	100

There were 5 or 5% who had parents with no formal schooling, 14 or 12% had parents with no formal schooling. It implies that most students ages 14-16 years old, female, stayed at home with their parents, and parents who finished elementary level.

Table 3. Students' mathematical problems comprehension skills

Indicators	Mean	Sd	Interpretation
Measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode)	78.496	16.214	Fairly Satisfactory
Organizes data in a frequency distribution table	70.089	17.903	Did not meet expectations
Draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data and measures of central tendency and variability.	67.168	11.297	Did not meet expectations
Uses appropriate graphs to represent organized data	73.805	13.250	Did not meet expectations

The table shows that the students' mathematical problems comprehension skills in terms of measures of central tendency (mean=78.496; SD=16.214) was fairly satisfactory, organizes data in a frequency distribution (mean=78.496; SD=16.214), draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data and measures of central tendency and variability (mean=67.168; SD=11.297) and uses of appropriate graphs to represent organized data (mean=73.805; SD=13.250) was found not to meet expectations.

It implies that students' mathematical problems comprehension skills were found low. Meaning students struggles to comprehend or understand word problems in Mathematics, they were not skilled enough to understand or to understand the word clues found in the problem. The results also implied that if students failed to meet the expected learning outcomes in solving mathematics word problems they also have difficulty in comprehending word problems that would result to decline in their mathematics performance.

According to Kaur and Sam (2017), students find it difficult to interpret real-life problems and translate them into mathematical symbols and equations, which affects their ability to solve mathematical problems. Similarly, a study by Noraida et al. (2012) found that students in Malaysia struggled with word problems in mathematics, particularly when they had to integrate multiple concepts and apply them in the problem-solving process.

Table 4. Level of Mathematics Performance of Grade 7 Students

Indicators	Mean	Sd	Interpretation
Mathematics Performance of Grade 7 Students	90.327	3.247	Outstanding



The table presents that the Mathematics Performance of Grade 7 students (Mean=90.327; SD=3.247) was found as outstanding. It implies that Grade 7 students meet and exceed the desired learning outcomes as their general performance in Mathematics.

Numerous studies have examined the factors that contribute to strong mathematics performance among students. For instance, a study by Arends-Tóth and Van den Akker (2020) found that students who received explicit instruction in key mathematical concepts and problem-solving strategies demonstrated significantly higher performance in mathematics compared to students who did not receive such instruction.

Table 5. Difference between mathematics problem comprehension skills when grouped by profile

Mathematics Problem Comprehension Skills		Profile of Grade 7 Students				
		Age	Sex	Living with at home	Educational Level of Parents	Employment Status of Parents
2.1 Measures of Central Tendency	F/t-value	11.175	3.655	2.307	0.932	0.735
	p-value	0.000	0.000	0.049	0.425	0.598
	Interpretation Decision	Sig. Reject Ho	Sig. Reject Ho	Sig. Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho
2.2 Organizes data in a frequency distribution table	F/t-value	11.223	4.396	1.836	1.798	1.099
	p-value	0.000	0.000	0.112	0.108	0.365
	Interpretation Decision	Sig. Reject Ho	Sig. Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho
2.3 Draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data	F/t-value	5.008	2.424	2.688	1.357	1.698
	p-value	0.008	0.017	0.025	0.239	0.141
	Interpretation Decision	Sig. Reject Ho	Sig. Reject Ho	Sig. Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho
2.4 Uses appropriate graphs to represent organized data	F/t-value	2.423	3.729	1.230	2.428	1.699
	p-value	0.093	0.000	0.300	0.031	0.141
	Interpretation Decision	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho	Sig. Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho	Sig. Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho

When grouped by age, mathematics problem comprehension in terms of the measure of central tendency (F-value=11.175; p-value=0.000), Organizes data in a frequency distribution table (F-value=11.223; p-value=0.000) and Draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data (F-value=5.008; p-value=0.008) was interpreted to have significant difference when grouped by age which meant that the null hypothesis was rejected. Meanwhile, in terms of the Uses appropriate graphs to represent organized data (F-value=11.223; p-value=0.000) was found to have no significant difference which means that it failed to reject the null hypothesis. It implies that age matters in students while learning in the measure of central tendency, organizing data in a frequency distribution table, and drawing conclusions from graphs or tabular data. It means that, older students learn fast than the younger ones since they are already mature in dealing with their lessons in the right level of learning according to their state.

Research has consistently shown that age plays an important role in students' mathematics learning and comprehension skills. Older students tend to have better problem-solving skills and a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. According to a study by Hill et al. (2016), students' problem-solving ability improves as they progress from elementary to middle school, and then from middle to high school.

When grouped by sex, mathematics problem comprehension in terms of the measure of central tendency (t-value=3.655; p-value=0.000), organizes data in a frequency distribution table (t-value=4.396; p-value=0.000) and draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data (t-value=2.424; p-value=0.017) and uses appropriate graphs to represent organized data (t-value=2.424; p-value=0.017) was interpreted to have significant difference when grouped by sex which meant that the null hypothesis was rejected. It implies that male students were more skilled than females in terms of understanding the problems in Mathematics. Meaning, male students were more likely to think critically than females.

More recent studies have examined the potential reasons behind this disparity. A study by Voyer and Voyer (2014) found that males tended to perform better on tasks that required mental rotation abilities, which are important for solving certain geometry and spatial reasoning problems. However, other studies have suggested that social and cultural factors, such as gender stereotypes and classroom environments, may also play a role in differential math performance between males and females (National Science Foundation, 2015).

In terms of living with the respondents at home, their mathematics problem comprehension skills in terms of the measure of central tendency (F-value=2.307; p-value=0.049) and draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data (F-value=2.688; p-value=0.025) was interpreted to have significant difference which meant that the null hypothesis was rejected. Meanwhile, in terms of organizing data in a frequency distribution (F-value=1.836; p-value=0.112) and using appropriate graphs to represents organized data (F-value=1.230; p-value=0.300) were found not to have significant difference. It implies that students' skills in measuring the central tendency and



drawing conclusion differs depending on who they live with at home which meant that people lived with them can help them solve problems in identifying the measures of central tendency and in drawing conclusion. On the other hand, students know how to organize data in a frequency distribution table and can use appropriate graphs to represent organized data regardless of who they live with at home.

In terms of the specific skills mentioned in the statement, research has shown that parental involvement and support can have a positive impact on students' ability to understand and use measures of central tendency and draw conclusions from data. A study by Fan et al. (2017) found that parental involvement in mathematics homework was positively associated with students' math achievement, especially in areas such as problem-solving and data analysis. However, the lack of significant differences in organizing data and using appropriate graphs to represent data depending on home environment may suggest that these skills are more directly taught in the classroom and less influenced by environmental factors outside of school.

In terms of the educational level of parents, problem comprehension skills in terms of using appropriate graphs to represent organized data (F-value=2.428; p-value=0.031) were found to have a significant difference. On the other hand, the measures of central tendency (F-value=0.932; p-value=0.425), organizing data in a frequency distribution table (F-value=1.798; p-value=0.108) and drawing conclusion from graphic and tabular data (F-value=1.357; p-value=0.239) were found to have no significant difference. It implies that students whose family has higher educational level tend to help their children to use appropriate data to represent organized graph. On the contrary, educational level of parents' does not matter in student's comprehension skills in the measure of central tendency, organization of data in a frequency distribution and drawing conclusion from graphic and tabular data.

Research has shown that parental education can have a positive impact on students' ability to use appropriate graphs and charts to represent data. A study by Fan et al. (2017) found that parents with higher educational levels were more likely to be involved in their children's math homework and to provide support and guidance on data analysis tasks. In terms of the lack of significant differences in measures of central tendency, organizing data in a frequency distribution table, and drawing conclusions from graphic and tabular data, these skills may be more directly taught in the classroom and less influenced by parental education. Additionally, other factors such as student motivation and engagement may play a larger role in determining these skills.

Lastly, students' problem comprehension skills in terms of parents' employment status was not significant in terms of measures of central tendency (F-value=0.735; p-value=0.598), organizes data in a frequency distribution table (F-value=1.099; p-value=0.365), draws conclusion from graphic and tabular data Draws conclusion from graphic (F-value=1.698; p-value=0.141) and tabular data and Uses appropriate graphs to represent organized data (F-value=1.699; p-value=0.141). It implies that students' can develop their problem comprehension skills regardless of their parents' employment status.

Recent research has continued to investigate the impact of parents' employment status on students' academic performance and achievements in mathematics. A study by Lee and Kim (2021) found that parental employment instability, such as job loss or change, can have a negative impact on students' academic achievement in mathematics, especially for students from low-income families. The study suggested that employment instability can create economic stress and household disruption, which may impede students' learning and academic progress. However, another recent study by Yamada et al. (2020) found that the specific influence of parental employment on students' academic performance can vary depending on the child's age and the parent's job characteristics. The study found that parental non-standard work arrangements, such as irregular or part-time employment, were associated with lower math scores for younger children but had no significant effect on older children. Additionally, low-skilled parental jobs were associated with lower math scores for both younger and older children.

Table 6. Difference between students' level of mathematics performance when grouped according to their profile

		Profile of Grade 7 Students				
		Age	Sex	Living with at home	Educational Level of Parents	Employment Status of Parents
Mathematics Performance of Grade 7 Students	F/t-value	0.853	0.114	0.931	2.439	0.379
	p-value	0.429	0.910	0.464	0.030	0.862
	Interpretation Decision	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho	Sig. Reject Ho	Not Sig. Failed to Reject Ho

The table shows the mean difference and significance level for the comparison of educational levels between parents. The main finding is that there are no significant differences in the educational level of children based on their parents' education level. However, there are significant differences in educational levels between parents who completed after high school education and those who did not, as well as between parents who completed elementary school and those who graduated with a higher level of education. It implies that increasing parental education levels beyond high school and encouraging elementary school graduates to pursue higher education may have a positive impact on the educational outcomes of their children.

The results of the analysis indicate that there are significant differences in the educational level of children based on their parents' educational level, particularly for those who completed after high school education and those who graduated from elementary school.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that have shown a positive relationship between parental education levels and children's educational outcomes (Hoeffler & Ransom, 2013).

In addition, the relationship between parental education and child academic achievement concludes that the association is likely to be causal, but that the mechanisms underlying the relationship are complex and multifaceted (Pong, 2015).

## Conclusions

The older the students become; their problem comprehension skills are also honed. Most male students were able to enhance their word problem solving skills, also, they become more aware of the people they lived with at home since they are of great help in answering their problem-solving assignments. Meanwhile, most students whose parents has higher educational attainment were able to solve word-problems because their parents can most likely help them to use appropriate graphs in presenting organized data.

Students perform well in Mathematics when their parents are around to teach them. The skills of the parents in teaching them play a vital role in helping them to comprehend and solve mathematical problems in word format.

If students learn how to comprehend as to how to solve problem in the measure of Central Tendency, the better they perform academically in mathematics.

It is recommended that the education supervisor in Math will create programs that could help students learn new concepts or to enhance their skills in problem solving. Also, the District Math Coordinator is recommended to guide Mathematics teachers to create Support Instructional Materials the students will use to enhance their skills in problem solving. Moreover, School heads will be recommended to have a separate LAC session for Mathematics alone that will focus on the enhancement of students' problem comprehension skills and provide technical assistance whenever deemed necessary. Math teachers will be recommended to proceed to advance studies or to attend seminars, trainings and workshop specifically on enhancing students' comprehension in problem solving. Students will be recommended to attend remedial classes implemented by the school to further enhance their skills in problem-based comprehension.

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