



TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING GAMIFIED READING INTERVENTIONS: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE ON READING FLUENCY AND LEARNER ENGAGEMENT AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Gamified reading interventions have emerged as innovative instructional approaches that enhance learner motivation, engagement, and literacy development in contemporary education. This qualitative phenomenological study explored teachers' experiences in implementing gamified reading interventions and examined their perceived influence on reading fluency and learner engagement among junior high school students. The study involved twelve junior high school English teachers from selected public secondary schools in the Philippines who were purposively selected based on their experience in utilizing gamified reading strategies in classroom instruction. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis revealed five major themes: (1) Enhancing Learner Motivation Through Interactive and Competitive Reading Activities; (2) Improving Reading Fluency Through Repetitive and Technology-Assisted Reading Practices; (3) Promoting Active Participation and Collaborative Engagement in Reading Tasks; (4) Addressing Diverse Reading Difficulties Through Gamified Differentiated Instruction; and (5) Technological and Instructional Challenges in Gamified Reading Implementation. Findings revealed that gamified reading interventions positively influenced learners' oral reading fluency, comprehension, confidence, and classroom participation. Teachers observed that game-based reading activities reduced learners' anxiety and encouraged reluctant readers to actively participate in literacy tasks. However, participants also encountered challenges related to technological accessibility, classroom management, learner diversity, and limited instructional resources. The study concludes that gamified reading interventions serve as effective learner-centered instructional approaches that support literacy engagement and reading fluency development. The findings provide implications for literacy instruction, teacher professional development, and technology-supported reading intervention programs in secondary education.

Keywords: gamified reading interventions, reading fluency, learner engagement, literacy instruction, gamification, qualitative research, junior high school education

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I. INTRODUCTION

Reading fluency and learner engagement remain among the most significant concerns in literacy education, particularly in secondary school settings where learners encounter increasingly complex reading tasks and academic demands. Reading fluency, which involves accurate, expressive, and automatic reading, plays a crucial role in learners' comprehension, academic achievement, and overall literacy development. However, many junior high school students continue to experience difficulties in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, decoding skills, and sustained engagement during literacy instruction.

In recent years, educational institutions have increasingly integrated gamified instructional approaches to address learner disengagement and improve literacy outcomes. Gamification refers to the application of game elements such as rewards, points, leaderboards, badges, challenges, and interactive tasks within educational settings to enhance learner motivation and participation. In reading instruction, gamified interventions include digital reading games, reading competitions, interactive quizzes, storytelling challenges, collaborative literacy tasks, and reward-based reading activities designed to make literacy learning more engaging and enjoyable.

The integration of gamified reading interventions aligns with constructivist and motivational learning theories emphasizing active participation, experiential learning, and learner-centered instruction. Research suggests that gamified instructional strategies improve learner motivation, engagement, and academic performance by creating enjoyable and interactive learning experiences (Deterding et al., 2019; Hamari et al., 2020). Gamification also supports literacy instruction by encouraging repeated reading practice, collaborative learning, and positive learner participation.

Despite the increasing use of gamified learning approaches, limited qualitative studies have explored teachers' lived experiences in implementing gamified reading interventions, particularly within junior high school contexts. Existing literature predominantly focuses on quantitative measures of academic achievement, leaving a gap in understanding teachers' instructional practices, perceptions, and implementation challenges related to gamified literacy instruction.

Thus, this study explored teachers' experiences in implementing gamified reading interventions and examined their perceived influence on reading fluency and learner engagement among junior high school students.

Review of Related Literature

Gamification in Education

Gamification has become a widely recognized instructional strategy in contemporary education due to its potential to increase learner engagement, participation, and motivation. According to Deterding et al. (2019), gamification integrates game mechanics into non-game contexts to encourage active learner involvement and sustained participation.

Educational gamification includes points systems, rewards, leaderboards, badges, challenges, and collaborative competitions that motivate learners to accomplish instructional tasks. Research indicates that gamified learning environments positively influence learners' intrinsic motivation and classroom participation (Hamari et al., 2020).

Gamified Reading Interventions and Literacy Development

Gamified reading interventions involve literacy activities enhanced through game-based elements and interactive learning strategies. These interventions often include reading challenges, digital literacy games, storytelling competitions, vocabulary quests, and comprehension-based interactive activities.

According to Gee (2018), game-based literacy instruction encourages active meaning-making, repeated practice, and learner autonomy. Studies also reveal that gamified reading activities improve reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension performance among struggling readers (Kapp, 2021).

Reading Fluency and Learner Engagement

Reading fluency refers to the ability to read accurately, quickly, and expressively while comprehending texts effectively. Rasinski (2019) emphasized that fluency development significantly contributes to reading comprehension and learner confidence.

Learner engagement, meanwhile, encompasses behavioral,



emotional, and cognitive participation in learning activities. Engaged learners demonstrate sustained attention, active participation, and positive attitudes toward literacy instruction.

Teachers' Experiences in Technology-Supported Literacy Instruction

Teachers play a crucial role in implementing technology-supported and gamified instructional approaches. Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2019) noted that teachers' beliefs, instructional adaptability, and technological competence significantly influence educational technology integration. However, studies also identify challenges related to internet connectivity, learner accessibility, classroom management, and insufficient teacher training as barriers to successful technology-enhanced literacy instruction (OECD, 2021).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore teachers' lived experiences in implementing gamified reading interventions and their perceived influence on reading fluency and learner engagement among junior high school students. Phenomenology was appropriate because it enabled the researchers to understand participants' instructional experiences, perceptions, and reflections within authentic classroom contexts. The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools in the Philippines implementing gamified literacy activities in English and reading instruction. The participants consisted of twelve junior high school English teachers selected through purposive sampling. Participants were required to have at least three years of teaching experience, actively implement gamified reading interventions, and willingly participate in the study. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving reading intervention materials, gamified instructional activities, and learner performance records. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis involving coding, theme generation, theme review, and thematic interpretation. Credibility was established through member checking and triangulation, while dependability, confirmability, and

transferability were ensured through audit trails, reflective journaling, and thick descriptions of participants' instructional experiences.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Enhancing Learner Motivation Through Interactive and Competitive Reading Activities

Participants consistently described gamified reading interventions as highly effective instructional approaches in increasing learners' motivation, enthusiasm, and active participation during reading instruction. Teachers observed that learners became more interested and emotionally invested in literacy activities when reading lessons incorporated game elements such as rewards systems, points, badges, leaderboards, timed challenges, and collaborative competitions. Participants explained that gamified activities transformed reading instruction into enjoyable and engaging learning experiences, reducing learners' boredom and reluctance toward reading tasks.

One participant shared:

"Mas excited ang learners kapag may games at rewards sa reading activities."

Another teacher explained:

"Gamified activities encourage even reluctant readers to participate."

Teachers emphasized that interactive and competitive literacy activities sustained learners' attention and increased classroom participation. Participants observed that learners who were previously passive during traditional reading sessions became more enthusiastic when instructional tasks involved challenges, team competitions, and achievement recognition systems. Teachers further explained that game-based literacy activities created positive classroom environments where learners viewed reading as enjoyable rather than stressful.

One participant remarked:

"The learners become more engaged because reading feels enjoyable and less stressful."

Another teacher shared:



“Kapag may reading games, mas focused sila at gustong-gusto nilang sumali.”

Participants also highlighted that gamified reading interventions strengthened learners’ intrinsic motivation by promoting a sense of accomplishment and excitement. Teachers observed that learners became more willing to complete reading tasks because they anticipated rewards, positive reinforcement, and recognition from peers and teachers. Some participants explained that gamification particularly motivated struggling readers who previously demonstrated low confidence and limited classroom participation.

One teacher stated:

“Even struggling readers try harder because they feel challenged and encouraged.”

The findings suggest that gamified reading interventions positively influence learners’ emotional and behavioral engagement in literacy activities by creating enjoyable, interactive, and achievement-oriented learning experiences. These findings support Hamari et al. (2020), who emphasized that gamification enhances learner motivation and participation through rewarding and immersive instructional environments. Similarly, Deterding et al. (2019) noted that game-based instructional strategies increase learners’ engagement by stimulating curiosity, competition, and active participation.

Theme 2: Improving Reading Fluency Through Repetitive and Technology-Assisted Reading Practices

Teachers highlighted that gamified reading interventions contributed significantly to the improvement of learners’ reading fluency through repetitive reading activities, technology-assisted literacy tasks, and immediate feedback mechanisms. Participants explained that repeated oral reading exercises embedded within games encouraged learners to practice reading more frequently while minimizing anxiety and fear of failure.

One participant stated:

“Repeated reading activities through games help learners improve pronunciation and fluency.”

Another teacher shared:

“Digital reading applications provide instant feedback that helps learners self-correct.”

Participants observed noticeable improvements in learners’ pronunciation accuracy, word recognition, reading speed, oral reading confidence, and comprehension performance. Teachers explained that learners became more willing to read aloud during gamified literacy activities because the classroom environment became more supportive, collaborative, and less intimidating.

One teacher remarked:

“Gamified reading tasks reduce learners’ fear of making mistakes.”

Another participant explained:

“Kapag paulit-ulit nilang ginagawa ang reading tasks sa games, mas bumibilis at gumaganda ang pagbabasa nila.”

Teachers further noted that interactive digital tools and reading applications allowed learners to receive immediate corrective feedback, helping them identify reading errors and improve pronunciation independently. Participants emphasized that technology-assisted interventions strengthened learners’ self-monitoring skills and encouraged continuous reading practice.

One participant shared:

“Learners become more confident because they can immediately see their progress.”

Teachers also highlighted that gamified reading activities promoted consistency in reading practice because learners viewed the activities as entertaining and rewarding rather than repetitive academic exercises. Participants explained that learners demonstrated improved fluency development when instructional activities combined repetition with engaging multimedia and interactive literacy tasks.

The findings align with Rasinski (2019), who emphasized that repeated reading and supportive literacy environments contribute significantly to reading fluency and comprehension development. Similarly, Gee (2018) noted that interactive and game-based literacy environments encourage active learning, repeated practice, and learner autonomy, all of which positively influence literacy



acquisition.

Theme 3: Promoting Active Participation and Collaborative Engagement in Reading Tasks

Participants emphasized that gamified reading interventions effectively promoted active participation, peer interaction, teamwork, and collaborative engagement during literacy instruction. Teachers described implementing team-based reading competitions, collaborative storytelling activities, reading relay games, vocabulary challenges, and group comprehension tasks to encourage learners' social interaction and cooperative learning experiences.

One participant explained:

"Group reading games encourage teamwork and peer support."

Another teacher shared:

"Learners actively participate because they enjoy competing and collaborating with classmates."

Teachers observed that collaborative reading activities improved learners' communication skills, oral participation, confidence, and classroom interaction. Participants further explained that shy and hesitant learners became more participative during group-based literacy games because collaborative environments reduced pressure and encouraged peer support.

One participant remarked:

"Mas nagiging confident ang shy learners kapag kasama nila ang group nila sa activities."

Another teacher stated:

"Peer interaction during games encourages learners to help one another improve."

Participants emphasized that gamified collaborative tasks strengthened learners' sense of belonging and classroom participation. Teachers observed that learners became more socially engaged during reading activities because games promoted cooperation, shared goals, and collective achievement. Some participants also highlighted that collaborative literacy activities improved learners' listening comprehension, teamwork, and problem-solving

skills.

One participant explained:

"The learners become more expressive and communicative during collaborative reading games."

The findings indicate that gamified literacy instruction strengthens learner engagement through socially interactive and collaborative learning experiences. These findings support constructivist learning theories emphasizing the importance of social interaction and cooperative learning in knowledge construction and literacy development. Likewise, Vygotsky's social constructivist perspective highlights the role of peer interaction and collaborative learning in enhancing cognitive and language development.

Theme 4: Addressing Diverse Reading Difficulties Through Gamified Differentiated Instruction

Teachers described utilizing differentiated gamified instructional strategies to address diverse learner reading abilities, literacy needs, and learning preferences. Participants explained that gamified reading interventions allowed teachers to modify instructional tasks according to learners' reading proficiency levels, enabling struggling readers and advanced learners to participate meaningfully in literacy activities.

One participant stated:

"I modify reading challenges depending on the learners' reading levels."

Another teacher explained:

"Gamified interventions help struggling readers become more motivated to practice reading."

Participants described using leveled reading games, adaptive literacy tasks, vocabulary-based competitions, differentiated comprehension challenges, and individualized reading activities to accommodate varying learner needs. Teachers observed that struggling readers became more willing to participate because game-based tasks reduced embarrassment and promoted positive reinforcement.

One teacher shared:

"Kapag gamified ang activities, hindi nahihiya ang



struggling readers na sumali.”

Another participant explained:

“Differentiated reading games allow learners to progress at their own pace.”

Teachers also emphasized that gamified interventions helped reduce learners’ reading anxiety and frustration because instructional activities became more supportive and learner-centered. Participants observed that learners who previously demonstrated low confidence gradually became more engaged and persistent in reading tasks.

One teacher remarked:

“The learners become more motivated because they experience success little by little.”

Participants further highlighted the importance of individualized monitoring and scaffolding during gamified reading activities. Teachers explained that differentiated instructional approaches enabled them to provide targeted literacy support while maintaining learners’ motivation and participation.

The findings highlight the importance of learner-centered and differentiated instructional approaches in literacy intervention programs. These findings support Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), who emphasized the importance of inclusive pedagogical approaches that accommodate learner diversity through differentiated instruction and responsive teaching practices.

Theme 5: Technological and Instructional Challenges in Gamified Reading Implementation

Despite the positive instructional experiences, participants encountered several technological, instructional, and classroom management challenges affecting the implementation of gamified reading interventions. Teachers explained that limited technological infrastructure, insufficient digital devices, unstable internet connectivity, learner distractions, and extensive preparation requirements hindered the consistent implementation of gamified literacy activities.

One participant shared:

“Minsan mahina ang internet kaya naapektuhan ang

activities.”

Another teacher stated:

“Gamified instruction requires extensive preparation and planning.”

Participants explained that unreliable internet connectivity frequently interrupted digital literacy activities and affected the continuity of classroom instruction. Teachers also highlighted that some learners lacked access to digital devices, limiting their participation in technology-supported reading interventions.

One teacher remarked:

“Hindi lahat ng learners may gadgets kaya kailangan naming mag-adjust.”

Another participant explained:

“Technical problems sometimes consume instructional time.”

Teachers further identified classroom management difficulties during gamified activities, particularly when learners became overly competitive or distracted by game elements. Some participants emphasized the challenge of balancing entertainment and instructional objectives during literacy games.

One participant shared:

“Kailangan talagang ma-manage nang maayos para hindi puro laro lang ang focus.”

Participants also expressed the need for additional teacher training related to gamification strategies, digital literacy tools, and technology-enhanced instructional design. Teachers explained that effective gamified instruction requires pedagogical competence, creativity, and continuous professional development.

One teacher stated:

“More training on gamified instruction will help teachers maximize these strategies.”

The findings demonstrate that while gamified reading interventions positively support learner engagement and literacy development, successful implementation requires adequate technological resources, instructional preparation, and institutional support. These findings align with OECD (2021), which emphasized that technological accessibility,



teacher preparedness, and institutional infrastructure significantly influence the effectiveness of digital learning initiatives.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that gamified reading interventions positively influence learners' reading fluency, motivation, and engagement by creating interactive, enjoyable, and learner-centered literacy environments. Teachers observed that integrating game-based instructional strategies such as reading competitions, collaborative literacy games, rewards systems, storytelling challenges, and digital reading applications increased learners' interest and active participation during reading instruction. Participants emphasized that gamified activities transformed traditional reading sessions into engaging and meaningful learning experiences, allowing learners to become more confident and enthusiastic in accomplishing literacy tasks. Teachers further noted that learners who previously demonstrated hesitation and low participation gradually became more involved in reading activities because game elements reduced fear, pressure, and classroom anxiety. The findings indicate that gamification promotes positive emotional responses toward reading instruction, encouraging learners to view literacy activities as enjoyable and achievable learning experiences rather than difficult academic tasks.

The study further revealed that repetitive reading practice and immediate feedback mechanisms significantly contributed to learners' reading fluency development and reduced reading-related anxiety. Teachers explained that repeated oral reading exercises embedded within gamified activities strengthened learners' pronunciation accuracy, word recognition, vocabulary retention, reading speed, and comprehension skills. Participants observed that learners became more willing to practice reading repeatedly because the activities were interactive, rewarding, and motivating. Additionally, the use of technology-assisted reading applications provided immediate corrective feedback that enabled learners to identify reading errors

and improve independently. Teachers emphasized that immediate feedback mechanisms enhanced learners' self-monitoring skills and encouraged continuous improvement in oral reading performance. Participants also highlighted that supportive and non-threatening gamified environments reduced learners' fear of making mistakes, thereby strengthening their confidence and willingness to participate in oral reading tasks. The findings suggest that gamified interventions support both the cognitive and affective dimensions of literacy learning by combining skill development with motivational reinforcement.

Moreover, collaborative and socially interactive literacy tasks strengthened learner participation, peer support, and classroom interaction. Teachers described how team-based reading activities, collaborative storytelling tasks, group comprehension challenges, and peer-assisted reading games promoted cooperation, communication, and active engagement among learners. Participants observed that learners became more expressive and socially engaged during collaborative literacy activities because they felt supported by peers and motivated by shared goals and group achievements. Teachers further emphasized that collaborative gamified interventions encouraged shy and struggling readers to participate more actively because peer interaction minimized feelings of embarrassment and isolation. These findings highlight the role of social interaction and cooperative learning in enhancing literacy development and learner engagement within gamified instructional environments.

However, despite the positive instructional outcomes, the successful implementation of gamified reading interventions requires adequate technological infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and institutional instructional support systems. Participants encountered several challenges including unstable internet connectivity, insufficient digital devices, limited access to technological resources, classroom management difficulties, and extensive preparation requirements. Teachers explained that technological limitations often interrupted instructional continuity and restricted learners' participation in digital



reading activities. Participants also emphasized that implementing effective gamified literacy instruction requires significant planning, creativity, and pedagogical competence. The identified challenges indicate the importance of sustained professional development programs focusing on gamification strategies, digital literacy instruction, differentiated teaching approaches, and technology-enhanced pedagogy. Furthermore, the findings underscore the need for schools and educational institutions to strengthen resource allocation, technological accessibility, and instructional support mechanisms to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of gamified reading interventions in secondary literacy education.

IV. CONCLUSION

Gamified reading interventions serve as effective learner-centered instructional approaches that support reading fluency development and learner engagement among junior high school students. Teachers perceived gamification as a valuable literacy strategy that enhances motivation, participation, confidence, and collaborative learning experiences.

Despite implementation challenges, gamified literacy instruction demonstrates significant potential in improving secondary-level reading instruction. Educational institutions should therefore strengthen teacher capability-building initiatives, technological accessibility, and instructional support systems to maximize the effectiveness of gamified reading programs.

Implications of the Study

1. Schools should strengthen professional development programs focusing on gamified literacy instruction and digital pedagogy.
2. Teachers may integrate more interactive and collaborative game-based literacy activities to improve learner engagement.
3. Educational institutions should improve technological infrastructure and digital accessibility for literacy programs.
4. Future studies may examine learners' perspectives and quantitative impacts of gamified reading interventions on literacy achievement.

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