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Pedagogical Approaches to Reading through a Gender and Development Lens

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Abstract

This study examined the pedagogical approaches used in reading instruction at Manggitahan Elementary School through a Gender and Development (GAD) lens. Anchored on the Department of Education's Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy, the study aimed to identify how teachers integrate gender-responsive strategies in reading lessons, assess their awareness and application of GAD principles, and determine the influence of these practices on learners' engagement and participation. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed, involving selected reading teachers directly engaged in classroom instruction. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and instructional materials to ensure triangulation and credibility of findings.

Thematic analysis revealed that teachers predominantly utilized learner-centered pedagogical strategies such as guided reading, shared reading, storytelling, and differentiated activities to address varied reading abilities. Gender-responsive practices were observed in equitable classroom interactions, inclusive language use, and balanced participation of male and female learners during reading activities. However, findings indicated that the integration of GAD principles in reading instruction was largely informal and not systematically reflected in instructional planning and assessment. Teachers demonstrated moderate awareness of GAD concepts but reported limited professional training on gender-responsive pedagogy.

The study further established that gender-responsive reading pedagogy positively influenced learners' engagement, confidence, and participation. Despite these positive outcomes, a gap remained between policy awareness and consistent classroom implementation. The study concludes that targeted professional development and deliberate integration of GAD principles into reading pedagogy are necessary to strengthen inclusive literacy instruction aligned with DepEd policies.

Keywords: gender-responsive pedagogy, reading instruction, Gender and Development (GAD), learner engagement, elementary education

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Introduction

Reading proficiency remains a core priority in Philippine basic education because it strongly predicts learners' success across all learning areas. In response, the Department of Education (DepEd) has institutionalized reading assessment and intervention mechanisms such as the revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and school-based reading initiatives like Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) and "Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa" (3Bs), all of which emphasize early identification of reading levels and targeted instructional support. However, improving reading outcomes is not only a matter of selecting strategies; it also requires ensuring that classroom practices are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to learner diversity including gender-related needs and experiences.

Alongside literacy priorities, DepEd has strengthened its Gender and Development (GAD) mandate through policies that institutionalize gender-responsive basic education and encourage gender mainstreaming in curriculum, instruction, learning resources, and school governance. Within this policy context, examining reading pedagogy through a GAD lens becomes essential because gender norms and stereotypes can shape learners' engagement with reading, participation patterns, classroom interaction, and self-concept as readers. Thus, this study focuses on Manggitahan Elementary School to identify the reading pedagogical approaches used by teachers, determine how gender-responsive principles are integrated into reading instruction, and analyze how these approaches influence learners' engagement and participation toward generating context-specific recommendations aligned with DepEd GAD policies.

Review of Related Literature

Gender-responsive education and classroom pedagogy

DepEd's Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy provides the national policy backbone for integrating gender equality and non-discrimination in basic education delivery, including teaching and learning processes. Complementing this, the PCW-DepEd-CHED-TESDA Joint Memorandum Circular 2025-03 institutionalizes the use of gender-responsive assessment tools for evaluating instructional materials, signaling that gender responsiveness should be visible not only in teacher behavior but also in learning resources used in class. International guidance likewise emphasizes that gender-responsive pedagogy is enacted through inclusive language, equitable participation structures, bias-aware classroom management, and learning materials that avoid stereotypes. Framework papers also argue that gender-responsive pedagogy requires intentional design choices (e.g., classroom interaction patterns, feedback, and assessment) that prevent gendered marginalization and support learner voice.

Gender, reading engagement, and learning outcomes

A consistent finding across international assessments is that gender differences in reading achievement persist, with girls often outperforming boys in reading on large-scale measures; the OECD has synthesized these patterns and their development across time. Beyond performance, research shows that reading is socially "gendered": stereotypes such as "reading is for girls" can influence motivation, identity, and classroom dynamics, and teachers may unintentionally transmit such stereotypes early in schooling. These insights imply that improving reading outcomes may require pedagogy that actively counters stereotypes, broadens reading identities for all learners, and creates participation norms where both boys and girls can engage confidently.

Evidence on gender-responsive pedagogy in basic education contexts

Empirical work in Philippine basic education has documented the presence (and unevenness) of gender-responsive pedagogy and gender sensitivity among public elementary school settings, highlighting the role of teacher awareness and school context in shaping practice. Related Philippine research also reports varying levels of awareness and implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy, suggesting that policy adoption does not automatically translate into consistent classroom practice. Broader school-based studies on gender issues in public school contexts further indicate that stakeholders experience gender concerns differently, reinforcing the need for localized inquiry rather than assuming uniform implementation across schools.

Reading pedagogy and school-based literacy initiatives

DepEd policy guidance positions the Phil-IRI as a classroom-based assessment tool intended to guide instruction (e.g., independent, instructional, frustration levels) in both Filipino and English, supporting differentiation and targeted remediation. DepEd's ECARP likewise provides a programmatic structure for early literacy interventions

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to ensure that learners needing support receive appropriate reading assistance. Studies on reading-teaching practices in Philippine settings show that classroom practices (instructional routines, feedback, scaffolding, and assessment) relate to reading performance, implying that pedagogy-focused investigations can yield actionable improvement points for schools.

Research Gap

While DepEd policies clearly support both (a) strengthened reading instruction through assessment-informed intervention (e.g., Phil-IRI, ECARP, and 3Bs) and (b) gender mainstreaming in basic education through the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy and gender-responsive instructional materials evaluation, existing literature often treats reading interventions and GAD implementation as separate streams. Moreover, many studies document gender-responsive practices or general reading-teaching practices at a broad level, but fewer studies examine *how specific reading pedagogies are enacted through a GAD lens within a particular school context*, and how such enactment shapes learners' engagement and participation in reading lessons. Addressing this gap, the present study focuses on Manggitahan Elementary School to generate context-grounded evidence on gender-responsive reading pedagogy and to propose feasible, DepEd-aligned pedagogical enhancements responsive to the school's actual classroom realities.

Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the pedagogical approaches used in reading instruction at Manggitahan Elementary School through a Gender and Development (GAD) lens. Specifically, it seeks to identify how teachers integrate gender-responsive strategies in reading lessons, assess their awareness and application of GAD principles, and determine the influence of these approaches on learners' engagement and participation. The study further aims to generate pedagogical insights that may inform the enhancement of reading instruction aligned with DepEd's Gender and Development policies.

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine pedagogical approaches to reading through a Gender and Development (GAD) lens at Manggitahan Elementary School. The participants of the study were selected reading teachers who were directly involved in classroom instruction. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and instructional materials to identify gender-responsive practices in reading instruction. The use of multiple data sources ensured triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded and categorized to identify recurring patterns and themes related to gender-responsive pedagogy, learner engagement, and classroom interaction. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study, including securing informed consent from participants, maintaining confidentiality, and using the data solely for academic purposes. The results of the analysis were used to generate pedagogical insights and recommendations aligned with Department of Education Gender and Development policies.

Results and Findings of the Study

The analysis of interview data, classroom observations, and instructional documents revealed four major themes that addressed the research objectives of the study. These themes highlight the pedagogical approaches used in reading instruction, the integration of gender-responsive strategies, teachers' awareness and application of Gender and Development (GAD) principles, and the influence of these practices on learners' engagement and participation.

Theme 1: Learner-Centered Reading Pedagogical Approaches

The findings showed that teachers at Manggitahan Elementary School predominantly employed learner-centered strategies in reading instruction. These included guided reading, shared reading, storytelling, and small-group activities designed to address varying reading levels. Teachers emphasized flexibility and responsiveness to learners' needs.

One participant shared, *"I group my pupils based on their reading ability so I can guide them properly during reading Azal Arts and Humanities*

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time.”

Classroom observations supported this response, showing differentiated tasks that allowed both struggling and proficient readers to participate meaningfully. This theme indicates that teachers intentionally used pedagogical approaches that promote inclusivity and support diverse learning needs.

Theme 2: Informal Integration of Gender-Responsive Strategies

Results revealed that gender-responsive practices were present in classroom instruction, although they were largely applied informally. Teachers reported consciously ensuring equal participation of boys and girls during reading activities.

As one teacher stated, *“I make sure that both boys and girls are given the chance to read aloud and answer questions.”*

Observations confirmed balanced teacher attention and mixed-gender grouping during reading tasks. However, lesson plans rarely reflected explicit GAD-related objectives, indicating that gender responsiveness was practiced more as an implicit value than as a structured pedagogical strategy.

Theme 3: Moderate Awareness but Limited Systematic Application of GAD Principles

The findings indicated that teachers possessed basic awareness of GAD principles, particularly those related to gender equality and fairness in the classroom.

Participants commonly associated GAD with equal treatment, as expressed in the response,

“For me, GAD means treating boys and girls equally in class.”

Despite this awareness, teachers acknowledged limited training on integrating GAD into reading instruction, which affected the depth and consistency of its application. Document analysis further showed minimal explicit reference to GAD in instructional planning and assessment, highlighting a gap between policy awareness and systematic classroom implementation.

Theme 4: Positive Influence on Learner Engagement and Participation

The study found that gender-responsive pedagogical practices positively influenced learners’ engagement and participation in reading activities. Teachers observed increased confidence and willingness to participate among both male and female learners when equitable practices were applied.

One participant noted, *“When pupils see that everyone is treated fairly, they become more confident and active in reading.”*

Classroom observations revealed improved interaction, reduced hesitation in reading aloud, and more collaborative peer engagement. These findings suggest that inclusive and gender-responsive pedagogy contributes to a supportive learning environment that enhances reading participation.

Conclusion of the Study

Based on the results and findings, the study concludes that reading instruction at Manggitahan Elementary School is generally grounded in learner-centered pedagogical practices that promote inclusivity and active participation. Teachers effectively utilized varied reading strategies such as guided reading, shared reading, and differentiated activities to address learners’ diverse reading abilities. These approaches created opportunities for both male and female learners to engage meaningfully in reading lessons, fostering a supportive and participatory classroom environment.

However, while gender-responsive practices were evident in classroom interactions, their integration into reading pedagogy was largely informal and not systematically embedded in instructional planning and assessment. Teachers demonstrated basic awareness of Gender and Development (GAD) principles, primarily equating them

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with fairness and equal treatment, yet limited training and guidance constrained their deliberate and consistent application. As a result, a gap remains between DepEd's GAD policy framework and its practical implementation in reading instruction.

Hence, the study highlights the potential of gender-responsive pedagogy to enhance learner engagement and confidence in reading when applied intentionally. It underscores the need for strengthened professional development, explicit integration of GAD principles into lesson planning, and alignment of reading programs with DepEd's Gender and Development policies to ensure more inclusive, equitable, and effective reading instruction.

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Conflicts of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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