



Reading Attitude and Reading Proficiency of Junior High School Students in a Private University

Roberto S. Pacya Jr ^{1*}, Leomar S. Galicia ²

^{1,2} University of Perpetual Help System Laguna, Biñan, Philippines

* Corresponding Author: **Roberto S. Pacya Jr**

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Abstract

This study investigated the connection between reading attitude and reading proficiency among 109 Grade 7 students in a private university using a descriptive-correlational design. Key findings revealed that a large majority of students (86.9%) held negative reading attitudes, and while many showed advanced readiness (56.6%) and satisfactory fluency (46.5%), most (83.8%) had very low reading engagement. Demographic factors like age, gender, and socio-economic status generally did not significantly impact proficiency, although engagement varied by gender and socio-economic background. Importantly, a significant positive relationship was found between reading attitude and both reading fluency and engagement. The study concludes that negative attitudes likely contribute to low engagement, potentially hindering overall proficiency. It recommends implementing motivational reading programs, structured fluency interventions, and encouraging parental involvement to improve students' reading attitudes and skills for long-term academic success.

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1. Introduction

Reading proficiency is a foundational skill that significantly influences academic achievement and cognitive development across disciplines. It serves not only as a gateway to academic success but also as a critical determinant of students' future educational outcomes. Literacy, as emphasized by UNESCO (2021), is closely linked to learning outcomes, yet despite its importance, global literacy rates reveal concerning trends. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges, leading to a significant increase in the number of children worldwide struggling with basic reading skills, reversing two decades of progress in educational development (UNESCO, 2021). Moreover, the 2018 PISA Report for the Philippines highlighted that over 80% of students failed to meet basic reading competency standards, underscoring a crucial gap in reading proficiency (Parojenog & Pabalan, 2024). Reading proficiency encompasses various skills, including reading readiness, fluency, engagement, and comprehension. While reading readiness involves the foundational cognitive skills necessary for decoding text, reading fluency refers to the ability to read accurately and expressively. Studies have shown that fluency is a strong predictor of academic success across subject (Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2021) ^[18]. Additionally, engagement with reading has been identified as a key factor in promoting deeper understanding and critical thinking (Kim *et al.*, 2017) ^[22]. Importantly, reading attitudes—defined as students' feelings and beliefs toward reading—can significantly influence their motivation and engagement with texts (Tulis & Santiago, 2023). A positive reading attitude fosters greater involvement in reading tasks, improving overall proficiency (Rafi *et al.*, 2021). The primary research problem addressed in this study is the insufficient understanding of how students' reading attitude influence their reading proficiency, particularly in the context of private university education in the Philippines. Although substantial research has explored various factors contributing to reading difficulties, there is limited focus on the relationship between attitudes toward reading and literacy development, especially among junior high school students in a university setting. This gap in research is particularly concerning as reading attitudes are integral to fostering engagement and improving reading outcomes.

2. Theoretical framework

This study was grounded in two primary frameworks: Stage Theory of Reading Development (STR) by Jeanne Chall (1980) and the Transactional Theory of Reading (TTR) by Louise Rosenblatt. Chall's Stage Theory of Reading Development posits that reading proficiency develops through distinct stages, from prereading and decoding to fluency and reading for meaning. This framework provides a developmental lens through which reading skills, including readiness, fluency, and engagement, are analyzed. According to Chall's model, early stages focus on building foundational skills like phonological awareness and alphabet recognition, which are crucial for later stages of fluency and comprehension. The study utilizes this

model to explore how students transition through various stages of reading proficiency and how this progression influences their engagement with texts. Additionally, Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading (TTR) offers a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamic interaction between the reader and the text. TTR asserts that meaning is co-constructed through this interaction, where readers' personal, cognitive, and emotional responses shape their attitudes and interpretations of a text. The theory highlights the importance of cognitive engagement, where readers apply skills like inference and analysis, and emotional responses, which influence attitudes toward reading. By emphasizing the active role of the reader in constructing meaning, TTR informs the study's examination of how students' attitudes and personal experiences influence their engagement and proficiency in reading. This study aimed to explore the relationship between reading attitude and reading proficiency among junior high school students in a private university setting in the Philippines. It also looked into the difference in the respondents' reading attitude and reading proficiency based on their demographic characteristics. Given the diverse student population, which includes varying levels of reading preparedness, this research sought to address the critical gap in understanding how reading attitudes influence reading proficiency. At its core, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on literacy development by investigating the critical link between reading attitude and reading proficiency which are both important to basic and higher learning.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to explore the relationship between reading attitudes and reading proficiency among Grade 7 students in a private university. As indicated by Bickman and Rog (2017), descriptive-correlational research is ideal for examining relationships and describing phenomena in their natural state. This design was particularly appropriate for the study, as it sought to determine how various aspects of reading attitudes, such as enjoyment and engagement, relate to different dimensions of reading proficiency, including reading readiness, fluency, and engagement.

3.2 Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between reading attitude and reading proficiency among Grade 7 learners at a private university in Laguna, Philippines. Specifically, the study aimed to assess how

students' attitudes toward reading correlate with their levels of proficiency in reading, which encompasses skills in reading readiness, fluency, and engagement.

3.3 The participants and setting of the study

The sources of data for this study were primarily drawn from the responses of Grade 7 students enrolled in the Junior High School in a private university. The students participated in a questionnaire designed to measure their reading attitudes, reading proficiency, and engagement. Additionally, their performance on a reading proficiency test contributed to the overall data set.

3.4 Population of the study

A total of 149 students were enrolled in four sections of Grade 7 at the time of the study. Using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, the sample size was determined to be 109 students. These participants were proportionally distributed across the four sections: Section A (27 students), Section B (26 students), Section C (26 students), and Section D (30 students). To ensure fair representation, stratified random sampling was employed, minimizing bias in participant selection. However, of the 109 selected participants, only 99 students voluntarily participated in the survey, as 10 students opted not to take part.

3.5 Data gathering procedure

The data were gathered through various tools designed to measure reading attitudes and proficiency. The reading attitude was assessed using PIRLS-based items, which measured students' enjoyment, engagement, and general perspectives on reading. This instrument was chosen for its ability to capture students' affective and motivational engagement with reading. In terms of reading proficiency, the study utilized a multi-tiered approach. First, the Reading Readiness Test, adapted from the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI), measured key literacy skills such as word recognition, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Secondly, the study used a DIBELS-style Reading Fluency Assessment, which evaluated both Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and Maze Comprehension, essential indicators of fluency. Lastly, the Reading Engagement Survey assessed four distinct aspects of student engagement: behavioral, cognitive, affective, and social. To ensure the validity of these instruments, experts in education and literacy reviewed them, and a pilot test was conducted with 35 students from a similar demographic group. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, ensuring the internal consistency of the assessment tools. Data collection began with obtaining formal approval from the school administration. Following this, participants were informed about the study's purpose and provided with a detailed briefing. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with parental consent acquired for minors. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were given the option to complete the questionnaire in either printed or online formats. The data collection process took place over four weeks, from February 1 to February 28, 2025.

3.6 Treatment and analysis of data

Once the data were collected, the responses were systematically organized, coded, and prepared for analysis. The collected data were analyzed using a variety of statistical

methods. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage, were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, and socio-economic status. Additionally, the Chi-Square Test for Independence was employed to examine any significant differences in reading attitudes and proficiency levels based on demographic variables. This test helped determine whether factors like age, gender, and socio-economic status had an influence on students' reading attitudes and proficiency levels. Furthermore, another Chi-Square Test for Independence was used to analyze the relationship between reading attitude and reading proficiency, thereby assessing whether a significant correlation existed between these two variables.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethically, this study adhered to strict guidelines to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and for those under 18, parental consent was secured. Participation was voluntary, and respondents had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. To ensure confidentiality, all personal data were anonymized and stored in password-protected files. Data were only used for academic purposes and will be securely stored for five years before being permanently deleted, in line with ethical standards in research. By following these methods and ethical guidelines, the researchers ensured the study was conducted with integrity.

and respect for the respondents, maintaining the highest standards of ethical research practice.

4. Results And Discussions

This descriptive correlational study focused on the dual aspects of reading—attitude and proficiency. It highlights the population of interest (junior high school students in a private university) and sets the context for exploring how these factors are interrelated. The tables that follow and the corresponding analysis and interpretation are in accordance with the problem statements. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents, highlighting their age, gender, parents' education, socio-economic status, access to reading materials, and time spent on independent reading. The majority of respondents are aged 13 and above (65.7%), with a slight male majority (52.5%). Most respondents' parents have at least a college degree (54.5%), and 53.5% come from upper-class families. Regarding reading habits, 50.5% use online materials, and 46.5% spend 11-20 minutes daily reading. The key findings indicate that socio-economic background, parental education, and access to reading materials significantly influence students' readiness for reading. However, limited time for independent reading may restrict deeper engagement with texts. These findings suggest that increased exposure to reading materials and more dedicated reading time could enhance reading proficiency and engagement.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

| Profile | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Age | | |
| 11-12 years old | 34 | 34.3 |
| 13 years old and above | 65 | 65.7 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 52 | 52.5 |
| Female | 46 | 46.5 |
| Prefer not to say | 1 | 1.0 |
| Parents' Educational Attainment | | |
| Graduate Degree | 28 | 28.3 |
| College | 54 | 54.5 |
| High School | 14 | 14.1 |
| No formal education | 3 | 3.0 |
| Parents' Socio-economic Status | | |
| Upper Class | 53 | 53.5 |
| Middle Class | 42 | 42.4 |
| Lower Class | 4 | 4.0 |
| Available Reading Materials | | |
| Online Reading Resources | 50 | 50.5 |
| Books | 45 | 45.5 |
| Others (Magazines, Newspaper) | 4 | 4.0 |
| Time Allocated for Independent Reading | | |
| More than 30 minutes | 13 | 13.1 |
| 21-30 minutes | 23 | 23.2 |
| 11-20 minutes | 46 | 46.5 |
| Less than 10 minutes | 17 | 17.2 |
| Total Number of Respondents = 99 | | |

Table 2 highlights the respondents' reading attitudes, revealing that 86.9% of students exhibit a negative attitude, while only 9.1% have a positive attitude, and 4.0% remain neutral. These findings suggest that most students do not find reading enjoyable or engaging, which could be attributed to factors such as lack of motivation, difficulties with comprehension, or limited exposure to meaningful reading activities. The small percentage with a positive attitude

indicates that only a few students appreciate the value and enjoyment of reading. The results imply a need for strategies that foster positive reading experiences, such as introducing more relatable texts and employing engaging teaching methods. The negative attitudes observed may hinder students' engagement with reading, potentially affecting their literacy development.

Table 2: Respondents' Reading Attitude

| Reading Attitude | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Positive Attitude | 9 | 9.1 |
| Neutral Attitude | 4 | 4.0 |
| Negative Attitude | 86 | 86.9 |
| Total Number of Respondents = 99 | | |

Table 3 reveals the respondents' levels of reading proficiency in readiness, fluency, and engagement. In readiness, 56.6% of students are at the advanced level, while 32.3% are proficient, and a smaller percentage (8.1%) are developing, with 3.0% at the emerging level. For fluency, 46.5% are rated very satisfactory, followed by 19.2% who achieved excellent fluency. However, 6.1% need improvement, and 10.1% exhibit poor fluency. Engagement levels show a stark contrast, with 83.8% of students classified under very low

engagement, while only 5.1% are highly engaged, 7.1% moderately engaged, and 4.0% show low engagement. These findings suggest that while many students demonstrate high levels of reading readiness and fluency, there is a significant gap in their engagement with reading. Despite proficiency in fundamental skills, a majority of students struggle with deeper engagement, which is essential for knowledge-building and academic success. This gap indicates that while students may have acquired basic decoding and comprehension skills, they face challenges in transitioning to more complex reading activities that require critical thinking and sustained attention. The lack of engagement, despite proficiency in readiness and fluency, highlights the need for interventions that promote active and meaningful reading experiences, encouraging students to move beyond simply decoding texts to engaging deeply with them. Addressing this gap is crucial to fostering well-rounded literacy skills.

Table 3: Respondents' Level of Reading Proficiency

| Level of Reading Proficiency | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Readiness | | |
| Advanced | 56 | 56.6 |
| Proficient | 32 | 32.3 |
| Developing | 8 | 8.1 |
| Emerging | 3 | 3.0 |
| Fluency | | |
| Excellent | 19 | 19.2 |
| Very Satisfactory | 46 | 46.5 |
| Satisfactory | 18 | 18.2 |
| Needs Improvement | 6 | 6.1 |
| Poor | 10 | 10.1 |
| Engagement | | |
| High Engagement | 5 | 5.1 |
| Moderate Engagement | 7 | 7.1 |
| Low Engagement | 4 | 4.0 |
| Very Low Engagement | 83 | 83.8 |
| Total Number of Respondents = 99 | | |

Table 4 examines the differences in reading attitudes based on various demographic and socio-economic profile variables. The chi-square test results show that none of the factors—age ($p = 0.383$), gender ($p = 0.910$), parents' educational attainment ($p = 0.770$), socio-economic status ($p = 0.283$), available reading materials ($p = 0.159$), and time allocated for independent reading ($p = 0.066$)—showed a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level of significance. These findings suggest that reading attitudes are independent of demographic and socio-economic factors. In other words, whether students are male or female, come from various socio-economic backgrounds, or have different levels of parental education, their attitudes toward reading remain

relatively consistent. This indicates that external characteristics alone do not determine students' motivation or interest in reading. The lack of statistical significance emphasizes that students' reading attitudes may be shaped by factors beyond demographic variables. This highlights the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation and providing engaging reading experiences rather than relying on external factors to drive reading interest. To improve reading attitudes, interventions should focus more on the quality of reading materials, the engagement of reading activities, and the creation of supportive environments that encourage a positive relationship with reading.

Table 4: Difference in the Respondents' Reading Attitude When They Are Grouped According to Profile Variables

| Profile Variables | Chi-square value | p-value | Interpretation |
|--|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Age | 3.058 | 0.383 | Not Significant |
| Gender | 2.106 | 0.910 | Not Significant |
| Parents' Educational Attainment | 5.693 | 0.770 | Not Significant |
| Parents' Socio-economic Status | 7.426 | 0.283 | Not Significant |
| Available Reading Materials | 9.274 | 0.159 | Not Significant |
| Time Allocated for Independent Reading | 16.018 | 0.066 | Not Significant |

0.05 level of significance

Table 5 presents the statistical analysis of respondents' reading proficiency based on age. The chi-square test results indicated no statistically significant difference in reading

readiness ($p = 0.068$), fluency ($p = 0.549$), and engagement ($p = 0.493$). These findings reveal that age does not significantly influence the respondents' level of reading

proficiency. The lack of significant differences suggests that other factors, beyond age, may be at play in shaping students' reading abilities. Despite age being a common indicator of developmental stages, the data show that students demonstrate varying levels of reading readiness, fluency, and engagement regardless of their age. This suggests that reading proficiency is more closely related to individualized experiences rather than a simple progression based on age alone. The general finding from these results is that age does not serve as a determining factor in reading proficiency. This implies that students may reach different levels of reading proficiency based on other variables, such as their exposure to reading materials, instructional support, or personal motivation. This finding challenges the assumption that age

automatically correlates with reading proficiency development. It highlights the importance of addressing each student's specific needs, providing targeted support, and creating engaging reading environments that foster individual growth, regardless of their age. In conclusion, these results emphasize the importance of considering a variety of factors in reading instruction rather than relying solely on age. Reading proficiency should be supported by personalized and adaptive teaching strategies, ensuring that students are equipped with the tools necessary to improve at their own pace. This approach aligns with the understanding that literacy development is influenced by a multitude of factors, making individualized support crucial for student success.

Table 5: Difference in the Respondents' Level of Reading Proficiency as to Age

| Level of Reading Proficiency | Chi-square value | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Readiness | 7.135 | 0.068 | Not Significant |
| Fluency | 3.052 | 0.549 | Not Significant |
| Engagement | 2.401 | 0.493 | Not Significant |

0.05 level of significance

Table 6 analyzes the difference in reading proficiency based on gender. The results from the chi-square test indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in reading readiness ($p = 0.226$) and fluency ($p = 0.285$) between male and female respondents. However, engagement shows a significant difference ($p = 0.025$), indicating that gender does influence engagement levels, with one gender exhibiting higher engagement than the other. The findings suggest that gender does not affect the development of reading readiness and fluency, but it does play a role in how engaged students are with reading. This difference in engagement could stem from various factors, such as different reading preferences,

societal expectations, or personal experiences with reading, which shape how students interact with texts. Overall, the data reveals that while both male and female students demonstrate similar levels of readiness and fluency, their engagement with reading differs significantly. The result points to the need for more targeted strategies that cater to these varying engagement levels, ensuring that all students find reading appealing and worthwhile. This aligns with the idea that engagement is shaped by cognitive and emotional responses to reading, suggesting that effective reading strategies should consider students' personal interests and experiences.

Table 6: Difference in the Respondents' Level of Reading Proficiency As to Gender

| Level of Reading Proficiency | Chi-square value | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Readiness | 8.174 | 0.226 | Not Significant |
| Fluency | 9.719 | 0.285 | Not Significant |
| Engagement | 14.423 | 0.025 | Significant |

0.05 level of significance

Table 7 examines the impact of parents' educational attainment on respondents' reading proficiency. The results show a statistically significant difference in reading readiness ($p = 0.008$), indicating that students whose parents have higher educational levels tend to exhibit better reading readiness. However, fluency ($p = 0.117$) and engagement ($p = 0.864$) show no significant differences, suggesting that parental education does not influence these aspects of reading proficiency. These findings indicate that parents' educational backgrounds contribute to the development of early reading readiness but do not significantly affect fluency or engagement. This pattern may be due to the fact that parents

with higher educational attainment are more likely to provide their children with early literacy experiences, fostering initial reading skills. However, fluency and engagement, which require sustained practice and motivation, are influenced by a broader range of factors beyond parental education alone. In conclusion, the data suggests that while a higher level of parental education can enhance students' readiness to read, fluency and engagement are shaped by other influences, such as continued exposure to reading activities and structured support. This underscores the importance of holistic educational strategies that involve both home and school environments in nurturing a child's reading development.

Table 7: Difference in the Respondents' Level of Reading Proficiency As to Parents' Educational Attainment

| Level of Reading Proficiency | Chi-square value | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Readiness | 22.157 | 0.008 | Significant |
| Fluency | 17.960 | 0.117 | Not Significant |
| Engagement | 4.647 | 0.864 | Not Significant |

0.05 level of significance

Table 8 examines the relationship between respondents' reading proficiency and their parents' socio-economic status.

The results show no significant differences in readiness ($p = 0.671$) and fluency ($p = 0.594$), suggesting that socio-

economic status does not directly impact these areas of reading proficiency. However, a statistically significant difference was found in engagement ($p = 0.042$), indicating that socio-economic status influences the level of engagement in reading. These findings suggest that students from different socio-economic backgrounds demonstrate varying levels of reading engagement. This variation could be attributed to factors such as access to reading materials, the availability of literacy support at home, or exposure to a culture of reading. Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds may have more access to diverse reading resources and supportive environments, which could foster

greater engagement with reading. In contrast, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds may face challenges such as limited access to books or inadequate support, leading to lower levels of engagement. In conclusion, the data highlights the role of socio-economic status in shaping students' engagement with reading. While socio-economic background may not significantly impact foundational reading skills like readiness and fluency, it appears to influence how actively students engage with reading. Addressing disparities in access to reading materials and creating supportive literacy environments could help enhance reading engagement across different socio-economic groups.

Table 8: Difference in the Respondents' Level of Reading Proficiency As to Parents' Socio-economic Status

| Level of Reading Proficiency | Chi-square value | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Readiness | 4.040 | 0.671 | Not Significant |
| Fluency | 6.479 | 0.594 | Not Significant |
| Engagement | 13.058 | 0.042 | Significant |

0.05 level of significance

Table 9 explores the influence of reading materials on respondents' reading proficiency. The chi-square results show no significant differences in readiness ($p = 0.482$), fluency ($p = 0.475$), and engagement ($p = 0.976$), suggesting that the mere availability of reading materials does not directly improve reading proficiency. This implies that other factors—such as the quality of the reading materials, students' reading habits, and their motivation—are likely more influential in developing literacy skills. These findings highlight that while access to reading materials may support early stages of reading development (such as readiness and fluency), it does not automatically lead to sustained engagement with texts. The Stage Theory of Reading (STR)

Development suggests that engagement (Stage 3) is fostered through meaningful interactions with reading materials. This underscores the importance of guided reading activities and structured learning experiences, which ensure that students actively engage with texts, rather than simply having access to them. In conclusion, these results emphasize that reading proficiency is not solely dependent on the availability of materials but is also shaped by how students interact with and are supported in their reading practices. Providing students with the tools to actively engage with reading materials through structured learning and motivation may be more effective in enhancing reading proficiency.

Table 9: Difference in the Respondents' Level of Reading Proficiency As to Available Reading Materials

| Level of Reading Proficiency | Chi-square value | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Readiness | 5.499 | 0.482 | Not Significant |
| Fluency | 7.589 | 0.475 | Not Significant |
| Engagement | 1.217 | 0.976 | Not Significant |

0.05 level of significance

Table 10 investigates the relationship between the amount of time spent on independent reading and reading proficiency. The results show that while readiness ($p = 0.054$) and fluency ($p = 0.646$) do not exhibit significant differences, engagement ($p = 0.016$) shows a statistically significant difference. This suggests that the amount of time students spend on independent reading positively impacts their level of engagement with reading. Students who allocate more time to independent reading tend to develop higher levels of engagement, which is crucial for their overall literacy development. This finding aligns with the Transactional Theory of Reading (TTR), which emphasizes that cognitive engagement is essential for fostering a positive reading attitude. Students who engage in reading independently for

longer periods are more likely to form deeper connections with texts, enhancing both their interest and motivation. This highlights the importance of establishing consistent reading habits, which can lead to sustained engagement and improvement in reading proficiency. In conclusion, independent reading plays a significant role in enhancing reading engagement, which in turn supports literacy growth. However, factors such as curriculum demands and technological distractions may limit the time available for independent reading. Promoting regular independent reading, both in educational settings and at home, is crucial to improving reading engagement and fostering lifelong reading habits.

Table 10: Difference in the Respondents' Level of Reading Proficiency As to Time Allocated for Independent Reading

| Level of Reading Proficiency | Chi-square value | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Readiness | 16.670 | 0.054 | Not Significant |
| Fluency | 9.659 | 0.646 | Not Significant |
| Engagement | 20.278 | 0.016 | Significant |

0.05 level of significance

Table 11 explores the relationship between reading attitude

and reading proficiency. The chi-square test results reveal

that while there is no significant relationship between reading attitude and readiness ($p = 0.696$), fluency ($p = 0.016$) and engagement ($p = 0.000$) show significant relationships at the 0.01 level of significance. This indicates that a positive reading attitude is linked to improved fluency and higher engagement, highlighting the critical role attitude plays in shaping students' reading outcomes. These findings suggest that while reading attitude does not directly influence students' readiness to read, it significantly impacts fluency and engagement. A positive attitude towards reading likely fosters better fluency as students engage more deeply with texts, allowing them to process and understand material more effectively. It also enhances engagement, which is essential for sustaining motivation and developing a deeper connection

to reading activities. The Transactional Theory of Reading (TTR) offers an explanation for these results, as it posits that a positive reading attitude leads to greater cognitive and emotional engagement with texts. This interaction helps students to internalize meaning, making reading a more enjoyable and productive experience. Encouraging a positive reading attitude is thus vital for fostering fluency and long-term engagement in reading. In conclusion, reading attitude plays a pivotal role in developing fluency and engagement, both of which are critical for overall reading proficiency. Cultivating positive reading attitudes through engaging and enjoyable reading experiences can significantly enhance students' literacy outcomes.

Table 11: Relationship between Respondents' Reading Attitude and Level of Reading Proficiency

| Level of Reading Proficiency | Chi-square value | p value | Interpretation |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Readiness | 3.858 | 0.696 | Not Significant |
| Fluency | 18.825 | 0.016 | Significant |
| Engagement | 60.532 | 0.000 | Significant |

0.01 level of significance

5. Conclusions and Implications

Based on the key findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn to highlight the major insights into students' reading attitudes and proficiency. First, most respondents exhibited a negative reading attitude, which may contribute to their low engagement levels, hindering the development of strong reading habits and comprehension skills. Second, while reading readiness was generally high among the respondents, fluency and engagement varied, indicating that being prepared to read does not necessarily lead to sustained reading performance. Third, there was no significant influence of demographic or socio-economic factors on reading attitude, reinforcing the importance of internal motivation, instructional strategies, and school-based support in shaping reading behavior. Fourth, parents' educational attainment significantly affected students' reading readiness, while gender and socio-economic status were found to influence engagement, emphasizing the value of early literacy exposure and parental involvement. Fifth, independent reading time was significantly linked to reading engagement, highlighting the importance of encouraging reading routines both at home and in school to cultivate a genuine interest in reading. Sixth, a positive reading attitude was significantly associated with better fluency and engagement, pointing to the need for interactive and meaningful reading experiences. Seventh, students with poor fluency and low engagement may face challenges in overall academic performance, stressing the need for early intervention programs to address reading difficulties. Eighth, the absence of a significant relationship between reading attitude and demographic characteristics suggests that instructional and motivational factors are more influential than external traits. Ninth, the impact of parents' educational background on readiness underscores the critical role of early literacy exposure and supports the need for family-centered literacy programs. Tenth, the findings emphasize integrating reading engagement activities into the curriculum to create a lasting and enjoyable reading culture among students.

The findings of this study have significant implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers involved in promoting reading proficiency and engagement. First, the data suggest that a student's reading attitude plays a crucial

role in their fluency and engagement with texts. Therefore, fostering positive attitudes toward reading should be a key priority in literacy development programs. Schools and teachers may need to incorporate instructional strategies that not only teach reading skills but also cultivate a love for reading, particularly by introducing texts that are relevant and engaging to students' lives. Moreover, the study indicates that while parental education influences reading readiness, it does not necessarily guarantee sustained fluency or engagement. This implies that interventions targeting early literacy development should go beyond focusing on parental educational background and should involve community-wide initiatives to ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, have access to enriching reading materials and experiences. The research also highlights the importance of independent reading time. Although it did not show a direct impact on all areas of reading proficiency, the statistically significant relationship with engagement suggests that encouraging students to dedicate more time to independent reading could foster deeper connections with texts, leading to improved literacy outcomes. This implies a need for schools to prioritize independent reading time and support it with a diverse range of texts, fostering an environment conducive to reading for pleasure. Furthermore, the study's findings challenge some of the traditional assumptions about reading proficiency development, particularly regarding the impact of socio-economic status and access to reading materials. Despite some associations between socio-economic background and engagement, the study indicates that engagement in reading may be influenced more by the quality of reading experiences than by the mere availability of resources. This calls for a shift in focus from simply providing access to reading materials to ensuring that students have opportunities for meaningful, interactive reading experiences. For policymakers, this study suggests that policies aimed at improving literacy outcomes should include a combination of strategies: promoting positive reading attitudes, supporting independent reading practices, and ensuring that children from all backgrounds have access to enriching reading environments. Additionally, further research into the factors that influence engagement and fluency, including the potential role of digital media, could

help refine literacy programs and adapt them to the evolving needs of students.

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