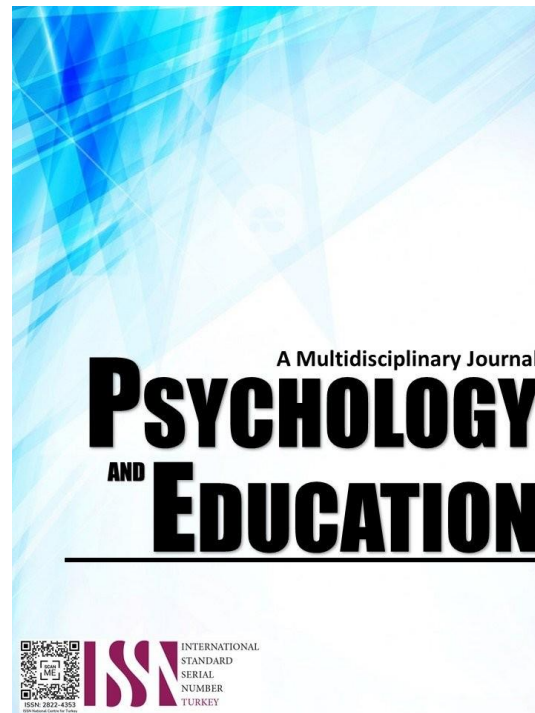


# **FROM READING TO COMPREHENDING: THE INFLUENCE OF READING HABITS ON READING COMPREHENSION AMONG GRADE 7-9 STUDENTS IN A PRIVATE CATHOLIC SCHOOL IN DAVAO CITY**



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## From Reading to Comprehending: The Influence of Reading Habits on Reading Comprehension among Grade 7-9 Students in A Private Catholic School in Davao City

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### Abstract

This study explores the reading habits and comprehension levels of Grade 7 to 9 students at St. Peter's College of Toril, Inc., with a particular focus on engagement, reading frequency, material preferences, and working memory. Employing a quantitative research approach, the study found that students demonstrate moderate reading engagement ( $M = 3.10$ ). Among the key indicators, Reading Interest and Motivation recorded the highest mean score ( $M = 3.34$ ), underscoring the significant role of personal interest in shaping reading behaviors. Conversely, Reading Frequency and Time Allocation received the lowest score ( $M = 2.66$ ), highlighting difficulties maintaining consistent reading habits. Regarding comprehension, Working Memory was assessed with a mean score of 3.28, indicating a moderate ability to retain and process textual information. The most frequently employed comprehension strategy was re-reading when encountering difficulties ( $M = 3.62$ ), suggesting that students actively understand texts. However, the low mean score for difficulty understanding meaning ( $M = 2.81$ ) points to areas requiring further instructional support. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to enhance students' reading engagement and comprehension skills. Schools and educators can implement structured reading programs, allocate dedicated reading time, and diversify reading materials to sustain student interest. Additionally, integrating evidence-based comprehension strategies, such as summarization, annotation, and guided discussions, further supports reading development. Strengthening these areas is crucial for fostering improved literacy and academic success among junior high school students, reinforcing the importance of a supportive reading culture within educational institutions.

**Keywords:** *reading habits, reading comprehension, junior high school students, literacy development, quantitative correlations study*

### Introduction

Reading is a critical skill that influences various aspects of learning. Castillo et al. (2019) emphasize that quickly understanding text is essential for effective learning. Akyol and Gedik (2022) argue that success is not determined solely by the reading volume but by the capacity to comprehend and assimilate information. Developing reading comprehension at an early stage helps build vocabulary and prior knowledge, which, in turn, enhances overall academic performance. Additionally, Balan et al. (2019) highlight the importance of cultivating strong reading habits, which are crucial for grasping complex texts and advancing learning progress.

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret text, which involves constructing a coherent mental representation of the information (Butterfuss et al., 2020). In contrast, reading habits refer to the regular engagement with texts for learning and enjoyment. Sutherland et al. (2023) found that engaging in various reading activities significantly improves comprehension skills. Furthermore, effective readers employ strategic approaches to absorb and analyze even complex texts, ensuring a deeper understanding of the material.

Global research has consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between reading habits and comprehension. Sartika et al. (2020) discovered a significant relationship between these factors, a finding that Septiarini et al. (2018) supported by concluding that improved reading habits lead to better comprehension. Samrotul (2014) further reported that effective reading patterns enhance understanding, while Walia and Sinha (2014) emphasized that proficient reading involves complex skills such as skimming, scanning, and contextual interpretation. Studies by Singer and Alexander (2017) and Fitriani (2015) also indicate that efficient reading practices contribute to better memory retention and the interpretation of meaning.

Nationally, a lack of reading habits has resulted in difficulties among students in understanding complex texts (Abequibel, 2021). Torres and Alieto (2019) advocate for instilling reading habits at an early age, a view supported by Patty (2023) and Pantito (2020), who assert that encouraging regular reading can significantly improve comprehension skills. Cabural and Infantado (2023) suggest that additional support is necessary for learners to interpret surface-level and more profound messages. Enhanced reading effectiveness, as noted by Mirasol (2019), also contributes to a more extensive vocabulary and improved critical thinking and information-processing skills (Oclarit & Casinillo, 2021), with frequent reading further boosting comprehension (Maribbay, 2022).

In the local context of Davao City, concerns have arisen regarding the reading comprehension levels of elementary and high school students (Lim et al., 2021). Norton et al. (2021) link poor comprehension skills to reading disabilities, such as difficulty manipulating and analyzing language sounds. In the locale where the study is conducted, a noticeable deficiency in reading comprehension among Grade 7–9 students has prompted an investigation into whether these issues are related to weak reading habits. Given the absence of prior studies examining this relationship at the institution, this research seeks to determine how much reading habits influence

comprehension skills among these students. Specifically, it aims to answer the question: How do reading habits influence the reading comprehension levels of Grade 7–9 students in a Private Catholic School in Davao City? The findings hope to provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions to enhance both reading habits and comprehension skills.

## Research Questions

This study examines the perceived level of reading habits and comprehension of Grade 7-9 students at St. Peter's College of Toril, Inc. Furthermore, it examines whether a relationship exists between Grade 7-9 students' reading habits and their reading comprehension level. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of reading habits among Grade 7-9 students? Specifically, in terms of:
  - 1.1. Reading Interest and Motivation
  - 1.2. Reading frequency and time allocation
  - 1.3. Types of Materials
2. What is the level of reading comprehension among Grade 7-9 students? Specifically, in terms of:
  - 2.1. Working Memory
  - 2.2. Vocabulary
  - 2.3. Prior Knowledge
3. Is there a significant correlation between the level of reading habits and the reading comprehension performance of Grade 7 to 9 students?

## Literature Review

### *Reading Habits*

Reading habit refers to the regular engagement with written material—fiction, nonfiction, books, magazines, newspapers, or electronic texts—to gain knowledge, understanding, and entertainment. This behavior, which requires physical and mental readiness, develops over time through social interactions and environmental influences such as family and school (Azizah & Pradita, 2022). It emphasizes consistent and active participation with various texts, ensuring the mind and body are prepared for optimal information absorption.

Reading is an active process that enhances text comprehension and contributes significantly to personal and academic growth. For students, transitioning from learning how to read to engaging in frequent reading deepens understanding, broadens perspectives, and strengthens self-efficacy, ultimately maximizing their learning potential throughout life (Skenderi & Ejupi, 2017). Additionally, Bishry (2021) highlights that regular reading improves comprehension skills, with factors such as reading enjoyment, the habit of reading during free time, and the willingness to revisit texts playing critical roles. To assess the quality of reading habits, key indicators include reading interest and motivation, frequency and time allocation, and the diversity of reading materials.

### *Reading Interest and Motivation*

Reading interest—the individual's desire or attraction to engage with texts—is shaped by factors such as exposure to various hobbies and personal experiences, while reading motivation drives sustained engagement in reading activities. These elements enhance reading habits and comprehension (Chin et al., 2024). When students are genuinely interested in a topic, their engagement transforms reading from a chore into an enriching experience. For example, a student passionate about fantasy may find that reading series like Harry Potter deepens their interest through compelling storylines and intriguing characters and sparks curiosity about historical contexts (Arofah & Ningsia, 2021). Moreover, frequent reading exposes individuals to diverse genres and topics, allowing them to discover what resonates with their preferences, while sustained motivation helps maintain their reading practices. As Presadă and Badea (2021) observe, pleasurable and engaging reading experiences foster positive reading behaviors, ultimately cultivating beneficial reading habits.

### *Reading Frequency and Time Allocation*

Reading frequency—defined as how often individuals engage with various texts—and time allocation—how students distribute their reading time across different activities—are crucial indicators of reading habits and comprehension skills. A higher reading frequency promotes better comprehension by fostering familiarity with language and content, while effective time management enhances these skills through consistent practice and exposure to diverse materials (Sartika, 2020). Students who read more frequently develop more vigorous reading habits, improving their ability to understand texts. These factors shape reading experiences and outcomes and provide a foundation for reading habits, which are further influenced by identification and motivation. This underscores the importance of both regular reading and diversified reading practices.

### *Types of Materials*

Reading materials—written resources tailored to meet readers' needs and interests—serve multiple purposes, including vocabulary recognition, pronunciation practice, comprehension, and enjoyment. These materials, which range from authentic texts such as newspapers and literature to various academic and non-academic sources, not only engage students with real-world language but also

motivate them and enhance their comprehension skills (Amalia et al., 2024). Furthermore, regular exposure to diverse reading materials improves conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and verbal fluency (Balan et al., 2019). Carefully selecting these resources—considering readability and grade-level appropriateness—ensures alignment with educational standards and supports academic achievement (Alcances et al., 2016). The types and availability of reading materials significantly influence reading habits, as individuals surrounded by a variety of sources such as books, magazines, and online articles are more likely to develop strong, multifaceted reading practices. These practices encompass not only frequency and the number of books read but also the time devoted to reading (January 2018).

### ***Reading Comprehension***

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive skill that involves visually processing words, identifying their phonological, orthographic, and semantic representations, and integrating these elements through syntactic rules to uncover meaning (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). As Horowitz (2014) emphasizes, this multifaceted process requires active and intentional engagement from the reader—monitoring words and their meanings in real time—to construct a coherent mental representation of the text, much like a film unfolding in the mind. This dynamic process allows readers to grasp definitions and assess the author's perspective and enhances critical writing skills and vocabulary acquisition (Clarke et al., 2014; Oakhill et al., 2015; Brandon, 2021).

Research consistently demonstrates a positive correlation between reading habits and comprehension. Studies by Septiarini et al. (2018) and Sartika et al. (2020) show that increased reading frequency strengthens comprehension. However, high reading habit scores do not automatically guarantee superior comprehension, suggesting other factors are involved. Indicators such as working memory, vocabulary, and prior knowledge are employed to assess reading comprehension effectively, providing a comprehensive measure of an individual's ability to integrate and understand textual information.

### ***Working Memory***

Working memory is the temporary storage of information essential for performing cognitive tasks such as reading, problem-solving, and learning (Baddeley, 2017). Often compared to a mental notepad, it serves as a mental workspace with limited information at any given time, allowing us to track and manage multiple tasks simultaneously (Miller et al., 2018). As Chatham and Badre (2015) argue, working memory is the platform for holding and manipulating thoughts, forming the foundation for organized, goal-directed behavior. Its critical role in reading comprehension is highlighted by its ability to store and process textual information temporarily. Research by Mahshanian et al. (2023) further supports the positive relationship between working memory capacity and improved reading outcomes.

### ***Vocabulary***

Vocabulary refers to the words an individual knows and uses to effectively convey thoughts, ideas, and emotions (Shivers, 2019). It includes knowledge of word meanings, usage, and pronunciation in both spoken and written forms. Beyond its basic function, vocabulary is essential for literacy, comprehension, and cognitive development, with distinctions often made between its size and depth (Schmitt, 2014). Nagy (2012) emphasizes that academic vocabulary is a critical component of academic language, directly influencing students' abilities to read and understand texts across various disciplines. As Vrhovc and Soršak (2024) note, lower vocabulary scores are often linked to diminished comprehension, while higher scores are associated with more potent interpretative abilities.

### ***Prior Knowledge***

Prior knowledge refers to an individual's information and experiences before encountering new content, serving as a framework for integrating and interpreting new information (Belouiza et al., 2024). It is one of the most influential factors in student learning, as new material is processed through existing knowledge, skills, and beliefs acquired from past experiences (Ambrose & Lovett, 2014). This foundational knowledge significantly shapes learning outcomes and perceptions, enhancing reading comprehension by allowing students to form meaningful connections with both texts and spoken language (Tinggi, 2017). Without such a framework, readers may struggle to engage fully with new material, as they lack the contextual understanding necessary for deeper comprehension.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative non-experimental research design with a descriptive-correlational approach to concurrently capture the current status of variables and explore the underlying relationships between them. Quantitative research objectively examines theories or audience perspectives by gathering data from participants in their natural environments. In this context, a descriptive study—designed to delineate the distribution of one or more variables without inferring causality (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019)—complements correlational studies, which assess how changes in one variable correspond to changes in another without experimental manipulation (Afgan et al., 2023). This method is particularly well-suited to comprehensively assess the reading habits and reading comprehension levels among Grade 7–9 students and explore the correlation between these variables.

While this approach provides valuable insights, it is subject to certain limitations. One key limitation of the descriptive-correlational design is its inability to establish causal relationships between variables, as it does not involve experimental control or manipulation.

Additionally, self-reported data on reading habits may introduce response bias, potentially affecting the accuracy of the findings. To mitigate these limitations, the study will ensure the validity and reliability of results by having the survey questionnaire undergo content validation and employing statistical controls to account for potential confounding variables. Moreover, a sufficiently large and diverse sample will be selected to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

## Respondents

The researchers used stratified random sampling to ensure unbiased and representative respondent selection. According to Singh & Masuku (2014), this technique divided the population into distinct strata, from which individuals were randomly chosen. Grade 7-9 students were selected as they were in a critical stage of academic development where reading habits and comprehension were essential. Of 349 students, 70% (243) were sampled for the study at St. Peter's College of Toril, Inc. for the school year 2024-2025. This sample size was sufficient for statistical analysis and addressing the study's research questions.

## Instrument

In this study, the researcher will utilize an adapted and modified instrument designed by the study's framework and informed by a comprehensive literature review. This instrument consists of three sections to ensure systematic and practical data collection. The first section provides an overview of the study, offering respondents essential information, including the research title, primary objectives, and details about the researchers. The second section examines the reading habits of Grade 7 to Grade 9 students through 15 statements categorized into three key indicators: reading interest and motivation, reading frequency and time allocation, and preferred reading materials. The third and final section evaluates students' reading comprehension through 15 statements structured around indicators such as working memory, vocabulary proficiency, and prior knowledge. A five-point Likert scale will be employed to measure responses. It has undergone expert validation and reliability testing to ensure the instrument's reliability and validity.

## Procedure

After the research proposal, the researchers will obtain a letter from the school principal granting permission to conduct the survey. With the permission secured, the researchers will seek consent from the research participants and formally start the survey by explaining the study's main objectives. The researchers utilized the Likert scale questionnaire, where respondents chose the option that best corresponded with how they felt about the statement. Once the survey is done, the researchers will secure it to keep its confidentiality and privacy. Then, the researcher will extract the data and analyze it. Lastly, the researchers will give the final report.

## Data Analysis

The data analysis and interpretation employed several statistical tools. Mean and standard deviation were used to address the first two objectives by describing the levels of reading habits and reading comprehension among Grade 7–9 high school students; the mean represents the average score, while the standard deviation quantifies the variability in the dataset. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient, a widely used technique for investigating the strength and direction of relationships between two quantitative variables (McClenaghan, 2024), was applied to assess the significance of the relationship between reading habits and comprehension. Regression analysis—a set of methods for estimating relationships between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables—was utilized to examine the presumed relationship between these variables further.

## Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical standards mandated by DOST-PHREB and SPCT Research and Publications Office guidelines to ensure participant safety, confidentiality, and informed consent. It examines the reading habits and comprehension of Grade 7–9 students at St. Peter's College of Toril, Inc., emphasizing social value, risk mitigation, privacy, justice, transparency, researcher qualification, facility adequacy, and community involvement. Informed consent is obtained through formal school permissions, while straightforward survey questions, optimal scheduling, and secure data storage protect respondents. Stratified random sampling ensures fairness and transparency by disclosing methods and potential conflicts. The study is conducted by qualified Grade 12 students under expert guidance, respects local cultures, and promotes inclusive, ethical practices throughout the research process.

## Results and Discussion

### The Level of Reading Habits Among Grade 7-9 Students

The results below show the level of reading habits of students as measured across various indicators.

#### Reading Interest and Motivation

Table 1 shows the reading habits of Grade 7-9 students regarding reading interest and motivation. This indicator received an overall mean score rating equivalent to 3.34. This numerical analysis is equivalent to a moderate descriptive level rating.

The findings indicate that students' reading habits are strongly influenced by their interests. The statement "I like to read books or stories related to my interest" received the highest mean score of 3.95 (very high descriptive level), underscoring the significant role of personal interest in fostering reading engagement. In contrast, "I like reading only the recommended books from the lecturers" scored



the lowest at 2.79 (moderate descriptive level), suggesting limited enthusiasm for prescribed academic texts. This could be due to the perceived irrelevance of the materials, lecture-dominated teaching methods, or time constraints arising from other academic demands.

**Table 1. *Reading Interest and Motivation***

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Description</i>
Reading Interest and Motivation			
1. I like to read books or stories related to my interests.	3.95	1.063	High
2. I enjoy reading when I am alone.	3.75	1.272	High
3. I like reading only the recommended books from the lecturers.	2.79	1.042	Moderate
4. I think reading is an essential part of life.	3.46	1.143	High
5. If the teacher discusses something interesting, I read more about it.	3.37	1.197	Moderate
Overall	3.34	1.212	Moderate

These findings align with Azizah and Pradita (2022), who highlight the influence of social and environmental factors on reading motivation, and Arofaha and Ningxia (2021), who emphasize the impact of interest-aligned materials in making reading enjoyable. Additionally, Chin et al. (2024) argue that motivation is the foundation for cultivating sustainable reading practices.

The results highlight the strong connection between personal interest and reading engagement, reinforcing the need for educators to integrate student preferences into reading programs. Encouraging students to explore interest-aligned materials can significantly enhance motivation, while the low enthusiasm for prescribed readings suggests a need to make academic texts more engaging and relevant. Structured interventions such as guided reading activities, book clubs, and personalized reading recommendations could be implemented to translate motivation into sustained reading habits. Also, fostering a culture that balances personal choice with academic requirements may help students develop lifelong reading habits.

### Reading Frequency and Time Allocation

Table 1.1 shows the reading habits among Grade 7-9 students regarding reading frequency and time allocation. This indicator received an overall mean score rating equivalent to 2.66. This numerical analysis is equivalent to a moderate descriptive level rating.

**Table 1.1. *Reading frequency and Time allocation***

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Description</i>
Reading frequency and Time allocation			
1. I set aside a specific time each day for reading.	2.70	1.184	Moderate
2. I spend a lot of my leisure time in reading.	2.54	1.161	Low
3. I find time to read even on my busy weekdays.	2.56	1.276	Low
4. I allocate a significant portion of my daily routine to reading.	2.62	1.173	Moderate
5. I spend more time reading on weekends than on weekdays.	2.88	1.289	Moderate
Overall	2.66	1.222	Moderate

The findings reveal that students tend to allocate more time for reading on weekends, as reflected by the statement, "I spend more time reading on weekends than on weekdays," which received the highest mean score of 2.88 (moderate descriptive level). This suggests that fewer academic and extracurricular commitments on weekends provide more opportunities for reading. In contrast, the statement "I spend a lot of my leisure time reading" scored the lowest at 2.54 (low descriptive level), highlighting the limited integration of reading into students' daily leisure activities. These results point to a critical gap in establishing reading as a consistent habit. Sartika (2020) emphasizes that sustained reading, regardless of timing, is essential for developing literacy skills, while Bishry (2021) advocates embedding reading into both academic and leisure activities to foster long-term engagement.

The findings suggest that while students may have more time for reading on weekends, reading is not yet fully embedded in their daily routines. To address this, schools and educators can implement strategies to encourage more frequent reading. Initiatives such as weekend reading challenges or personalized reading schedules could capitalize on students' increased reading time during weekends. Additionally, incorporating reading into leisure activities—through book clubs, storytelling sessions, or digital reading platforms—can make reading more engaging and habitual. By bridging the gap between academic and leisure reading, these interventions can help cultivate a stronger reading culture. As motivation drives engagement, the consistent allocation of time for reading is crucial in forming sustainable reading habits. The next consideration—types of reading materials—further influences the depth and richness of students' reading experiences, making content diversity an essential factor in literacy development.

### Types of Materials

Table 1.2 shows the reading habits of Grade 7-9 students in terms of the types of materials they use. This indicator received an overall mean score rating equivalent to 3.17. This numerical analysis is equivalent to a moderate descriptive level rating.

The findings highlight students' strong preference for fiction, as reflected in the statement "I enjoy reading fiction," which received the highest mean score of 4.02 (high descriptive level). This underscores the appeal of engaging and imaginative content, aligning with Amalia et al. (2024), who emphasize the role of appealing materials in enhancing motivation and comprehension. Similarly, Balan et al. (2019) assert that exposure to diverse reading materials fosters critical thinking and verbal fluency. The accessibility and relatability

of fiction further reinforce this preference, as noted by Januarty (2018), who observed that engaging narratives captivate young readers. In contrast, the statement "I often read magazines" received the lowest score of 2.67 (moderate descriptive level), indicating that magazine reading is less frequent. This may reflect shifts in media consumption habits, where digital content and other reading materials take precedence over traditional print media.

Table 1.2. *Types of Materials*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Description</i>
Types of Materials			
1. I love reading online articles	3.53	1.264	High
2. I often read magazines	2.67	1.282	Moderate
3. I enjoy reading fiction.	4.02	1.162	High
4. I like reading academic textbooks.	2.85	1.208	Moderate
5. I like reading textbooks of Filipino authors.	2.78	1.275	Moderate
Overall	3.17	1.343	Moderate

The strong preference for fiction presents an opportunity for educators and parents to use it as a gateway to broader reading habits. While fiction engages and inspires, integrating other genres—such as biographies, nonfiction, and informational texts—can enrich students' learning experiences. Initiatives such as thematic book fairs, storytelling competitions, and curated reading lists can encourage the exploration of diverse genres, fostering a more well-rounded reading culture. Just as consistent reading time reinforces habits, the variety and relevance of reading materials further engage students, contributing to a more comprehensive and meaningful reading experience. Together, motivation, time allocation, and material selection form a holistic approach to strengthening students' reading habits.

### Overall Level of Reading Habits Among Grade 7-9 Students

Table 1.3 summarizes the overall reading habits of Grade 7–9 students using three indicators: Reading Interest and Motivation, Reading Frequency and Time Allocation, and Types of Materials. The overall mean score of 3.10 indicates moderate engagement. Among the indicators, Reading Interest and Motivation scored highest at 3.34, suggesting moderate enthusiasm, followed by Types of Materials at 3.17, which reflects varied reading engagement. In contrast, Reading Frequency and Time Allocation scored lowest at 2.66, highlighting a relative weakness in consistent reading practices.

Table 1.3. *Overall Level of Reading Habits Among Grade 7-9 Students*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. Reading Interest and Motivation	3.34	1.212	Moderate
2. Reading frequency and Time allocation	2.66	1.222	Moderate
3. Types of Materials	3.17	1.343	Moderate
Overall	3.10	1.303	Moderate

The results highlight the multifaceted nature of reading habits, with various factors contributing differently to students' overall engagement. While students demonstrate a moderate level of interest and diversity in reading materials, the lower scores in reading frequency and time allocation suggest a challenge in making reading a consistent part of their routines. This inconsistency could hinder long-term literacy development, as regular practice is essential for improving comprehension and critical thinking skills. Azizah and Pradita (2022) emphasize that reading habits are shaped by social and environmental influences, with consistent engagement playing a crucial role in habit formation. Similarly, Sartika (2020) stresses that the frequency and duration of reading directly impact literacy gains, highlighting the need to address gaps in students' reading routines.

To foster more consistent reading habits, schools and educators can implement targeted strategies such as structured reading programs that allocate dedicated time for reading within the school day, embedding reading activities across subjects, and encouraging family support for daily reading at home. Expanding access to a wider range of reading materials—such as fiction, nonfiction, and multimedia texts—while incorporating incentive systems to reward consistent reading behaviors can further enhance motivation. By addressing these areas, educators can cultivate a stronger reading culture that not only improves academic performance but also fosters a lifelong appreciation for reading. While the findings indicate moderate engagement, they also present significant opportunities for improvement through strategies that nurture interest, increase reading frequency, and diversify materials, ultimately promoting a more sustained and enriching reading experience among Grade 7–9 students.

### Level of Reading Comprehension of Student

The results below show the level of reading comprehension of students as measured across various indicators.

#### Working Memory

Shown in Table 2 is the level of reading comprehension among Grade 7–9 students in terms of working memory, which received an overall mean score of 3.28. This result corresponds to a moderate descriptive level, indicating that students demonstrate an average capacity to utilize working memory in supporting their reading comprehension skills.

Table 2. *Working Memory*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Description</i>
Working Memory			
1. I have difficulty remembering what I have just read.	3.14	1.280	Moderate
2. I have difficulty understanding the meaning of the text I read.	2.81	1.205	Moderate
3. I need to re-read sentences several times to understand them.	3.39	1.226	Moderate
4. I re-read parts of a passage when I do not understand them.	3.62	1.205	High
5. I can remember important details right after I finish reading a passage.	3.45	1.053	High
Overall	3.28	1.227	Moderate

The statement "I re-read parts of a passage when I do not understand them" received the highest mean score of 3.62 (high descriptive level), indicating that students actively employ working memory strategies, such as re-reading, to enhance comprehension. In contrast, the statement "I have difficulty understanding the meaning of the text I read" had the lowest mean score of 2.81 (moderate descriptive level), suggesting that while comprehension challenges exist, they are not widespread. These findings align with Chatham and Badre (2015), who emphasize the crucial role of working memory in processing and retaining textual information. Similarly, Mahshanian et al. (2023) highlight the link between working memory engagement and improved comprehension, reinforcing Perfetti and Stafura's (2014) active processing model, which suggests that re-reading helps mitigate cognitive load and enhances understanding.

The results suggest that students are proactive in managing comprehension difficulties through re-reading strategies, demonstrating a reliance on working memory. However, moderate challenges in understanding texts indicate room for improvement in cognitive processing and retention skills. To further strengthen students' working memory capacity and reading comprehension, strategies such as chunking information, using mnemonic devices, and providing structured reading guides may be beneficial. These approaches can help students manage complex texts more effectively and develop stronger reading skills. While working memory supports cognitive processing, a well-developed vocabulary is equally essential for deep comprehension and engagement with texts. Together, these elements form the foundation for effective reading comprehension, ensuring that students can process, retain, and interpret complex material more efficiently.

## Vocabulary

Table 2.1 shows the level of reading comprehension among Grade 7-9 students in terms of vocabulary. This indicator received an overall mean score rating equivalent to 3.75. This numerical analysis is equivalent to a high descriptive level rating.

Table 2.1. *Vocabulary*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Description</i>
Vocabulary			
1. I can understand the basic usage and meaning of words I read.	3.88	1.126	High
2. I know which words are important for me to learn.	3.93	0.985	High
3. I can tell if a new word is important for understanding a passage.	3.78	1.023	High
4. When I meet a new word or phrase, I know clearly whether I need to remember it.	3.51	1.115	High
5. I can tell if a new word is relevant to understanding the text.	3.66	1.140	High
Overall	3.75	1.089	High

The results indicate that students exhibit confidence in identifying essential vocabulary, as reflected in the highest mean score of 3.93 (high descriptive level) for the statement, "I know which words are important for me to learn." Conversely, the lowest mean score of 3.51 (high descriptive level) for the statement, "When I meet a new word or phrase, I know clearly whether I need to remember it," suggests a need for improvement in recognizing which words are critical for retention. These findings align with Vrhovec and Soršak's (2024) assertion that vocabulary breadth and depth significantly influence comprehension. Schmitt (2014) also emphasizes that a well-developed vocabulary enables students to engage with complex texts, while Shivers (2019) highlights its role in strengthening cognitive processing and comprehension.

While students demonstrate strong confidence in identifying key vocabulary, the slightly lower score in determining word retention suggests a gap in metacognitive awareness of vocabulary importance. This underscores the need for targeted instructional strategies to enhance vocabulary acquisition. Integrating explicit vocabulary instruction, such as word mapping, context-based learning, and personalized vocabulary lists, can help students refine their ability to select and retain key terms. Strengthening these skills will not only improve vocabulary knowledge but also contribute to overall reading comprehension and academic performance. Since vocabulary serves as a linguistic foundation for decoding text, its integration with prior knowledge further enhances comprehension by facilitating connections between new and existing information.

## Prior Knowledge

Shown in Table 2.2 is the Level of Reading Comprehension among Grade 7-9 students in terms of Prior Knowledge. This indicator achieved an overall mean score of 3.75, which corresponds to a high descriptive level rating.



Table 2.2. *Prior Knowledge*

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Prior Knowledge			
1. I can connect previous knowledge from different sources in the passage.	3.66	1.092	High
2. I use my background knowledge to help me understand new information in the text.	3.82	0.978	High
3. I can imagine some scenes described in the passage to facilitate my reading comprehension.	3.88	1.062	High
4. I use my prior knowledge and reasoning skills to predict the main ideas in the passage.	3.69	1.075	High
5. I integrate new information from the passage with existing knowledge for a deeper understanding.	3.71	1.087	High
Overall	3.75	1.061	High

The highest mean score of 3.88 (high descriptive level) for the statement, “I can imagine some scenes described in the passage to facilitate my reading comprehension,” underscores students’ strong ability to employ visualization as a comprehension strategy. This finding suggests that students effectively use mental imagery to understand and retain information, reinforcing the importance of visualization techniques in reading instruction. In contrast, the lowest mean score of 3.66 (high descriptive level) for “I can connect previous knowledge from different sources in the passage” suggests challenges in synthesizing information from multiple sources. These findings align with the study of Belouiza et al. (2024), which highlights the critical role of prior knowledge as a foundation for understanding new content. Similarly, Ambrose and Lovett (2014) argue that integrating new information with existing knowledge enhances comprehension and retention. This result indicates that while students excel in visualization, they may struggle with making meaningful connections between different knowledge domains, which could limit their deeper understanding and critical analysis of texts.

To address this gap, targeted instructional strategies such as graphic organizers, cross-disciplinary activities, and scaffolded discussions can facilitate deeper connections between varied knowledge sources. By incorporating these strategies, educators can provide structured opportunities for students to integrate complex ideas, ultimately strengthening their ability to synthesize information across subjects. Encouraging interdisciplinary learning and supporting students in linking prior knowledge with new concepts can enhance both comprehension and critical thinking skills. Fostering a holistic approach that includes vocabulary development, prior knowledge activation, and working memory utilization will contribute to improved reading comprehension. Strengthening these areas ensures that students not only visualize content effectively but also develop the ability to connect and apply knowledge in diverse contexts.

Overall Level of Reading Comprehension Among Grade 7-9 Students

Table 2.3 presents the Overall Level of Reading Comprehension among Grade 7-9 students, assessed through three key indicators: Working Memory, Vocabulary, and Prior Knowledge. The overall mean score for Reading Comprehension was 3.60, corresponding to a high descriptive level rating.

Among the indicators, Vocabulary and Prior Knowledge ranked highest, each with a mean score of 3.75 (high descriptive level), suggesting that students effectively utilize these skills to enhance comprehension. In contrast, Working Memory recorded the lowest mean score of 3.28 (moderate descriptive level), indicating a potential area for improvement. While still within a positive range, this score suggests that strengthening students' working memory could further enhance their reading comprehension.

Table 2.3. *Overall Level of Reading Habits Among Grade 7-9 Students*

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1. Working Memory	3.28	1.227	Moderate
2. Vocabulary	3.75	1.089	High
3. Prior Knowledge	3.75	1.061	High
Overall	3.60	1.149	High

The results indicate that students generally demonstrate strong reading comprehension skills, effectively utilizing cognitive components such as working memory, vocabulary, and prior knowledge. The high overall rating reflects their proficiency in processing and interpreting information, highlighting their ability to comprehend texts through these key cognitive mechanisms. This suggests that students possess a solid foundation in reading comprehension, enabling them to engage with texts effectively. These findings align with the Perfetti and Stafura (2014) model of reading comprehension, which emphasizes the interplay of vocabulary, prior knowledge, and working memory in text understanding. The high scores in Vocabulary and Prior Knowledge suggest strengths in linguistic familiarity and information integration, as supported by Vrhovec and Soršak (2024) and Belouiza et al. (2024). These strengths indicate that students can efficiently recognize words and relate new information to existing knowledge, enhancing their overall comprehension.

However, the moderate score in Working Memory indicates a potential area for improvement, consistent with Clarke et al. (2014), who emphasize the need to enhance cognitive resources for better comprehension. This suggests that while students can recall and process information, additional support in strengthening working memory—such as chunking strategies, retrieval practice, and cognitive exercises—could further optimize their reading performance. A holistic approach that targets all three cognitive components—

vocabulary expansion, prior knowledge activation, and working memory reinforcement—will further improve students' reading comprehension skills. Implementing strategies that balance these areas will ensure a more comprehensive and effective reading development process.

### Test of Influence of Reading Habits on Reading Comprehension

Table 3 presents the regression analysis on the influence of reading habits on the reading comprehension of Grade 7-9 students at St. Peter's College of Toril, Inc. The analysis yielded a Multiple R-value of 0.610, indicating a moderate positive correlation, while the  $R^2$  value of 0.372 suggests that reading habits account for 37.20% of the variance in comprehension scores. The Adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.370 further reinforces this relationship, confirming its strength after adjusting for model complexity. These findings underscore the significant role of reading habits in comprehension, aligning with the principles of Schema Theory.

Table 3. *Test of Influence of Reading Habits on Reading Comprehension*

Variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Standard Error	T-Value	P-Value	Alpha Value	Interpretation
Reading Comprehension	0.503	0.585	2.280	0.023	0.05	Significant
Constant	0.721	0.060	11.933			
Multiple R	0.610	Moderate Positive Correlations				
	0.372					
	0.370					

These findings align with Schema Theory, which posits that comprehension results from the interaction between a reader's prior knowledge and the text. Rumelhart (1980) explains that understanding new information requires activating existing knowledge structures or schemata. The Multiple R-values of 0.610 indicate a moderate positive correlation, demonstrating that regular reading habits help students develop and refine these schemata, thereby enhancing their ability to interpret and understand texts. This suggests that students who engage in frequent reading are more likely to strengthen their cognitive frameworks, allowing for better text comprehension.

Furthermore, the  $R^2$  value of 0.372 reveals that reading habits account for 37.20% of the variance in students' reading comprehension scores, reinforcing Schema Theory's assertion that consistent reading engagement strengthens schemata essential for processing complex information. The Adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.370 confirms the stability of these results, ensuring that the relationship between reading habits and comprehension remains robust even after accounting for potential model overfitting. This highlights the direct contribution of reading habits to comprehension while acknowledging that other cognitive and linguistic factors also play a role.

These findings underscore the theoretical and practical significance of Schema Theory in reading comprehension. While reading habits explain a substantial portion of comprehension variance, the remaining unexplained factors highlight the complex interplay of prior knowledge, cognitive skills, and linguistic abilities. The regression analysis further emphasizes the importance of cultivating consistent reading practices to enhance cognitive processing and deepen textual understanding. Encouraging students to engage with diverse reading materials can help them expand their schemata, ultimately improving their academic performance and cognitive development.

### Conclusions

The researchers concluded that the reading habits of Grade 7–9 students at St. Peter's College of Toril, Inc. were moderately developed, with interest-driven reading significantly influencing engagement. While students demonstrated strong comprehension supported by vocabulary and prior knowledge, challenges with working memory were evident. Given the correlation between reading habits and comprehension, targeted interventions such as structured reading programs and memory-enhancing exercises are recommended to strengthen literacy skills. Implementing guided reading schedules and cognitive strategies can help improve engagement, comprehension, and overall academic performance.

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are prioritized to enhance students' reading habits and comprehension skills. First, schools should implement structured reading sessions by allocating dedicated time for guided reading, silent reading, and interactive storytelling, directly addressing the lack of consistent reading practice. Strengthening explicit instruction in comprehension strategies, such as summarization, inferencing, and critical analysis, is also essential to improve students' ability to engage with texts. Additionally, integrating digital tools like reading platforms, audiobooks, and interactive e-books can make reading more accessible and engaging, particularly for diverse learners.

To further support literacy development, personalized reading plans should be introduced, allowing educators to tailor reading activities based on students' proficiency levels and interests. Encouraging peer learning through book clubs and literature circles can also foster deeper comprehension and motivation to read. Moreover, continuous professional development for teachers is crucial to equip them with effective literacy instruction techniques, modern teaching strategies, and the ability to integrate technology into reading interventions. Regular assessment and feedback mechanisms, such as comprehension quizzes and student reflections, should be implemented to track progress and refine instructional approaches.

Lastly, parental involvement should be strengthened through home reading programs, literacy workshops, and recommended reading

lists, reinforcing reading habits beyond the classroom. These recommendations, prioritized based on their potential impact and feasibility, collectively create a structured and sustainable approach to improving students' reading proficiency. By adopting these strategies, schools can foster a stronger reading culture and equip students with essential literacy skills for lifelong learning.

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