



Strategies to Minimise Reading Difficulties in Junior Primary Phase

Pelagi Namutenya Mponda¹, Hilya Tulipomwene Shuulinawa Nghitoolwa², Isidor Haufiku³

¹ Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Ndiyona Secondary school, Kavango East Region, Namibia

² Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, I.K. Tjimuhiva Combined Schools, Postcode:13271, Eenhana, Namibia Country

³ Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Shaama Combined School, Postcode:13693, Eenhana, Namibia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received August 31, 2024

Revised May 28, 2025

Accepted July 14, 2025

Available online July 15, 2025

Kata Kunci:

Sekolah Dasar Negeri,
Meminimalkan, Kesulitan
Membaca, Strategi Membaca

Keywords:

Junior Primary, Minimise,
Reading Difficulties, Reading
Strategies

This is an open access article
under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.

Copyright © 2025 by Author.
Published by Program Studi
Pendidikan Guru Madrasah
Ibtidaiyah

ABSTRAK

Banyak pelajar di sekolah dasar tingkat awal mengalami kesulitan dalam membaca, dan banyak yang merasa sangat frustrasi sehingga mempertimbangkan untuk putus sekolah. Oleh karena itu, tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan membaca dan strategi untuk mengurangi tantangan tersebut di kalangan pelajar di fase dasar awal di Sirkuit Ndiyona, Wilayah Kavango Timur, Namibia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif untuk mengumpulkan data dari 13 guru sekolah dasar tingkat awal di tiga sekolah dasar terpilih di Wilayah Kavango Timur. Peneliti menggunakan metode pengambilan sampel purposif untuk memilih peserta. Wawancara dan kuesioner tidak terstruktur digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data untuk penelitian ini. Penelitian menemukan bahwa pelajar mengalami kesulitan membaca akibat disleksia. Kurangnya sumber daya di sekolah dasar juga menjadi faktor yang berkontribusi pada kesulitan membaca pelajar. Ada beberapa pendekatan untuk mendukung pelajar yang kesulitan membaca. Pertama dan terutama, guru harus memahami apa yang dimaksud dengan membaca untuk mengurangi kesulitan membaca yang dihadapi oleh siswa sekolah dasar. Selain itu, guru memiliki tanggung jawab untuk mengajarkan keterampilan pemahaman membaca dan mendorong kelancaran dalam membaca. Guru juga harus memotivasi pembaca yang kesulitan dan membuat akomodasi untuk siswa yang memiliki masalah membaca. Terakhir, guru harus melibatkan orang tua dalam pembelajaran anak-anak mereka dan mengikuti kegiatan pengembangan profesional.

ABSTRACT

Numerous learners in Junior primary school experience difficulties with reading, and many are getting so frustrated that they are considering dropping out. Hence, the purpose of this study was to identify reading challenges and strategies for reducing these challenges among learners in the junior primary phase in the Ndiyona Circuit, Kavango East Region, Namibia. The study used a qualitative research approach to collect data from 13 junior primary teachers in three selected primary schools in the Kavango-East Region. The researcher used a purposive sampling method to select the participants. Interviews and unstructured questionnaires were used to gather data for the study. The research found that learners experience dyslexic reading difficulties. Inadequate resources in primary schools are another factor contributing to learners' reading difficulties. There are several approaches for supporting learners who struggle with reading. First and foremost, teachers must comprehend what is meant by reading to lessen the reading difficulties faced by primary students. In addition, teachers have a responsibility to teach reading comprehension skills and to encourage fluency in reading. Teachers should also motivate struggling readers and make accommodations for students who have reading issues. Finally, teachers should involve parents in the learning of their children and take part in professional development activities.

INTRODUCTION

This study investigated challenges and strategies to minimize reading difficulties in the Junior Primary Phase in the Ndiyona circuit, Kavango East Region, Namibia. Reading is the act of examining a set of written symbols and comprehending or interpreting their meaning

*Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: ihaufiku2@gmail.com (Isidor Haufiku)

(Iser, 2022). According to Osman and Hayati (2022, 23), “human beings have been in the act of reading to understand the rapidly changing structure of society and to adapt to this structure, since the invention of writing to the present.” Therefore, reading difficulties among junior primary school learners are an issue of concern in any society. Reading is considered to be a basic need in the modern world of science and technology. However, many children in Namibia’s junior primary schools lack proper reading skills and cannot read properly. As Osman and Hayati (2022) noted, some learners have left school without gaining the requisite reading abilities while others read without comprehending what they are reading.

Hamilton (2023) highlights that reading is essential for children's success in the classroom, the workplace, and society at large. Still, a large number of children graduate from school having only attained minimal literacy. Therefore, reading is one of the most difficult skills for learners in schools. Since independence when English was made an official language in Namibia, learners have struggled to read or use this language in school, leading to poor results. Stated differently, English in Namibia is one of the compulsory subjects or promotional subjects in schools in the Namibian Curriculum for Basic Education and it is giving learners reading difficulties. The Ministry of Education (2015) clarify that learners learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process through a high degree of participation, contribution and production. Because of this, the development of reading abilities is essential to the learners' education. Without reading proficiency, learners cannot participate in learner-centred Education (LCE). Hence, when learners can read they gain confidence to become active participants.

It is imperative to conduct this study because it will benefit both teachers and learners in the Ndiyona circuit, the Kavango East Region, and Namibia overall. Teachers will learn various difficulties and approaches to reduce reading challenges in the junior primary phase. They will also be aware of some of the factors impeding students' reading proficiency in the classroom. Teachers will enhance their performance by employing a range of approaches to address these challenges. They will be able to recognize their areas of weakness and strengthen them. Likewise, teachers and language policymakers will be aware of some of the approaches that might be taken to address this issue. The Ministry of Education will also gain from this study since it will help develop campaigns, workshops, and training to improve junior primary teachers' proficiency in teaching reading. The country will attain excellent achievements at the senior secondary and advanced subsidiary levels (AS) if a solid foundation is built.

Numerous research works have been conducted regarding reading difficulties and strategies to minimize reading issues in the junior primary phase. For instance, the study conducted by Mohammed and Amponsah (2018) in Tehran, Iran emphasizes that individual characteristics can contribute to reading challenges in students, such as hearing impairments and difficulty processing individual letter sounds necessary for word recognition. Additionally, Karami's (2018) study investigated reading strategies that can reduce reading difficulties in learners in Tehran, Iran. This study reports that what differentiates between poor and good readers are reading strategies. This alludes that identifying effective reading strategies at the early grades can overcome the reading difficulties. This study has shown that participants are aware of some strategies and can reflect upon their reading, however, some strategies seemed harder to acquire and some learners faced difficulties in acquiring some complex strategies (Karami, 2018). This clarifies why numerous tactics can be employed, but not all of them are simple for learners to adopt; in fact, some of these strategies can be challenging.

Meanwhile, Gilakjani (2016) has also researched reading strategies in Lahijan, Iran. This study discovered that reading strategies have a great influence on the learners' reading comprehension ability whereby learners are not just inactive receivers of information but they are active makers of meaning. Further, Gilakjani (2016) allude that successful readers try to apply various skills to understand the meaning of the texts. Hence, Duke and Pearson (2021) highlight the importance of diverse and interactive reading strategies to improve comprehension skills. Readers should be involved in the reading practice by using different strategies to monitor their meaning. All of these strategies work together to construct the meaning process easily and effectively. This simply means that there is a positive influence on using correct reading strategies because it can prevent reading difficulties at the junior primary phase. Therefore, learners must be actively involved in reading lessons so that they can understand what they are reading. In the words of Griffith and Rasinski (2022), reading aloud and other stimulating activities help young readers gain confidence and make learning fun.

Moreover, Mzimane and Mantlana's (2017) study conducted in South Africa revealed that some teachers are interested in teaching reading, but others are not. Most use shared reading, reading aloud and independent reading. Teachers identify reading difficulties and put in place interventions and, where possible, prevent reading difficulties. Grade 0 teachers have not been trained on how to teach reading; they receive very limited knowledge when they attend workshops (Mzimane & Mantlana, 2017). This explains the way teachers can

contribute to some of their learners' reading issues since they are not passionate about teaching reading and have inadequate expertise and understanding of the term reading. Hence, Fien, Chard and Baker (2021) highlight that teachers should understand reading to promote educational equity. Likewise, teachers' professional development is required and needs to be continuous, team-based, and intimately related to teaching methods, according to Darling-Hammond (2020).

Research was conducted in Namibia to determine the measures employed at Namutuni Primary School to solve reading challenges among junior primary learners. Hartney (2011) conducted this investigation in Namibia's Khomas region and the findings showed that some learners needed to learn letters and sounds and how to read for meaning to become good readers. At the same time, some learners also needed opportunities to practice reading with many types of books. Epstein (2021) encouraged parental involvement in children's education as learners who have parents who actively participate in their education have higher reading competency levels and a more favourable attitude toward learning. Hartney (2011) further reports that while some children needed more intensive and systematic individualised instruction than others, all the children required these three essential elements: (1) to learn the letters of the alphabet, (2) to sound them, and (3) to read for meaning to read well and independently by the end of the Third Grade. On the other hand, Mohammed and Amponsah (2018) found that personal factors causing reading difficulties in learners are hearing problems and their inability to process the individual sounds of letters which is needed for word recognition. This alludes that when learners lack knowledge of letter sounds, everything will be a problem because letter sounds are the main foundation of reading. Hence, learners have different reading difficulties which need different strategies to be solved. Malisiova and Folia (2024) emphasize that diversified education and multisensory techniques are crucial to meeting the varied needs of learners, particularly those who struggle with reading.

Reading skills are one of the first skills that an individual acquires in the early years of education. While speaking skills are acquired in natural environments, reading skills are typically acquired in an educational environment as a result of the implementation of education programs (Ulu & Akyol, 2016). This means that reading strategies are very important in someone's life, especially at an earlier age. Hence, learners at the junior primary phase must get these skills, for them to successfully progress well in the next grades. Reading is a fundamental skill that is essential for academic success and lifelong learning. However, many learners in the junior primary phase experience reading difficulties that can hinder their progress and development. To address this issue, teachers need to implement effective

strategies to minimize reading difficulties and support learners in their reading journey. Therefore, this study aims to investigate difficulties and strategies to minimize reading challenges in the junior primary phase in Ndiyona Circuit, Kavango East Region, Namibia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilized a qualitative case study approach to collect in-depth data about strategies to minimize reading difficulties in the Junior Primary Phase in Ndiyona Circuit, Kavango East Region, Namibia. According to Creswell and Clark (2018), the term "case study" can refer to a research method or an analysis unit. In this study, each of the three selected primary schools at Ndiyona Circuit in Kavango East Region of Namibia constituted a case and the unit of analysis was the individual primary phase teachers. A case study design was appropriate for this investigation because it enable an in-depth investigation of a particular topic, event, group, or person (Priya, 2021). Additionally, semi-structured interviews and unstructured questionnaires were used as a data collection method. An in-depth investigation of reading difficulties and measures to reduce these challenges in the Junior Primary Phase at Ndiyona Circuit, Kavango East Region, Namibia, was the central focus of the interviews and questionnaire. These two methods generated qualitative data. The incorporation of two data collection methods, semi-structured interviews and an unstructured questionnaire was paramount to the study's success because it gave the researcher a deeper understanding of the matter under investigation and increased the validity of the study's conclusions, a process known as triangulation, according to Jentoft and Olsen (2019).

The thematic analysis approach described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was generally applied in this study. In addition, data was analysed thematically using NVivo 14 software. Both descriptive and in vivo coding were used in combination. The primary method of conducting thematic analysis was an "inductive data-driven manner" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83), in which the themes were derived directly from the interview data. This method was chosen since there has not been much study done in this field, and themes from the interview data have formed as a result. The research gathered qualitative data from a sample of 13 purposively selected teachers from the three selected primary schools in the Kavango East Region. Teachers had to meet certain criteria for selection. They had to be between the ages of 25 and 50 and represent both genders. In the same way, they ought to hold a variety of degrees and diplomas as teaching qualifications. Comparably, teachers should have four to twenty-one years of teaching experience and be teaching learners in Grades 1-3.

A description of the participants' attributes is given in the table below. Out of the 13 teachers, 9 were female, and 4 were male. All Grade 1 teachers were female except for one male. All the Grade 2 teachers were female. In Grade 3, 3 out of 5 teachers were male and two were female. Out of 13 teachers, 6 have degrees, while 7 hold diplomas. Among the Grade 1 teachers, 2 out of 4 have degrees, and 2 have diplomas. For the Grade 2 teachers, 1 out of 4 have a degree, and 3 have diplomas. In Grade 3, 3 out of 5 teachers hold degrees, and 2 have diplomas. The majority of teachers (7 out of 13) have between 4 and 6 years of teaching experience. One teacher has the highest experience of 20 years. Teachers with 10 or more years of experience were found in Grade 2 and Grade 3. The age of the teachers ranges from 25 to 50 years. The youngest teacher is 25 years old and the oldest is 50 years old. Most teachers are in their 30s, with 8 out of 13 falling within the 27-38 age range. Grade 1 is taught by 4 teachers: 3 females and 1 male. Grade 2 has 4 female teachers, with one holding a degree and three holding diplomas. Grade 3 is taught by 5 teachers: 2 females and 3 males, with the majority holding degrees.

Table 1: Participants' profiles

Participant Pseudonym	Grade Taught	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Years of teaching experience
TA: G1	Teacher A: Grade 1	F	31	Degree	4
TB: G1	Teacher B: Grade 1	M	25	Diploma	6
TC: G1	Teacher C: Grade 1	F	30	Diploma	5
TD: G1	Teacher D: Grade 1	F	29	Degree	1
TE: G2	Teacher E: Grade 2	F	34	Diploma	4
TF: G2	Teacher F: Grade 2	F	26	Diploma	5
TG: G2	Teacher G: Grade 2	F	39	Degree	13
TH: G2	Teacher H: Grade 2	F	47	Diploma	5
TI: G3	Teacher I: Grade 3	F	36	Diploma	6
TJ: G3	Teacher J: Grade 3	M	35	Degree	16
TK: G3	Teacher K: Grade 3	F	29	Degree	9
TL: G3	Teacher L: Grade 3	M	50	Diploma	20
TM: G3	Teacher M: Grade 3	M	40	Degree	12

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two sub-themes on the reading difficulties of learners and seven sub-themes regarding the strategies for improving reading skills in the Junior Primary Phase in Ndiyona Circuit, Kavango East Region, Namibia emerged. These sub-themes are connected and reflect the difficulties and strategies to reduce reading difficulties in the Junior Primary Phase in Ndiyona Circuit, Kavango East Region, Namibia.

Theme	Subthemes
Reading difficulties of learners	Subtheme1.1: Reading difficulties associated with dyslexia Subtheme1.2: Insufficient resources resulting in reading barriers
Strategies for improving reading skills	Subtheme1.1 Understanding the term reading Subtheme1.2: Promote reading fluency Subtheme1.3: Teaching reading comprehension skills Subtheme1.4: Accommodating learners with reading difficulties Subtheme1.5: Motivating struggling readers Subtheme1.6: Teachers' participation in professional development Subtheme1.7: Parental involvement in their children's reading

Reading difficulties of learners

Subtheme1.1: Reading difficulties associated with dyslexia

TK: G2 had this to say, “In my experience teaching second grade, I've observed several common reading difficulties among junior primary learners. Dyslexia is a significant challenge for some learners, making it hard for them to match letters with their corresponding sounds and to read fluently.”

TB: G1 from the questionnaire made a comparable observation, stating:

As a first-grade teacher, I have become quite familiar with common reading difficulties that junior primary learners face. One of the most prevalent issues is phonological awareness, where students struggle to recognize and manipulate the sounds within words. This can lead to difficulties with decoding and blending sounds to form words.

Students who have dyslexia also have trouble matching letters to sounds, which makes it harder for them to read fluently. These issues arise from students' inability to detect and manipulate sounds within words, which causes problems with decoding and blending sounds to form words. This echoes the research of Mohammed and Amponsah (2018), who highlighted personal factors causing reading difficulties in learners as hearing problems and their inability to process the individual sounds of letters which are needed for word recognition. Personal qualities like dyslexia impede students' reading development.

Subtheme1.2: Insufficient resources result in reading barriers

TF: G2 from the interview expressed concern over the shortage of textbooks noting, “Learners do not have adequate reading textbooks and other written texts. Reading resources are just so scarce at our school.” TD: G1 from the questionnaire reinforced this idea by noting that, “Sometimes up to ten learners share one book”.

Teachers noted that their capacity to provide students with appropriate support was hampered by a shortage of resources, including textbooks and other reading materials.

Strategies for improving reading skills

Subtheme 1.1 Understanding the term reading

TB: G1 from the teachers' questionnaire highlighted the critical role of comprehension in reading. According to this perspective:

Reading involves not only accurately decoding words but also understanding the ideas, themes, and messages conveyed by the text. Effective comprehension strategies, such as predicting, questioning, and summarizing, are essential for learners to derive meaning and make connections from what they read.

A response from interviews, (TC: G1), emphasized the foundational aspect of phonetic decoding in reading stating:

This perspective underscores the importance of phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, and fluency in developing learners' ability to accurately and fluently decode written words. By mastering these foundational skills, learners can effectively access and process written information, laying the groundwork for deeper comprehension and engagement with texts.

Teachers generally defined reading as the ability to decode written text, understand its meaning, and engage with the content. Teachers need to have this common understanding of reading as Fien, Chard and Baker (2021) advocate for uniform reading instruction methods to ensure educational equity. There will be more standardized methods for solving reading issues if teachers have extensive reading knowledge.

Subtheme 1.2: Promote reading fluency

TE: G2 from the interview reported, "I use repeated reading exercises and reading aloud sessions to improve fluency." Another participant from the questionnaire, TM: G3 agreed, adding that:

To improve reading fluency, I regularly use repeated reading exercises where students read the same passage multiple times until they become more fluent. I also hold reading-aloud sessions, where learners take turns reading to the class. This not only boosts their confidence but also helps them practice reading with expression and proper pacing.

TB: G1 from the interview reinforced this idea by stating:

I integrate paired reading activities, where students are paired up to read together. This peer-assisted learning strategy allows them to support each other and provides more

practice opportunities. Additionally, I use timed reading exercises to help students improve their reading speed and accuracy.

These responses demonstrate the teachers' awareness of and commitment to implementing various strategies to enhance reading fluency among their learners such as reading aloud sessions, repeated reading tasks, and paired reading activities. These findings align with Griffith and Rasinski's (2022) study results whereby it was discovered that engaging activities like reading aloud not only make learning enjoyable but also build confidence in young readers. Learning may be enhanced and students' love of reading can be encouraged by applying these tactics consistently to build a solid literacy foundation.

Subtheme 1.3: Teaching reading comprehension skills

TH: G2 a respondent from the interview highlighted, "I use story maps to aid comprehension."

TM: G3 from the questionnaire shared a similar sentiment, stating, "I use visual aids such as thematic posters and mind maps to help students identify and connect key themes, symbols, and motifs within the literature. These strategies collectively foster a richer comprehension of the texts we study."

These responses highlight diverse strategies that cater to different age groups and learning styles, demonstrating the adaptability and effectiveness of various techniques in teaching reading skills. Duke and Pearson (2021) highlight the importance of diverse and interactive reading strategies to improve comprehension skills. Learner reading skills are promoted when teachers use a variety of teaching tactics.

Subtheme 1.4: Accommodating learners with reading difficulties

TD: G1 interview highlighted that "teachers need to use differentiated instruction, one-on-one support, and using multi-sensory approaches to accommodate learners' learning needs." TC: G1 interview encouraged that, "Teachers need to use Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to cater to varying learners needs." This was also supported by TI: G3 from the questionnaire, stating:

To support learners with reading difficulties, I use a combination of individualized guidance, multimodal methods, and personalized instruction. These strategies allow me to address the diverse needs of my students and provide them with the tools they need to succeed. By using these methods, I can create an inclusive classroom environment where all students feel supported and capable of improving their reading skills.

All of these comments emphasize how crucial it is to use individualized, diversified teaching methods when working with learners who struggle with reading. Malisiova and Folia

(2024) highlight that differentiated instruction and multi-sensory approaches are essential to cater to the diverse needs of learners, particularly those with reading difficulties. Teachers should strive to incorporate diverse instructional approaches for learners' varying reading needs.

Subtheme 1.5: Motivating struggling readers

TH: G2 interview commented that “I implemented a reward system to encourage progress. I give learners stickers or small prizes for meeting reading milestones, which increased their motivation and engagement.” TA: G1 interview expressed a similar insight, “I employ personalized reading plans tailored to each learner's interests and reading level, helping them feel more connected to the material and making reading a more enjoyable activity.” On this note, the interview of TL: G3 noted that “I use interactive and multimedia resources, such as reading apps and digital storytelling, to make reading sessions more dynamic and engaging for struggling readers.” The questionnaire of TB: G1 complemented these findings, noting, “I organize peer reading sessions where stronger readers paired with struggling readers, fostering a supportive environment and promoting collaborative learning.”

Strategies to motivate struggling readers included positive reinforcement, setting achievable goals, using engaging reading materials, and using peer reading sessions. Because of the advantages they will experience, using these strategies will motivate children to read regularly. This will encourage a reading culture.

Subtheme 1.6: Teachers' participation in professional development

TD: G1 a response from interviews expressed, “I found these opportunities helpful for staying updated on new teaching methods. This is in line with TE: G2, a respondent from the questionnaire who stated, “I find that participating in workshops and conferences significantly enriches my teaching practice. These opportunities expose me to innovative strategies and research findings that I can directly apply to support learners with reading difficulties”. Similarly, TI: G3, a respondent from the questionnaire added, “I found professional development pivotal in my teaching career. It's inspiring to learn new approaches and collaborate with colleagues who share the same passion for supporting struggling readers. These opportunities continuously motivate me to strive for excellence in teaching”.

Teachers' ability to solve learners' reading issues will improve if they take advantage of professional development opportunities such as conferences and workshops. According to Darling-Hammond (2020), professional development should be ongoing, collaborative, and closely linked to classroom practice. When teachers are properly trained, they will be better able to help students who struggle with reading.

Subtheme 1.7: Parental involvement in their children’s reading

TD: G1, an interview responded encouraged "a parent reading partner program, where parents volunteered to read with learners during school hours. This initiative not only encouraged reading but also strengthened the school-home partnership." Likewise, TH: G2 interview urged "parents to participate in home reading programs where families could borrow books from the school library and engage in shared reading activities. This initiative aims to create a reading culture within the family environment." Hence, a questionnaire of TG: G2 stressed that," parent mentorship programs should be introduced where experienced parents mentor newcomers, fostering a supportive network and sharing best practices in parental involvement."

Fostering reading proficiency in children is greatly aided by parental involvement in their schooling. Research by Epstein (2021) revealed that when parents are actively engaged in their children's education, students demonstrate higher levels of reading proficiency and a more positive attitude toward learning. Parents should thus strive to participate in learners’ reading activities.

Tabel 2. Analysis of Reading Difficulties and Strategies for Improvement in Junior Primary Education

Theme	Subtheme	Teacher/Respondent	Observation/Insight
Reading Difficulties of Learners	Reading difficulties associated with dyslexia	TK (G2)	Difficulty in matching letters with corresponding sounds and reading fluently.
		TB (G1)	Struggles with phonological awareness, decoding, and blending sounds.
	Insufficient resources result in reading barriers	TF (G2)	Shortage of textbooks and reading materials.
		TD (G1)	Up to 10 learners sharing a book.
Strategies for Improving Reading Skills	Understanding the term reading	TB (G1)	Reading involves decoding words and understanding ideas, themes, and messages.
		TC (G1)	Importance of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction.
	Promote reading fluency	TE (G2)	Use of repeated reading and reading aloud sessions.
		TM (G3)	Repeated reading and peer-assisted reading for fluency.

		TB (G1)	Use of paired reading and timed reading exercises to improve speed and accuracy.
	Teaching reading comprehension skills	TH (G2)	Use of story maps to aid comprehension.
		TM (G3)	Use of thematic posters and mind maps to aid comprehension.
	Accommodating learners with reading difficulties	TD (G1)	Need for differentiated instruction, one-on-one support, and multi-sensory approaches.
		TC (G1)	Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to cater to learners' needs.
		TI (G3)	Use of multimodal methods and personalized instruction.
	Motivating struggling readers	TH (G2)	Reward system with stickers or small prizes to encourage reading.
		TA (G1)	Personalized reading plans tailored to learners' interests and levels.
		TL (G3)	Use of interactive reading apps and multimedia resources to engage struggling readers.
		TB (G1)	Peer reading sessions for stronger and struggling readers to collaborate.
Teachers' Participation in Professional Development	Professional development for teachers	TD (G1)	Participation in workshops helps stay updated on teaching methods.
		TE (G2)	Workshops and conferences expose teachers to innovative strategies and research.
		TI (G3)	Professional development continuously motivates teachers to strive for excellence in teaching.
Parental Involvement in Reading	Parental involvement in children's reading	TD (G1)	Parent reading partner programs strengthen school-home partnership.
		TH (G2)	Home reading programs where families borrow books and engage in shared reading

activities.
TG (G2) Parent mentorship programs for experienced parents to guide newcomers.

DISCUSSION

The study reveals several key findings regarding the reading difficulties and strategies for improvement among primary school learners. One significant challenge identified is the issue of dyslexia. Teachers such as TK (G2) and TB (G1) noted that students with dyslexia often struggle to match letters with their corresponding sounds, making reading fluency difficult. This issue arises from the inability of these students to identify and manipulate the sounds within words, leading to problems in decoding and blending. Research by Mohammed and Amponsah (2018) supports this by identifying hearing impairments and difficulties with sound processing as significant factors that hinder reading development. These personal factors, such as dyslexia, create significant barriers to students' reading progress. Another prominent barrier to reading development highlighted by the teachers is the insufficient availability of resources. According to TF (G2) and TD (G1), the lack of textbooks and other essential reading materials in the Ndiyona Circuit leads to a situation where students are forced to share a single textbook among multiple learners. This scarcity limits teachers' ability to provide comprehensive reading instruction, directly impacting the learning outcomes of students. Without proper resources, it becomes increasingly challenging to foster a conducive learning environment for struggling readers.

In addressing these challenges, teachers emphasized the importance of understanding what reading entails. As shared by TB (G1) and TC (G1), reading is not just about decoding words, but also about comprehending the meaning, themes, and messages within the text. According to Fien, Chard, and Baker (2021), for effective reading instruction to take place, there must be a shared understanding among teachers about what constitutes reading. This shared understanding is essential for ensuring that students receive consistent, equitable instruction that helps them overcome their reading difficulties. To promote reading fluency, several teachers, including TE (G2), TM (G3), and TB (G1), shared strategies such as repeated reading exercises, paired reading activities, and reading aloud sessions. These strategies aim to improve students' speed, accuracy, and expression while reading. Research by Griffith and Rasinski (2022) reinforces the effectiveness of these methods, suggesting that engaging in interactive reading exercises not only helps students become more fluent but also

builds their confidence in reading. By using these techniques consistently, students are provided with ample opportunities to practice, thereby improving their fluency.

Regarding reading comprehension, teachers like TH (G2) and TM (G3) highlighted the use of interactive strategies, such as story maps, thematic posters, and mind maps, to help students better understand the texts they read. According to Duke and Pearson (2021), incorporating diverse strategies is essential for enhancing students' comprehension skills. These approaches allow students to engage with the text on a deeper level, promoting a better understanding of key themes and ideas. When it comes to accommodating learners with reading difficulties, TD (G1), TC (G1), and TI (G3) emphasized the importance of personalized and multisensory instruction. These strategies cater to the diverse learning needs of students, ensuring that all learners receive the support they require. Malisiova and Folia (2024) argue that differentiated instruction and multisensory approaches are crucial in providing inclusive education, particularly for students with reading difficulties. Such approaches ensure that every student, regardless of their challenges, is given the opportunity to thrive in a supportive classroom environment.

To motivate struggling readers, teachers shared various methods, such as using reward systems, personalized reading plans, and peer reading sessions. Strategies like these not only make reading more engaging but also help build a positive attitude toward reading. By using interactive tools like reading apps and digital storytelling, teachers can create a dynamic learning environment that encourages students to enjoy reading. TB (G1) and TL (G3) highlighted the importance of fostering a collaborative learning environment, where more proficient readers support those who are struggling, thus promoting a sense of community and motivation among students. The role of professional development for teachers was also emphasized. Teachers like TD (G1), TE (G2), and TI (G3) expressed the value of attending workshops and conferences to stay updated on the latest teaching methods and strategies. Darling-Hammond (2020) supports this idea, suggesting that continuous, collaborative professional development is essential for improving teaching practices and equipping educators with the tools they need to support struggling readers. These opportunities not only expose teachers to innovative strategies but also encourage collaboration with colleagues who share a passion for helping learners succeed.

Lastly, the study highlights the significant impact of parental involvement in reading. As discussed by TD (G1), TH (G2), and TG (G2), involving parents in their children's education, particularly in reading activities, can greatly enhance reading proficiency. Epstein (2021) found that children whose parents actively engage in their learning show higher levels

of reading proficiency and a more positive attitude toward learning. Programs like parent reading partnerships and shared reading activities strengthen the connection between home and school, fostering a reading culture that extends beyond the classroom. In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the challenges and strategies related to reading in primary education. It emphasizes the need for teachers to have a shared understanding of reading, implement diverse strategies to enhance fluency and comprehension, and accommodate learners' individual needs. Moreover, it underscores the importance of motivating struggling readers, participating in professional development, and involving parents in fostering a positive reading environment. Through these combined efforts, teachers can significantly improve reading outcomes for their students, particularly those facing reading difficulties.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, the study's results highlight the challenges learners face when reading, including dyslexic reading impairments. They also show that learners' reading proficiency is restricted by a lack of resources. Teachers must use a variety of strategies to address learners' reading difficulties. To begin with, term reading comprehension is a prerequisite for teachers. Reading comprehension skills should also be taught by teachers, along with encouraging fluency in reading. Additionally, teachers need to support children who struggle with reading and motivate them. In addition, teachers should involve parents in their children's reading education and take part in professional development programs. The ramifications of these findings extend to educational practices and policies; they underscore the significance of teachers recognizing students' diverse reading challenges and devising solutions to surmount them, thereby facilitating all children's reading success and fostering an inclusive learning atmosphere.

The study's findings have significant theoretical and practical implications, while also revealing limitations and directions for future research. Theoretically, this study enriches the understanding of reading challenges, particularly dyslexia, and the importance of adequate resources in supporting reading learning in the early primary phase, thereby strengthening learning theories that emphasize individualized and contextual approaches. Practically, these findings encourage schools to provide professional training for teachers in recognizing and addressing reading difficulties, as well as enhancing parental involvement to create an inclusive learning environment. However, the study has limitations, such as a small sample

size and a focus on only one region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. For future research, it is recommended to expand the geographical scope, involve more participants, and explore the effectiveness of specific intervention strategies to address reading difficulties, including the use of educational technology to support learners with dyslexia.

ACKNOWLEDGE

We would like to acknowledge the Regional Director of Education for Kavango East for allowing us to conduct the study in the region. Additionally, expressed gratitude to the principals of the three primary schools in Ndiyona Circuit, Kavango East Region, for permitting the study to be conducted at the respective schools. Lastly, we extend our sincere appreciation to the teachers who voluntarily participated in the study.

REFERENCE

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. Doi: 0.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. (2006). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five traditions*. London: Sage Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2020). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1), 1- 44.
- Duke, N. K., & Pearson, P. D. (2021). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. *Journal of Education*, 189(1-2), 107-122.
- Epstein, J. L. (2021). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Westview Press.
- Fien, H., Chard, D. J., & Baker, S. K. (2021). Can the evidence revolution and multi-tiered systems of support improve education equity and reading achievement? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56, S105-S118.
- Gilakjani, P. A. (2016). How can students improve their reading comprehension skills? *Journal of Studies in Education*, 6 (2), 229-253. <http://www.macrothink.org/jse>.
- Griffith, L. W., & Rasinski, T. V. (2022). A focus on fluency: How one teacher incorporated fluency with her reading curriculum. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(2), 126-137.
- Hamilton, S. (2023, July 11). Reading difficulty in children: Interventions. Retrieved August 22, 2024, from <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/reading-difficulty-in-children-interventions#:~:text=Reading%20difficulty%20%E2%80%93%20Reading%20difficulty%20,of%20which%20is%20reading%20disability>.
- Hartney, R. N. (2011). *Investigating reading difficulties in English as a second language of Grade 3 learners in one primary school in the Khomas education region of Namibia*. Namibia: The University of Namibia.

- Iser, W. (2022). The reading process: A phenomenological approach. In *New directions in literary history* (pp. 125-145). Routledge.
- Jentoft, N., & Olsen, T. S. (2019). Against the flow in data collection: How data triangulation combined with a 'slow' interview technique enriches data. *Qualitative Social Work*, 18(2), 179-193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325017712581>.
- Karami, H. (2018). *Reading strategies: What are they?* Iran: University of Tehran.
- Malisiova, A., & Folia, V. (2024). Educational challenges and perspectives in developmental dyslexia. *Childhood Developmental Language Disorders: Role of Inclusion, Families, and Professionals*, 49-64.
- Ministry of Education (2015). *National Policy Guide for the Junior Primary Phase*. Okahandja: NIED.
- Mohammed, I., & Amponsah, O. (2018). Predominant factors contributing to low reading abilities of pupils at Elsie Lund Basic School in the Tamale Metropolis, Ghana. *African Educational Research Journal*, 6(4), 273-278. DOI: 10.30918/AERJ.64.18.071.
- Mzimane, N., C., & Mantlan, C. D. (2017). Reading strategies in the Foundation Phase (Grades R-3): Case studies of two schools in the Libode District, South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 16(1-3), 106-113. DOI:10.1080/09751122.2017.1311636.
- Osman, G., & Hayati, A. (2022). Reading difficulty and development of fluent reading skills. *Action Research International Journal of Progressive Education*, 18 (1), 22-41.
- Priya, A. (2021). Case study methodology of qualitative research: Key attributes and navigating the conundrums in its application. *Sociological Bulletin*, 70(1), 94-110.
- Ulu, H., & Akyol, H. (2016). The effects of repetitive reading and PQRS strategy in the development of reading skills. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 16(63), 225-242. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ejer/issue/24399/258656>.