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Socio-emotional Intelligence of Frustration Level Readers

Hansel P. Gaspe[1], Ma. Rosa S. Caraballe, PhD[2]
[1]Teacher II, Barangay Guinbala-on National High School, Silay City, Negros Occidental, Philippines
[2]MAED English Chairperson, Carlos Hilado Memorial State University, Talisay City, Negros Occidental, Philippines

Email: hansel.gaspe@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study assessed the socio-emotional intelligence of frustration-level readers in a secondary school in Negros Occidental, Philippines, during School Year 2022–2023, as a basis for enhancing an existing school reading program. A quantitative descriptive-survey design was employed involving 35 purposively selected junior high school students from Grades 7–10. Data were collected using a Hiligaynon-translated Panorama Social Emotional Learning Survey and analyzed through means and standard deviations. Findings revealed that respondents demonstrated high growth mindset (M = 3.77), average grit (M = 2.74), self-management (M = 3.07), social awareness (M = 3.36), and self-efficacy (M = 2.55). Female respondents exhibited higher grit (M = 3.78) than males (M = 2.32), while students in Grades 9–10 demonstrated lower grit and growth mindset than those in Grades 7–8. Respondents generally reported positive teacher-student relationships but expressed comparatively weaker perceptions of school safety. These findings indicate that frustration-level readers possess encouraging socio-emotional strengths but require additional support in perseverance, academic confidence, and perceived safety. The study recommends integrating targeted socio-emotional learning activities into Project RAISE, emphasizing self-efficacy, grit, and supportive learning environments. Although limited to 35 respondents from one secondary school, the findings provide context-specific evidence for strengthening reading interventions. The study contributes a practical foundation for developing holistic, learner-centered reading programs that address both literacy development and socio-emotional needs.

Keywords: *Frustration-Level Readers, Grit, Growth Mindset, Reading Intervention, School Safety, Self-Efficacy, Socio-Emotional Intelligence*

1. INTRODUCTION

Socio-emotional intelligence plays an important role in students' academic engagement, personal development, and ability to respond to learning challenges. It encompasses competencies that enable learners to manage emotions, maintain motivation, establish positive relationships, and navigate social environments. Beyond cognitive abilities, these competencies influence how students approach academic tasks, respond to difficulties, and participate in classroom activities. Danner et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of social and emotional competencies in supporting perseverance, interpersonal relationships, and effective responses to challenging situations. Similarly, Estrada et al. (2021) highlighted the relevance of emotional competencies to students' academic performance.

1.1. Background and Context of the Study

Reading proficiency remains a major educational concern, particularly among learners experiencing persistent difficulties in comprehension and word recognition. According to UNICEF (2022), approximately 64% of ten-year-old children globally were unable to demonstrate minimum reading proficiency. In the Philippines, the Department of Education has implemented reading assessment and intervention initiatives, including the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), to identify learners at independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels (Department of Education, 2018). These initiatives primarily emphasize decoding, fluency, and comprehension. However, reading difficulties may also involve motivational, emotional, and environmental challenges. Students experiencing repeated academic setbacks may demonstrate reduced confidence, limited perseverance, and reluctance to participate in reading activities. Yu et al. (2023) identified social-emotional skills as relevant factors in reading ability, emphasizing the importance of considering students' emotional and cognitive development together. Within this context, the present study examined frustration-level readers in a secondary school in Negros Occidental, Philippines, during School Year 2022–2023. It focused on student competencies and perceived school supports, including grit, growth mindset, self-management, social awareness, self-efficacy, school climate, teacher-student relationships, sense of belonging, and school safety. Understanding these dimensions provides a basis for developing reading interventions that address both academic and socio-emotional needs. Recent research has also examined socio-emotional competencies and school adjustment during adolescence (Mella et al., 2021).

1.2. Research Problem

Reading interventions in Philippine schools commonly prioritize the development of foundational literacy skills, particularly word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. Although these competencies are essential, difficulties in reading may coexist with emotional and motivational challenges that influence learners' willingness to engage in academic activities. Yu et al. (2023) documented associations between social-emotional skills and reading ability, while Castro et al. (2021) examined socio-emotional and cognitive skills in relation to school performance. More recently, Roque et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of parental motivation and support in addressing students' reading challenges. Students classified at the frustration reading level require particular attention because their difficulties may affect their classroom participation and perceptions of academic competence. Socio-emotional characteristics such as grit, growth mindset, and self-efficacy may shape their responses to repeated learning challenges. Likewise, teacher-student relationships, school climate, belonging, and perceived safety constitute important aspects of their educational experiences. In the selected secondary school in Negros Occidental, 35 junior high school students were identified as frustration-level readers through the Phil-IRI assessment during School Year 2022–2023. However, their socio-emotional competencies and perceptions of school support required systematic assessment to inform the enhancement of existing reading interventions. Thus, an

important concern remained regarding how schools could identify and address these learners' socio-emotional needs alongside their literacy difficulties.

1.3. Research Gap

Existing studies have established the relevance of socio-emotional competencies to academic performance, behavioral development, and students' adjustment to educational environments. Estrada et al. (2021) examined emotional intelligence in relation to academic performance, while Santamaría-Villar et al. (2021) investigated socio-emotional competencies in promoting positive school interactions. Yu et al. (2023) further demonstrated associations between social-emotional skills and reading ability. These studies provide important evidence concerning the educational relevance of socio-emotional development. However, their findings do not directly establish the socio-emotional profiles of Filipino junior high school students specifically classified as frustration-level readers. In particular, the combined assessment of individual competencies and perceived environmental supports across grade level, sex, and parental educational attainment remains insufficiently addressed in the selected school context. Furthermore, translating such assessments into improvements in existing school reading programs requires practical consideration. The present study addressed this contextual and application-oriented gap by identifying socio-emotional strengths and areas requiring support among frustration-level readers as a basis for enhancing Project RAISE. Portela-Pino et al. (2021) additionally examined gender differences in socio-emotional skills and student performance.

1.4. Purpose and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the socio-emotional intelligence of frustration-level readers in a secondary school in Negros Occidental, Philippines, during School Year 2022–2023. Specifically, it assessed student competencies in terms of grit, growth mindset, self-management, social awareness, and self-efficacy, as well as student supports and environment concerning school climate, teacher-student relationships, sense of belonging, and school safety. These dimensions were examined collectively and when respondents were grouped according to grade level, sex, and parental educational attainment. The study also sought to identify priority areas for socio-emotional development and utilize the findings as a basis for enhancing Project RAISE (Reading as Instrument to Scholastic Excellence), the school's existing reading intervention program.

1.5. Significance and Practical Contribution of the Study

This study provides school administrators, reading coordinators, teachers, and guidance personnel with context-specific information about the socio-emotional needs of frustration-level readers. Its findings may guide the development of reading interventions that incorporate perseverance, academic confidence, emotional regulation, and supportive classroom relationships alongside literacy instruction. The study also provides an empirical basis for enhancing Project RAISE through activities responsive to learners' identified competencies and perceptions of their school environment. For educational administrators, the findings may inform teacher training, learner-support initiatives, and resource allocation for holistic reading interventions. Furthermore, the study offers a foundation for future investigations involving broader student populations and additional factors influencing socio-emotional development.

1.6. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Alignment

This study primarily supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by emphasizing inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for students experiencing reading difficulties. Its assessment of socio-emotional competencies provides evidence for strengthening reading interventions that address both literacy development and learners' emotional needs. The research also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) through its attention to emotional regulation, self-efficacy, supportive

relationships, and perceived school safety. By informing the enhancement of Project RAISE, the study contributes to school-based approaches that recognize the relationship between educational participation and socio-emotional well-being. These contributions support the development of learning environments responsive to students' academic, emotional, and social needs.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-survey research design to assess the socio-emotional intelligence of frustration-level readers in a secondary school in Negros Occidental, Philippines. The descriptive approach was appropriate for examining students' socio-emotional competencies and perceptions of school support without manipulating variables or establishing causal relationships. Data were collected through a standardized survey questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The design enabled the researcher to describe patterns in respondents' socio-emotional intelligence when considered collectively and grouped according to sex, grade level, and parental educational attainment. Kautz et al. (2021) described the use of social-emotional learning and school climate surveys to inform school decision-making.

2.2. Research Locale

The study was conducted in a secondary school in Negros Occidental, Philippines, during School Year 2022–2023. Respondents comprised 35 junior high school students identified as frustration-level readers through the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). The participants included 24 Grade 7 students, three Grade 8 students, three Grade 9 students, and five Grade 10 students. Of these, 25 were male and 10 were female. Parental educational attainment was categorized into elementary level (10), elementary graduate (3), high school level (6), high school graduate (8), college level (3), and college graduate (5). These characteristics served as grouping variables in the analysis.

2.3. Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents who possessed characteristics directly relevant to the research objectives. Eligible participants were junior high school students from Grades 7–10 who had been assessed and classified as frustration-level readers by the school's Reading Program Committee using the Phil-IRI during October–November 2022. A total of 35 identified students participated in the study. Selection was based on their documented reading classification rather than random selection. No statistical sample-size computation was reported, as the study specifically targeted students meeting the established inclusion criteria.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher obtained permission from the school head to conduct the study and access the list of identified frustration-level readers. Parental informed consent was secured through class advisers, followed by student assent before participation. Face-to-face surveys were administered at the school's Learning Resource Center during school days. The researcher facilitated groups of five respondents, reading the Hiligaynon questions aloud and repeating them when necessary to ensure comprehension. Participants marked their selected responses, which were subsequently collected and prepared for statistical analysis. The questionnaire was adapted from the Panorama Social Emotional Learning Survey user guide (Panorama Education, 2017).

2.5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, to determine respondents' socio-emotional intelligence across the nine dimensions. Results were examined collectively and grouped according to sex, grade level, and parental educational attainment. Mean scores were interpreted using a five-point scale: 1.00–1.49 (Very Low), 1.50–2.49 (Low), 2.50–3.49 (Average), 3.50–4.49 (High), and 4.50–5.00 (Very High). Standard deviations described response variability. Cronbach's alpha was used during instrument reliability testing. No inferential statistical tests were reported.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards included obtaining parental informed consent and student assent because the respondents were minors. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw without academic consequences. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, anonymity in reporting, and protection from discrimination. The researcher-maintained objectivity throughout data collection and ensured that responses were used exclusively for research purposes. Completed questionnaires were shredded and recycled following the study to protect participants' privacy.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Socio-Emotional Competencies of Frustration-Level Readers

The findings revealed that growth mindset obtained the highest overall mean (M = 3.77, SD = 0.62), interpreted as high. Meanwhile, social awareness (M = 3.36, SD = 0.70), self-management (M = 3.07, SD = 0.67), grit (M = 2.74, SD = 0.89), and self-efficacy (M = 2.55, SD = 0.67) were rated average. Self-efficacy recorded the lowest mean, suggesting that respondents had comparatively weaker confidence in accomplishing academic tasks despite maintaining positive beliefs about their capacity to improve. These findings highlight a distinction between believing that abilities can develop and demonstrating confidence and perseverance when facing academic challenges. When grouped according to sex, female respondents demonstrated high grit (M = 3.78, SD = 0.70), whereas males exhibited low grit (M = 2.32, SD = 0.55). Both groups demonstrated high growth mindset, although males recorded higher self-management (M = 3.21) than females (M = 2.73). Across grade levels, Grades 7 and 8 exhibited average grit and high growth mindset, while Grades 9 and 10 demonstrated low grit and average growth mindset. Self-management remained average across all grade levels. Self-efficacy was particularly low among Grade 8 (M = 1.93) and Grade 10 (M = 2.48) respondents, while Grades 7 and 9 recorded average levels. These patterns indicate that perseverance, academic confidence, and beliefs about improvement varied across student groups, with comparatively weaker ratings appearing in selected higher grade levels.

Parental educational attainment also revealed variations. Respondents whose parents were elementary graduates (M = 2.13) or had high school-level education (M = 2.33) demonstrated low grit, while the remaining groups exhibited average grit. Growth mindset was high across most parental education categories, except among respondents whose parents were elementary graduates (M = 2.89). Self-management was high among respondents whose parents had high school-level (M = 3.52) and college-level education (M = 3.74). Furthermore, social awareness was high among respondents whose parents had college-level (M = 3.88) or college-graduate education (M = 3.70), but low among those whose parents were elementary graduates (M = 2.21). Self-efficacy was also low among respondents whose parents had elementary-level (M = 2.36) or elementary-graduate education (M = 2.07). These variations suggest that parental educational attainment may be relevant to students' socio-emotional experiences, although the findings do not establish a statistically significant relationship. The results are consistent with Hoferichter and Raufelder (2023), who discussed grit and school engagement in relation to students' academic experiences, and Won and Lee (2022), who examined parental expectations and

students' grit. Similarly, Limeri et al. (2020) emphasized the relevance of learning experiences to students' beliefs about their abilities, while Du et al. (2023) highlighted parental involvement in the development of grit. Within Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, the findings reinforce the importance of confidence and motivation in language learning. Accordingly, reading interventions may incorporate achievable learning goals, constructive feedback, perseverance-building activities, and parental engagement. Overall, growth mindset emerged as a relative strength, while self-efficacy and grit were identified as important areas for socio-emotional development.

3.2. Student Supports and Learning Environment of Frustration-Level Readers

The findings showed that teacher-student relationships obtained the highest overall mean (M = 3.51, SD = 0.88), interpreted as high. School climate (M = 3.32, SD = 0.73), sense of belonging (M = 3.31, SD = 0.60), and school safety (M = 2.87, SD = 0.69) were rated average. These results indicate that respondents generally maintained positive relationships with teachers but demonstrated comparatively weaker perceptions of school safety. The difference suggests that supportive teacher-student interactions may coexist with concerns regarding other aspects of the school environment. When grouped according to sex, both male (M = 3.50) and female (M = 3.56) respondents reported high teacher-student relationships. Males demonstrated slightly higher school climate ratings (M = 3.37) than females (M = 3.20), whereas females reported higher sense of belonging (M = 3.40) and school safety (M = 3.18) than males (M = 3.28 and M = 2.75, respectively). Across grade levels, Grade 8 respondents recorded high school climate (M = 3.87), while Grades 7, 9, and 10 reported average levels. Teacher-student relationships were high among Grades 8 (M = 3.80) and 9 (M = 4.13), but average among Grades 7 and 10. All grade levels demonstrated average perceptions of belonging and safety, with school safety means ranging from 2.55 to 2.94. These findings indicate generally favorable teacher-student relationships alongside consistently moderate perceptions of school safety.

Parental educational attainment revealed additional variations in school experiences. Respondents whose parents had elementary-level, high school-level, or college-level education demonstrated high school climate ratings, while the remaining groups reported average levels. Teacher-student relationships were high among respondents whose parents had elementary-level, high school-graduate, or college-level education. In terms of belonging and safety, respondents whose parents had college-level education reported high belonging (M = 3.60) but low school safety (M = 2.44). Other parental education groups generally demonstrated average ratings in these dimensions. These findings suggest that students' perceptions of school support differed across demographic categories, although no consistent pattern was established. The findings correspond with Forsberg et al. (2021), who emphasized teachers' role in establishing supportive learning environments, and Coristine et al. (2022), who discussed the relevance of teacher-student relationships to socio-emotional development. Similarly, Korpershoek et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of school belonging, while the OECD (2020) associated school connectedness with educational experiences. Although the present study did not directly measure bullying or violence, the comparatively lower school safety ratings indicate the importance of strengthening inclusive classroom practices, positive peer interactions, and accessible mechanisms for reporting safety concerns. Overall, supportive teacher-student relationships emerged as an institutional strength, while perceived school safety remained an area requiring attention.

3.3. Proposed Enhancement of Project RAISE Based on Socio-Emotional Findings

The findings served as the basis for enhancing Project RAISE (Reading as Instrument to Scholastic Excellence), the school's existing reading intervention program. Although respondents demonstrated high growth mindset (M = 3.77) and positive teacher-student

relationships (M = 3.51), comparatively lower ratings in self-efficacy (M = 2.55), grit (M = 2.74), and school safety (M = 2.87) identified priority areas for improvement. These findings suggest that reading interventions should address not only literacy skills but also students' confidence, perseverance, emotional experiences, and perceptions of the learning environment. Accordingly, the proposed enhancement incorporated socio-emotional learning into existing reading activities to provide more comprehensive academic and emotional support. The proposed program was designed as a year-round intervention for identified frustration-level readers in Grades 7–12 during School Year 2023–2024. Its objectives included improving reading proficiency from frustration to instructional and eventually independent levels while strengthening students' socio-emotional competencies. Recommended activities included goal setting, positive reinforcement, peer tutoring, collaborative learning, educational games, and the integration of information and communication technology. The proposal also emphasized coordination among school administrators, reading teachers, reading coordinators, and guidance personnel to provide appropriate learning activities and emotional support.

The proposed enhancement aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety in language learning. By incorporating socio-emotional learning into reading instruction, Project RAISE may provide a more supportive environment for students experiencing reading difficulties. However, the proposed enhancement was not implemented or evaluated as part of the study; therefore, its effectiveness remains to be established. Overall, the findings provide an evidence-informed basis for strengthening the school's reading intervention program through the integration of literacy development and socio-emotional support.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that frustration-level readers generally demonstrated a high growth mindset but average levels of grit, self-management, social awareness, and self-efficacy, with self-efficacy emerging as the weakest competency. Differences were observed according to sex, grade level, and parental educational attainment, particularly in perseverance, confidence, and self-management. Female respondents demonstrated higher grit than males, while students in higher grade levels generally exhibited lower grit and growth mindset. Regarding student supports and environment, positive teacher-student relationships emerged as a strength, whereas school safety received the lowest rating. These findings indicate that frustration-level readers possess socio-emotional strengths but require additional support in developing academic confidence, perseverance, and perceptions of safety. Overall, the study provides a contextual basis for enhancing Project RAISE by integrating socio-emotional learning into existing reading interventions to address students' academic and emotional needs more comprehensively.

Based on the findings, school administrators and reading program coordinators should strengthen Project RAISE by incorporating socio-emotional learning activities that promote self-efficacy, grit, and positive attitudes toward reading. Reading teachers should provide achievable learning goals, constructive feedback, motivational activities, and individualized support to help students develop confidence and perseverance. Teachers may also integrate educational games, information and communication technology, peer tutoring, and collaborative learning to encourage participation and reduce learning-related stress. School administrators should maintain positive teacher-student relationships while strengthening school safety through inclusive classroom practices, anti-bullying awareness, and appropriate mechanisms for reporting concerns. Guidance counselors or designated personnel should collaborate with reading teachers in organizing socio-emotional learning activities and providing support to students experiencing difficulties. Parents should actively encourage their children's reading

development and emotional well-being. Future researchers are encouraged to examine additional factors, including socioeconomic status and parenting styles, to deepen understanding of students' socio-emotional experiences.

The study was limited to 35 purposively selected frustration-level readers from Grades 7–10 in one secondary school in Negros Occidental during School Year 2022–2023. Its quantitative descriptive design relied on self-reported responses obtained through the Panorama Social Emotional Learning Survey, with data analyzed using means and standard deviations. Consequently, the findings describe respondents' perceptions and competencies without establishing causal relationships or statistically significant differences among demographic groups. The limited sample and single-school setting restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future studies may involve larger and more diverse samples, examine additional socioeconomic and family-related variables, and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the proposed reading program enhancement.

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