# Challenges Encountered by Third Grade Teachers Handling Non-Readers In The Division of Davao City

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*Abstract* — This study explored teachers' experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and insights in helping struggling readers in the new normal. The research participants were ten (10) selected elementary teachers assigned in schools in the Division of Davao City for school year 2022-2023 and who are currently handling grade 3 learners who are non-readers. The study results showed that the participants utilized various strategies to help struggling readers, such as conducting remedial classes, using phonetics, doing simultaneous reading, and integrating games and reading materials. In addition, the participants also encountered the following challenges: lack of student willingness, lack of parents' cooperation, lack of time for reading, lack of reading materials, and lack of teacher's patience. Furthermore, to address the challenges, the participants identified coping mechanisms: having more patience, fostering a supportive learning environment, using teaching strategies, and motivating themselves. Recommendations were made based on a general interpretation of teachers' strategies, challenges, coping strategies, adjustments, and suggestions for improvement. The suggested recommendations could help the plans of the Department of Education and numerous studies and researchers.

*Keywords — Challenges, coping mechanisms, teachers' strategies, struggling readers*

## I. Introduction

Various studies highlighted the challenges faced by elementary school teachers, specifically those handling grade 3 classes with non-readers and struggling readers. One study by Karki and Koirala (2020) explored the challenges faced by grade 6 teachers in Nepal who have non-readers in their classrooms. The study found that teachers faced difficulties in providing appropriate reading materials, managing classroom behavior, and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of non-readers. Another study by Chen and Chang (2021) found that teachers in Taiwan who handle non-readers in their classroom struggled with addressing individual differences among students, providing effective feedback, and creating engaging learning activities for non-readers. Moreover, a study by Adeshina and Fasasi (2021) found that grade 6 teachers in Nigeria who handle non-readers in their classrooms faced difficulties in providing individualized instruction, managing student behavior, and creating an inclusive classroom environment. Finally, Ang, Toh, Quek, and Chang (2020) highlighted that grade 6 teachers in Singapore who handle non-readers in their classrooms faced challenges in identifying the root

cause of students' reading difficulties, providing differentiated instruction, and managing classroom behavior. The authors recommended providing teachers with professional development to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skills.

Currently, there is scarcity of studies in literature which explored the and highlighted the challenges faced by elementary school teachers handling grade 6 classes with non-readers. However, few studies were relevant on the difficulties of elementary school teachers in general and the issues they must face because of having non-readers in their classes after primary grade level. One study conducted by Sarmiento, Ruiz, and Marasigan (2021) in the Philippines explored the challenges faced by elementary teachers in teaching reading to non-readers. The study found that teachers faced challenges in identifying the causes of students' reading difficulties, providing appropriate instructional materials and strategies, and managing classroom behavior. The authors recommended that teachers receive training in evidence-based reading instruction and have access to appropriate instructional materials. Another study conducted by Esteban, Basmayor, and Opulencia (2021) explored the challenges of elementary teachers in the Philippines in implementing the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education program, which includes reading instruction in the mother tongue. The study found that teachers faced challenges in adapting to the diverse language backgrounds of their students and in assessing students' reading skills in different languages. The authors recommended that teachers receive training in teaching reading in the mother tongue and have access to appropriate instructional materials.

Currently, these dilemmas are evident in the confines of the Division of Davao City, especially right after the pandemic. This, among others, comprise the pressing issues on the learning gaps brought about by the long period of isolation of learners due to remote or distance learning. Two years into the pandemic, the language learning of learners was affected and was starting to emerge when the present school year came into the picture. One of the many clamors of public elementary school teachers is the poor reading skills of learners, especially those in the higher grade levels, because the regular classroom instruction is also hampered thereby affecting the mastery of the required learning competencies.

This study is conducted to investigate and detail the experiences of third grade teachers among the public elementary schools in the Division of Davao City as they combat the needs of their learners who are non-readers at the same time ensuring that they learn the most essential learning competencies in the process. Furthermore, it is expected to yield insights on how teachers and school administrators may improve learning outcomes. The study used a phenomenological approach through the application of narrative analysis.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of third grade teachers who are handling non-readers in their classes in the public elementary schools in the Division of Davao City?

2. What are the coping mechanisms of third grade teachers who are handling non-readers in their classes in the public elementary schools in the Division of Davao City?

3. What educational insights can be generated from the experiences of third grade teachers who are handling non-readers in their classes in the public elementary schools in the Division of Davao City?

Reading is a complex process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. Reading is more than just making meaning from prints but it involves interaction with the texts. In school, reading is one of the most important skills a learner should develop. Reading is a life skill that will enable learners to extend their concepts and gain information as the basis for other learning.

Learning to read is essential to learners' well-being. Reading habit is however the single most important determinant of a student's success in education and in the modern complex society (State, n.d.) A child who cannot read at a comfortable level will experience significant difficulties mastering many types of academic content and may have the risk of failing in school (Reid, 2019.). It was further stressed that every learner must become fully proficient in reading to be successful in school (Aina, A J;Okusaga, T.O.; Taiwo, Adebowale and Ogundipe, 2021). Moreover, Cayubit (2019) added that any Filipino child with sufficient reading skills would have greater chances of success in school compared to a child whose reading skills are poor.

Apparently, in the Philippines, the ability to read and write is our priority. The government puts effort to promote effective readers and enhance high literacy. One can be literate, but not necessarily a reader because reading is a skill that requires the development of a habit that must be exercised regularly if it is to be retained and enhanced.

Consequently, non-reader can be considered as having a reading disability. A non-reader is an individual, with a reading disability, who demonstrates difficulties in reading skills that are unexpected in relation to age, cognitive ability, quantity and quality of instruction, and intervention. The reading difficulties are not the result of generalized developmental delay or sensory impairment (Lundberg & Hoien, 2021). Reading disability may be characterized by: • difficulties in single word reading; • initial difficulties decoding or sounding out words; • difficulties reading sight words; • insufficient phonological processing; that is, the understanding that sentences are composed of words, words are made up of syllables, and syllables are made up of individual sounds or phonemes.

Non-readers cannot recognize words quickly and efficiently. They could not demonstrate high word recognition. They possess weak fluency skills. They read with no good expression, intonation, pitch, and phrasing. To add, non-readers cannot recognize some letters or words like their own name, classroom labels, signs, and other environmental print (Mather & Goldstein, 2021).

The study made by Johnston (2020) emphasized that students with very weak reading skills have serious academic problems, which can develop into social problems as they reach the middle and high school years. Through years of failure and labeling, they often develop hard shells of resistance to reading. They compensate with strong auditory and observational skills, generally trying to avoid notice. Feeling helpless and hopeless, they may be vulnerable to anti-social behavior.

Moreover, Stanovich (2019) describes the downward spiral of students who start out having trouble acquiring alphabetic coding skills and recognizing words. With these barriers, they cannot read for meaning, and find reading increasingly unrewarding. They practice less and have more negative experiences around reading. Increasingly, they avoid reading or merely tolerate it, without really engaging in what's being read. Emotional side effects begin to be associated with school, and the entire school experience is impacted.

To escape from this spiral, students need an instructional environment that fosters the optimism that they can improve. Motivation must be as important a focus as skills development. Effective programs provide students access to interesting reading materials at their own levels, opportunities to share reading experiences, activities they choose and direct, interspersed with more prescriptive lessons . . . but above all, effective programs provide instructors who convey a message of faith in the student's capability to achieve success.

To rescue non-readers, we need programs that teach them to read well enough to profit from their education. The research in this realm is voluminous — and highly controversial. Although most would agree that non-readers need explicit phonics instruction and practice in the beginning phases of reading acquisition, there is serious disagreement about how, when, and to what degree to integrate contextual reading. Research on which types of classroom programs have the greatest benefits for non-readers, and why specific remediation approaches do and don't produce results, are not generally accepted.

Practitioners cannot wait for consensus from the research front. They must develop approaches based on selected research, balancing theories with direct experience to meet the pressing needs of their students. By continuous monitoring and adjustment, drawing from the wide realm of commercially available products, and tapping outside expertise as resources are available, schools can create programs that make readers of all students. The only prerequisites are leadership, commitment, and support (Lyons, 2019).

**Phonological Awareness and the Graphophonic Cueing System** is for beginning readers who develop their concept of letters and the alphabet. The recognition and naming of letters is foundational to using the graphophonic cueing system. By noticing letters in environmental print, singing, and recognizing their own name, students begin to explore and understand this relationship. Students who do not develop this understanding will require explicit and direct instruction in phonics. Likewise, Phonics instruction should begin with a foundational

understanding of phonemic awareness and letters of the alphabet. Most students eventually develop sound-letter relationships that help them decode and spell words. Effective phonics instruction focuses students' attention on noticing the letter-sound patterns. By embedding phonics instruction in the total language arts program and by using teachable moments, teachers can assist most students to develop an understanding of the graph phonic cueing system.

**Vocabulary Development and the Semantic Cueing System**. Beginning readers develop word awareness. Students need to develop a store of words that they recognize automatically and understand. By repeated reading experiences (e.g., labels, key words, messages, word walls, lists) students develop recognition of most words they see, hear, and write. During the reading process, students need to understand the words that allow them to comprehend what they are reading and the strategies that they need to figure out the meaning. Vocabulary cannot be left to chance; it has to be developed and extended and taught. However, for some of our students, developing and expanding their vocabulary level is a complex process that requires multiple exposure to words and their meanings. They must be taught to use various word-learning strategies as they approach new words in their reading and in their environment. Effective vocabulary instruction occurs when students are provided multiple exposure to words in a variety of contexts, words are taught in the context of a selection or unit, teachers help students activate prior knowledge when learning new words, relationships are drawn between new words and known words and concepts.

**Text Forms, Features, and the Textual Cueing System.** Students also have to recognize that words and sentences form different types of text, which are organized in particular structures or patterns. Typical textual cues and conventions for fiction, for example, include a setting (when and where), characters (who), and a series of events that focus on a problem followed by a solution. For students to be able to follow and understand text, they have to be able to recognize the organizational structures behind the text.

It is critical that students with reading difficulties and disabilities are identified early so that the appropriate intervention strategies may be implemented. Students who have a reading disability require explicit and intensive instruction that is ongoing. Classroom teachers continually assess students' learning in order to inform instruction.

More so, when teachers have initial concerns about a student's lack of progress, there are many things they can do to support the student. It is important to intervene as soon as the teacher recognizes that a student is falling behind. A suggestion also focuses on working together with parents to identify concerns and to develop a classroom intervention plan. In many situations, these interventions may be effective, and no further input may be required. Teachers in reading class need also to be assisted in identifying the source of reading difficulty. Because classroom teachers with possible support of special educators and/or administrators must discuss concerns with parents/guardians, ensure vision, hearing, and medical assessments are up to date, review cumulative records, collect data through informal assessments, document observations, and identify areas of strengths and difficulties. If there is sufficient information, develop a Classroom

Intervention Plan. Based on the research, 90 to 95 percent of poor readers, prevention and early intervention provided by well-trained teachers can increase reading skills to average reading levels (Tankersley, 2021).

These intervention programs must combine instruction in reading comprehension strategies, the language cueing systems including phonemic awareness, phonics, syntax, text, and pragmatic and fluency development. However, there is also evidence to suggest that if we delay intervention until nine years of age, approximately 75 percent of the children continue to have difficulties learning to read throughout high school (Tankersley, 2021). Successful intervention requires that teachers understand the reading processes and instruction, think diagnostically, and use this information on an ongoing basis to inform instruction. Struggling readers need multi-level, flexible, small-group instruction balanced with whole-class instruction in which the teacher models and explicitly teaches reading strategies.

Third-grade classrooms often consist of students with diverse reading abilities, including non-readers (Griffin, 2019). This diversity makes it challenging for teachers to meet the individual needs of each student (DeFord et al., 2021). Accommodating the diverse needs of non-readers requires individualized instruction, which can be challenging in a classroom with limited resources and large class sizes (Sanchez & Cole, 2019). Non-readers in third grade often lack basic foundational skills, such as letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and decoding abilities. This can hinder their progress in reading (National Institute for Literacy, 2019).

In addition, non-readers typically have limited exposure to printed text, resulting in a smaller vocabulary repertoire. This lack of vocabulary knowledge can hinder their comprehension and overall reading progress. According to Apel and Brimo (2019), students who have limited print exposure may struggle with understanding and using words in written texts. Third-grade teachers need to employ strategies such as explicit vocabulary instruction and provide opportunities for vocabulary development through read-aloud and meaningful discussions.

Time management is another significant challenge for third-grade teachers handling non-readers. Teachers need to strike a balance between teaching foundational reading skills and covering the broader curriculum. Limited instructional time can pose difficulties in providing targeted interventions and interventions for non-readers (Pinnell et al., 2019).

Furthermore, assessing the progress and growth of non-readers can be challenging. Traditional assessment methods may not effectively capture the progress of struggling readers, requiring teachers to explore alternative assessment strategies, such as informal reading inventories or running records (Roe et al., 2021). These assessments can provide valuable insights into individual reading abilities but may require additional time and effort from teachers. Assessing the progress of non-readers can be challenging due to their limited reading abilities (DeFord et al., 2021). Teachers must use appropriate assessment tools and methods to accurately measure their growth and adjust instruction accordingly (Vaughn et al., 2020).

Additionally, addressing the emotional and motivational aspects of non-readers can be a challenge. Some non-readers may experience frustration, low self-esteem, or a lack of motivation due to their struggles with reading (Okebukola, 2019). Teachers must create a supportive and nurturing classroom environment that promotes a positive attitude towards reading and fosters a love for learning.

Another challenge is catching up to grade-level expectations. Non-readers entering third grade may be significantly behind their peers in reading skills, which creates a challenge for teachers to help them catch up to grade-level expectations. According to Stecker et al. (2019), "non-readers in third grade may be two or more years behind their peers in reading ability." Teachers must provide intensive and targeted interventions, such as small-group instruction and one-on-one support, to help non-readers make accelerated progress. Simply put, non-readers in a third-grade classroom often have widely varying reading levels, making it challenging for teachers to provide appropriate instruction. According to Graham, Liu, and Aitken (2019), "students who enter third grade as non-readers or struggling readers often present with a range of reading abilities." This requires teachers to differentiate their instruction to meet the diverse needs of non-readers.

In fact, non-readers may struggle with focusing and engaging in activities due to their limited reading abilities (Allington & Johnston, 2020). This can pose challenges to maintaining a structured and productive classroom environment (Griffin, 2019). In addition, non-readers may struggle with focusing, staying engaged, and following classroom routines. This can disrupt the learning environment and require additional classroom management strategies to create a supportive and structured atmosphere (Chandler-Olcott et al., 2020).

Furthermore, third-grade teachers may need to collaborate with specialists, such as reading specialists, special education teachers, or speech-language pathologists, to support non-readers. Coordinating schedules and resources and maintaining open lines of communication can pose challenges (Storch & Whitehurst, 2019). Thus, providing differentiated instruction is crucial for non-readers, but it requires careful planning and implementation (Vaughn et al., 2020). Teachers need to design and deliver targeted interventions that address the specific needs and learning styles of non-readers (DeFord et al., 2021). In addition, teachers must differentiate their instruction to meet the varied learning styles and abilities of non-readers. This includes providing multisensory activities, manipulatives, and differentiated reading materials (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2019). Non-readers in a third-grade classroom may have diverse learning needs, including learning disabilities, language barriers, or attention difficulties. These students require individualized instruction and differentiated teaching strategies (Gupta & Gagnon, 2020).

On the other hand, phonemic awareness, the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in words, is a crucial skill for reading development. Non-readers often lack this skill, which makes it difficult for them to decode words and develop reading fluency. Kilpatrick (2019) states that students who enter third grade as non-readers may not yet have developed phonemic

awareness. Teachers must implement targeted phonemic awareness instruction to support non-readers in developing this foundational skill.

Another challenge faced by teachers is the lack of resources. Teachers often face a shortage of resources, such as appropriate reading materials, technology, or support personnel, to effectively address the needs of non-readers. Insufficient resources can hinder the implementation of evidence-based interventions (Chappell et al., 2019). Consequently, non-readers may experience frustration and exhibit disruptive behavior due to their struggles with reading. Teachers must develop strategies to address behavior challenges while maintaining a positive learning environment (Swoszowski, et al., 2019). Non-readers may face challenges in maintaining motivation and engagement due to their struggle with reading. This can result in frustration, disinterest, and a negative attitude towards reading. According to Gambrell et al. (2019), students who struggle with reading may become disengaged and display a lack of motivation. Teachers need to employ strategies that foster a positive reading environment, including using engaging and relevant texts, providing choice, and incorporating multimodal learning experiences.

Simply put, third-grade teachers face various challenges when handling non-readers in their classes. These challenges include addressing diverse learning needs, providing differentiated instruction, managing time constraints, assessing progress effectively, and addressing emotional and motivational aspects. By being aware of these challenges and implementing appropriate strategies, teachers can create inclusive learning environments that support the reading development of non-readers.

This study is primarily anchored on Simple View of Reading (SVR) theory (Gough & Tunmer, 2019). The SVR theory posits that reading comprehension is a function of two primary components: decoding (word recognition) and linguistic comprehension (Hoover & Gough, 2019). According to the SVR theory, individuals must have proficient decoding and linguistic comprehension skills to be successful readers (Catts & Kamhi, 2019).

The challenges faced by third-grade teachers in handling non-readers can be anchored on the SVR theory because non-readers typically struggle with one or both components of reading. For example, non-readers may have difficulty decoding words accurately and quickly or may have poor linguistic comprehension skills that prevent them from understanding what they read (Cain & Oakhill, 2019). These challenges can make it difficult for non-readers to access grade-level content and keep up with their peers in class. Furthermore, research has shown that the SVR theory can be useful in guiding instructional interventions for struggling readers (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2018). For example, interventions that target decoding or linguistic comprehension skills can improve reading outcomes for struggling readers (Torgesen et al., 2019).

Given the paradigm stated above, this study is further anchored on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This model suggests that stress is a result of a transaction between an individual and their environment, and that coping strategies are used to

manage the stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Several studies have explored coping strategies used by teachers in the context of teaching struggling readers (Kosnik, 2019; Klassen, 2019). These studies suggest that coping strategies can include seeking support from colleagues or administrators, seeking professional development opportunities, and using student data to inform instruction.

## II. Methodology

Descriptive phenomenology as a qualitative research methodology is employed in this study. By in-depth detailing people's subjective experiences, descriptive phenomenology, a qualitative research approach, tries to uncover the essence of a phenomena as it is experienced by individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2019). Through a rigorous process of data analysis and interpretation, descriptive phenomenology is a qualitative research technique that aims to comprehend and characterize the essence of human experiences as they are seen by the people who have lived them (Giorgi, 2019).

The participants of the study are ten (10) public elementary school teachers who are currently assigned in schools in the Division of Davao City for school year 2022-2023 and who are currently handling grade 3 learners who are non-readers. In the selection of the participants of my study, I utilized purposive sampling technique which is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which individuals or elements are selected for a study based on specific criteria or characteristics that align with the research objectives. It is commonly used when researchers seek to target a particular subgroup of the population that possesses the desired attributes (Creswell, 2014).

The instrument used in the study is an interview guide crafted by the researcher based on the context of the research objectives. To address the validity issues of this design specifically on the method, the contents of the instrument were presented to a group of experts for validation. The sampling that was used for the selection of the participants were under the suggestions of the expert panels.

This study made use of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, which aims to identify, analyze, and report patterns that built up the themes in a dataset. The thematic analysis will not involve a meticulous approach in the knowledge, which allowed me to employ the approach that would be used in the study (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

To ensure the trustworthiness in the study, I used Gasson's (2020) qualitative validation which was composed of four components namely: credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability.

## III. Results and Discussion

*Experiences of third grade teachers who are handling non-readers in their classes in public elementary schools in the Division of Davao City*

The transcripts from the four participants who were interviewed for the study were the most detailed source of data used to answer this question. When it comes to the experiences that these four individuals have had in instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom, their responses were very different. ELL or English Language Learners are students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in English language and in their academic courses. The themes connected with their experiences are *passing on early childhood experiences, teaching the language to the disabled, language barrier, lack of support: materials and resources, and teaching non-Filipinos.*

*Coping mechanisms of third grade teachers who are handling non-readers in their classes in the public elementary schools' in the Division of Davao City*

The teachers' coping mechanisms and self-management practices are related to informative practices, for example, perceiving a comprehensive pattern and developing such informative practices. At the same time, teaching objectives were related to utilizing standardizing evaluating guidelines and contents that develop the execution of practices and objectives in the classroom. These coping mechanisms are *having more patience, fostering a supportive learning environment, using teaching strategies, and motivating oneself.*

*Educational insights generated from the experiences of third grade teachers who are handling non-readers in their classes in the public elementary schools in the Division of Davao City*

All ten (10) teachers emphasized that their work as a teacher made them physically and emotionally exhausted, and seven (7) of the teachers explicitly characterized the work as stressful. Three of the teachers also told that they experienced psychosomatic symptoms. The teachers shared the following insights: *demands of teaching jobs, disruptive behavior of students, teaching many students, and strategies to control work situations (hard-working strategies, recovering strategies, reducing the workload strategies, job crafting strategies, and help seeking strategies).*

### Discussion

Teachers must transition from learning to reading to reading for learning because this is essential for their future success should insist that readers of adolescent age must be able to deal with increasingly difficult texts. This is important to learn more about the subjects they are studying. Teachers must have access to a complete English language curriculum that integrates teacherled and online learning in a blended learning environment, as well as continuing assessments, data analytics, and literacy assistance for teachers if they want to be efficient teachers.

In addition, by reading and understanding more difficult texts, pupils will be able to produce better-written assignments as their reading skills improve. Immediate and positive feedback encourages pupils to improve their reading skills, especially in reading English materials.

In order to assist their pupils' development in reading, teachers should schedule a time to speak with parents/guardians. As a result, the teacher will know which areas of the lesson need to be simplified or given additional instructions/notes so that the pupils can understand how to complete the challenging sections of the reading process.

The local school district may sponsor seminars about handling the hindrances encountered in the reading performance of the pupils. The researchers only focused on one school to conduct the study, we suggest other researchers to examine and investigate the different experiences of elementary teachers in helping struggling readers to figure out whether or not the results presented in this study reflect the general experiences of teachers in the different school divisions.

In formal education, "reading" has been an indispensable element for a child to learn when he enters the realm of exchange of information. Reading is an essential ability that every child must learn in primary education before moving on to junior high school. Students' reading skills are the foundation of practically all learning processes, requiring students to master not only vocabulary, but also other disciplines. If students have poor reading skills, they may have trouble acquiring knowledge in a variety of other areas, which will have an impact on the learner's academic performance (Nanah et al., 2019).

Teachers who have more than 30 students in a class might not be able to provide attention to each one individually, therefore they would turn to chorus reading as a method of instruction, which will impede good reading (Ikoh, 2020). There appears to be a lot of discussion over what triggers reading difficulties. Reading difficulties are attributed to neurological factors according to some researchers, while others attribute them to environmental factors. Debates have taken place to determine whether reading issues are driven by psychological or neurological reasons (Maruyama, 2020). Reading issues are complicated, and identifying the causes is pretty difficult. Teachers who have more than 30 students in a class might not be able to provide attention to each one individually, therefore they would turn to chorus reading as a method of instruction, which will impede good reading (Ikoh, 2020).

There appears to be a lot of discussion over what triggers reading difficulties. Reading difficulties are attributed to neurological factors according to some researchers, while others attribute them to environmental factors. Debates have taken place to determine whether reading issues are driven by psychological or neurological reasons (Maruyama, 2020). Reading issues are complicated, and identifying the causes is pretty difficult.

## IV. Conclusion

There were many similarities among the participants in regard to their overall experiences instructing grade three learners in a classroom. The differences with their experiences depended upon the number of years in the classroom as well as the education and career paths that led to this particular moment. It is indeed those differences that affected their experiences with ELL students and their response to those students through the delivery of instruction and instructional practices.

The research participants shared that pupils need to be constantly motivated and receive instant feedback from the teachers whenever they feel unsure of the text read. One research participant also said that the learning environment must always be welcoming and friendly in order that pupils will not feel that reading time is a punishment.

Most participants shared that they motivate themselves to find ways to solve the struggles of their pupils. No teaching strategy fits all learners, and teachers feel frustrated whenever their pupils do not improve. Motivating themselves to overcome this challenge is very rewarding when achieved. According to Mitchell (2019), competent educators have always been multifaceted, selecting from various methodologies to ensure that their students receive an exceptional learning experience and outcomes.

The interviews revealed that the teachers perceived multiple job demands. The teachers mentioned ten partly overlapping obstacles or job demands and each teacher mentioned between four and seven demands. Nine of the demands may be seen as constituting challenges and obstacles: time pressure, demanding social interactions, and lack of autonomy. These were their insights (or sentiments).

The time pressure or work overload has in previous quantitative research been identified as a major demand that is strongly associated with emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2019). The time pressure has been attributed to an increasing number of work assignments in the teaching profession.

Despite all the demands, the teachers expressed high job satisfaction, which they attributed to working with the students. This is in accordance with previous research (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021, 2022) that also shows that job satisfaction is positively associated with motivation to continue teaching. Nevertheless, both the results of this study and of previous research reveal an urgent need to reduce the total demands on the teachers.

The strategies aimed at reducing the workload were reducing the teaching position to get one extra day off, and to keep account of the work tasks and use the account as a bargaining chip to avoid additional tasks. Reducing the teaching position actually changes the required workload and therefore resembles a primary control. However, the strategy is costly in terms of reduced income. We therefore tend to classify this strategy as a negative control. On the other hand, keeping account of what one is doing may change a situation where one is often given additional

assignments that lead to work overload. It therefore represents an attempt to use primary control. However, the bargaining strategy did not put the teacher in control of his work situation.

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