

Empowering Minds, Transforming Lives: Effectiveness of Literature-Based Reading Instruction to Children in Conflict with the Law

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated a university-led community extension program using literature-based reading instruction to improve comprehension among children in conflict with the law (CICL) at a rehabilitation center for youth in Cebu, Philippines. Using a quasi-experimental design, significant gains were observed in lexical ($t = 0.03$) and critical ($t = 0.01$) comprehension across grades 0–3, 4–6, 7–8, and 11–12, whereas grades 9–10 showed no significant improvement. The program enhanced vocabulary and analytical skills but had a limited impact on interpretive and creative comprehension. The findings highlight the value of facilitator-supported instruction and call for more tailored strategies. This study affirms that reading is a rehabilitative tool and urges further research on long-term and socioemotional literacy factors.

Keywords: CICL, literature-based reading instruction, reading comprehension, rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

Universities serve multiple essential functions beyond instruction, one of which is providing sustainable services that address societal issues through their community extension services. These services often include training programs informed by research findings, ensuring that academic knowledge is translated into meaningful community impact (Montañez et al., 2024). In line with this mandate, the Literature-Based Reading Instruction Program for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) at the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY) has been developed as a subsidiary initiative under the CAS Shares HEART extension program. This initiative, spearheaded by the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) of Cebu Technological University Argao Campus, integrates Human Kinetics, Emotional Well-Being, Arts, Reading and Literature, Technology, and Scientific Processes to support the rehabilitation and growth of youth at RRCY. As part of the university's commitment to community extension, this program reinforces the role of education and literature in fostering social change and personal development.

The beneficiaries of this program are covered by Republic Act No. 9344, also known as the "Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act" of the Philippines, which establishes a legal framework that prioritizes the rehabilitation and well-being of youth involved in the justice system rather than punitive measures. This legislation seeks to safeguard the rights of children and youth in conflict with the law (CICL) by promoting restorative justice and emphasizing rehabilitation instead of criminalization. This act applies to children under 18 years old who are at risk or in conflict with the law (Canete & Pandey, 2020). Additionally, the law outlines various rehabilitation programs to facilitate the reintegration of young offenders into society and support their personal development (Oppus, 2019). Furthermore, this act emphasizes multisectoral collaboration among the Philippine National Police, Barangay Personnel, and Social Welfare Officers to ensure effective implementation. However, gaps in capabilities need to be addressed (Cale, 2024). Hence, through its extension services arm, the university actively rehabilitates and reforms these CICLs before their reintegration into their respective communities.

Undeniably, Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) experience educational disruptions that hinder their academic development and long-term reintegration into society. Despite rehabilitation centers incorporating scholastic activities into their programs, the lack of a structured educational environment significantly affects CICLs' literacy levels, particularly their reading comprehension. As cited by Olapane et al. (2024), education plays a vital role in shaping individuals and uplifting communities. In addition, Valdez et al. (2023) emphasized that reading proficiency is not only fundamental to academic achievement but also crucial for social integration and economic participation. Therefore, strengthening literacy skills among young people is essential to equip

them with the competencies needed to meet the demands of an increasingly complex society.

Furthermore, reading literacy is crucial in cognitive development, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and cultural understanding (Vicente-Yagüe et al., 2023). Studies have demonstrated that reading enhances comprehension and analytical skills, which are fundamental to academic achievement (Wang et al., 2022; Abid et al., 2023; Saputra & Al Haddar, 2024). However, marginalized youth, particularly CICL, often struggle with literacy because of fragmented educational experiences, social stigma, and emotional trauma. Consequently, instilling a reading culture within this demographic presents both an opportunity and a challenge. The research emphasized the importance of a strong reading culture in boosting literacy rates, thereby improving overall educational outcomes and workforce readiness. Additionally, Elleman and Oslund (2019) highlighted the difficulties faced by adolescents detached from traditional education, emphasizing the need for long-term interventions that build background knowledge and inference skills.

Previous studies have explored various reading interventions targeting diverse populations. Literature-based reading instruction, which emphasizes engagement with literary texts to improve comprehension and foster critical thinking, has shown promise in enhancing literacy among youth. It is a teaching method that fosters literacy development through engagement with rich, authentic literary works rather than concentrating on phonics or isolated vocabulary exercises. This appreciation for language enhances analytical abilities and develops a lifelong love for reading. Fani and Akhtar (2024) argue that exposure to diverse literary works cultivates creativity and social empathy, key attributes for successful rehabilitation. As Eshkobilova and Ruziyeva (2025) elucidated, engaging with fictional texts stimulates cognitive functions such as memory, analytical thinking, and reasoning. Through the interpretation of intricate storylines and character development, readers enhance their capacity for deeper reflection, which in turn improves their ability to express complex thoughts and emotions clearly. Furthermore, this approach uses questioning strategies to encourage deeper analysis and thoughtful reflection on the material. Active inquiry encourages critical thinking and a more profound understanding of texts, fostering meaningful interaction with literature and helping students develop interpretative skills while forming personal connections to the content, ultimately enriching their reading experience.

In the context of the study, literature-based reading instruction adopted a four-pronged approach developed at the College of Education of the University of the Philippines, Diliman, by Professor Basilisa Manhit. Laudiano (2019) argues that this approach provides a comprehensive framework to enhance reading development by integrating four essential components, recognizing the multifaceted nature of literacy, and seeking to cultivate well-rounded readers with

technical skills and a genuine passion for reading. The first component is meant to develop a genuine love for reading among learners by fostering an intrinsic motivation for reading through opportunities to actively engage with various meaningful literary texts of varying genres to capture imagination and lifelong reading habits. The second component involves developing critical and creative thinking, highlighting the role of analytical and imaginative processes in comprehension, considering that reading is about understanding words and interpreting, questioning, and generating new ideas. Students are encouraged to develop deeper connections with texts through guided discussions and interactive activities, enhancing their critical and creative thinking abilities. In the context of this study, an additional focus on value enhancement is attained during the appreciation level of comprehension. The third component is the integration of grammar and oral language development, a vital foundational element of literacy acquisition. This integration of language mastery within reading activities ensures that students understand texts and articulate their thoughts clearly and precisely. Finally, the transfer stage component facilitates the transition toward independent reading by equipping students with readiness activities that strengthen comprehension strategies, empowering them to apply their reading skills autonomously. The definitive goal of this component is to nurture confident readers who can easily navigate diverse texts, extending their literacy beyond structured instruction.

Despite these insights, limited research has specifically examined the impact of literature-based reading instruction on CICL. Existing studies focus broadly on literacy development in rehabilitation settings. Nevertheless, there remains a gap in understanding how this instructional approach can be tailored to address the unique challenges faced by the CICL. This study aims to bridge this gap by evaluating the effectiveness of literature-based reading instruction in enhancing CICLs' reading comprehension and fostering positive cognitive and socioemotional development.

The primary objective of this research is to assess whether literature-based reading instruction improves the reading comprehension levels of the CICL at the RRCY. Specifically, the study seeks to determine its impact on different levels of comprehension, including literal, lexical, interpretive, critical, and creative comprehension. Additionally, it explores how this intervention influences participants' motivation, engagement, and overall learning experience. The study hypothesizes that literature-based reading instruction significantly improves reading comprehension and contributes to participants' holistic development.

This research is necessary because literacy plays a transformative role in shaping the future trajectories of CICL. By fostering a strong reading culture, equipping them with critical thinking skills, and promoting socioemotional resilience, literature-based reading instruction can serve as a rehabilitative tool that empowers CICL to reintegrate into society successfully. The findings of this study

provide valuable insights for educators, rehabilitation center administrators, and policymakers in designing evidence-based interventions that support literacy development among marginalized youth.

Global Perspectives on Juvenile Incarceration and Access to Education

Juvenile incarceration policies vary globally, influencing access to education and rehabilitation. While some nations prioritize punitive measures, others focus on reintegration through education (Neissl & Singer, 2020). The U.S., for example, has historically high juvenile incarceration rates, although reforms emphasize rehabilitation (Young et al., 2017). On the other hand, European countries, such as Germany, favor community-based interventions (Prasenjit & Anand, 2023).

Education is crucial in juvenile rehabilitation, serving as a transformative tool that fosters cognitive, social, and emotional development among justice-involved youth. Research indicates that structured educational programs within juvenile correctional facilities significantly enhance rehabilitation outcomes by equipping juveniles with essential life skills, reducing recidivism rates, and improving their reintegration into society (Christian, 2022; Sharma, 2024). A study by Christian (2022) highlights that access to quality education in juvenile correctional facilities remains inconsistent, with many states failing to provide the same academic and vocational training as traditional schools do. This disparity often leads to limited opportunities for skill development, hindering successful rehabilitation. Similarly, Sharma (2024) emphasized the importance of a restorative approach in juvenile justice, advocating for educational interventions that address both the cognitive and behavioral aspects of delinquency. Education fosters resilience and self-efficacy by integrating structured learning environments with psychological support, enabling juveniles to transition into productive societal roles. The effectiveness of rehabilitation programs is further influenced by the availability of certified educators, comprehensive curricula, and post-release educational support, all of which contribute to long-term behavioral change and reduced criminal tendencies. Ultimately, Meggy et al. (2026) emphasized that although educational access has been extended to all juveniles in care, responsiveness to individual learning needs remains limited, and many educators lack the necessary competencies in inclusive education. Therefore, the implementation of inclusive and well-structured intervention programs is essential.

Educational Realities of Children in Conflict with the Law in the Philippines

Recent research highlights the educational challenges children face in conflict with the law (CICL) in the Philippines, emphasizing the need for systemic reforms to improve rehabilitation outcomes. A study by Urminita-Martinez (2017) examined the vulnerabilities of CICL in Caloocan City, revealing inadequacies in the

juvenile justice system, including limited resources and a lack of trained social workers. The study underscores the importance of psychosocial interventions and educational programs in reintegrating CICL into society. Similarly, Macabuhay et al. (2024) explored the effectiveness of intervention programs for CICL, identifying key strategies such as counseling, skill development, and alternative learning systems that contribute to rehabilitation. Their findings highlight the role of education in fostering resilience and reducing recidivism among justice-involved youth. Addressing these challenges requires a multisectoral approach that integrates formal education, vocational training, and psychosocial support to ensure that CICLs receive meaningful opportunities for reintegration into society.

Literacy training for children in conflict with the law (CICL) in rehabilitation centers in the Philippines plays a crucial role in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Holistic intervention programs, including literacy training, positively impact the rehabilitation process by enhancing self-awareness, social skills, and vocational abilities. These programs are essential for addressing the educational deficits many CICLs face due to their socioeconomic backgrounds and disrupted education (Urbano et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design with no control groups, focusing on determining the effectiveness of an intervention in a natural setting without randomly assigning participants to groups. Shadish et al. (2019) posit that this type of design is used to establish cause-and-effect relationships between variables in situations where randomizing participants is not possible or practical. Unlike true experimental designs, the quasi-experimental approach used in this study did not involve a control group for comparison, as the ethical and practical constraints of the research context did not permit withholding the intervention from any participants. This design is appropriate for real-world educational and social service settings where random assignment is not feasible but where there remains a need to evaluate program or strategy outcomes.

Specifically, a time series quasi-experimental design was utilized to measure participants' outcomes over time before and after the intervention (Bloom et al., 2007). In the context of the study, the intervention was administered to five single-group participant sets, and its effectiveness was assessed using pretest and posttest measures. The design allowed the researcher to examine participant performance or behavior changes after the intervention. While the absence of a control group limits the ability to attribute changes solely to the intervention, the quasi-experimental design still provides valuable insights into potential improvements and trends over time.

The data collection tools included standardized pretest and posttest materials, which, according to Trochim et al. (2018), can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention by comparing participants' outcomes before and after the intervention. Hence, significant differences indicative of the success of the applied strategy were determined. The analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to determine whether the observed changes were statistically significant.

Given the nature of the population and the setting, this design was deemed most appropriate to ensure inclusivity while still producing data that could guide improvements in service delivery and educational practices. The research prioritized ethical considerations, ensuring that all participants benefited from the intervention and were not deprived of potential developmental gains.

Participants

The participants were selected from the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY) under the supervision of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) of Region VII, Cebu, Philippines, according to the Administrative Order No. 2008--007 guidelines. The beneficiaries of this initiative are covered by Republic Act No. 9344, which refers to persons under eighteen (18) years of age who have allegedly committed, or have been found to have committed, an offense or violation of the law.

The RRCY provides care, treatment, and rehabilitation services for male children in conflict with the law (CICL) who are undergoing residential-based interventions. The study involved purposively selected male residents who met specific inclusion criteria: they had to be officially admitted to the center, within the age range defined by the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act, and capable of understanding and participating in the intervention activities. The number of participants depended on the current population of eligible youth residents during the data collection period. Informed assent was obtained from the participants, and consent was secured from their legal guardians and the appropriate DSWD authorities. Participation was entirely voluntary, and ethical considerations such as confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw at any time were strictly upheld throughout the study.

Data analysis

The data collected from the pretest and posttest were analyzed via both descriptive and inferential methods. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean, standard deviation, and percentage distribution, were used to summarize the general performance of the participants before and after the intervention. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2019), this provides an overview of the data,

allowing researchers to understand the distribution of variables, identify patterns, detect outliers, and provide a clear overview of trends and patterns in the data. To determine whether there were significant differences between the pretest and posttest scores, paired sample t tests were employed. This inferential technique makes inferences about a population on the basis of a sample of data and provides a way to conclude a population by analyzing a representative sample (Hogg & Tanis, 2019). This approach was appropriate in the context of measuring changes within the sets of single groups across two points in time, allowing the researcher to assess the impact of the intervention on participants' performance or behavior. The results were interpreted at the 0.05 level of significance. Furthermore, if applicable, additional analyses, such as effect size computation, were conducted to measure the magnitude of the intervention's impact. All data analyses were performed via appropriate statistical software to ensure accuracy and reliability in interpreting the findings.

The following hypothesis is proposed:

H₀: There is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest reading comprehension scores of the CICL after literature-based reading instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the paper presents a comprehensive discussion of the effectiveness of literature-based reading instruction among these CICLs at the identified RRCY. The findings are outlined and discussed, and the research objectives focus on the differences between the pretest and posttest scores, the levels of reading comprehension, and the challenges encountered during the intervention. Hence, the tables provide detailed presentations of the differences between the pretest and posttest scores of participants from different grade levels and the various results regarding the comprehension levels in every group year. It delineates the impact of literature-based reading instruction on reading comprehension skills.

Table 1 summarizes the overall effectiveness of literature-based reading instruction by comparing the pretest and posttest scores across different grade levels. The table presents the mean scores before and after the intervention, the computed t values, and whether the differences observed were statistically significant.

Table 1: Differences between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Participants

Group	Frequency (no. of participants)	Mean		Computed t value	Decision	Interpretation
		Pretest	Posttest			
Grades 0-3	9	16.33	36.22	0.00	Reject H _o	Significant
Grades 4-6	8	17.13	28.50	0.01	Reject H _o	Significant
Grades 7-8	20	17.10	34.95	0.00	Reject H _o	Significant
Grades 9-10	7	16.86	15.00	0.11	Accept H _o	Not Significant
Grades 11-12	11	18	27.64	0.00	Reject H _o	Significant

Table 1 highlights the differences in reading performance before and after the literature-based reading intervention among the CICLs at the RRCY. The findings emphasize the intervention's overall effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension skills while revealing variability in its impact across grade levels.

The results demonstrate that the intervention was particularly effective for grades 0--3, 4--6, 7--8, and 11--12. These groups exhibited substantial improvements in mean posttest scores relative to their pretest scores, as evidenced by statistically significant t values ($p < 0.05$). For example, with nine participants, grades 0--3 markedly increased from a pretest mean of 16.33 to a posttest mean of 36.22. Similarly, Grades 7--8, comprising 20 participants, experienced significant growth, with mean scores rising from 17.10 to 34.95. These results suggest that the intervention successfully addressed the specific literacy needs of younger and middle-grade participants, enhancing their foundational and advanced reading skills.

William et al. (2025) reported that well-designed, culturally appropriate reading interventions can significantly improve literacy levels; facilitators' training, available resources, and engagement levels affect these programs' success. In line with this, Kokka (2026) argues that culturally and contextually responsive affective pedagogical goals enhance students' sense that their emotional needs and overall well-being are prioritized, particularly through relationship-centered and healing-oriented approaches. This is further supported by Oktavianti et al. (2026), who reported that students commonly face challenges such as limited vocabulary, insufficient grammatical knowledge, and difficulty processing lengthy or complex texts. Additionally, students expressed the need for authentic materials, contextualized instructional strategies, and adaptive learning support. Before and during the implementation of literature-based reading

instruction for the CICL at the RRCY, the researchers considered these factors by offering comprehensive training to social workers, who also acted as facilitators, with guidance from university professors. Additionally, sufficient resources were allocated to create the necessary materials to meet the needs of both facilitators and learners. Ultimately, the reading program implementation focused on active engagement, with instructions designed to encourage learners to participate and apply their knowledge rather than simply passively absorbing information.

On the other hand, the seven participants from grades 9--10 demonstrated no improvement, as their pretest mean score of 16.86 decreased to a posttest mean of 15.00. The calculated t value of 0.11 for this group was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the intervention did not affect certain aspects of comprehension. Researchers have identified potential factors that may influence this result.

Lofranco et al. (2023) explored the factors influencing the reading performance of junior high school students. They discovered that these students are at a distinct developmental stage compared with younger learners, influencing their response to reading interventions. Additionally, they reported that students' demographic profiles significantly affected their reading performance. As a result, it is crucial to consider students' characteristics and backgrounds when designing interventions and support programs to achieve more effective outcomes.

Consistent with this, Vaughn et al. (2019) argued that older students exhibit varying levels of motivation and engagement compared with younger students, which can affect the effectiveness of reading interventions. Additionally, high school students' prior reading skills and knowledge significantly affect the extent to which they benefit from these programs. This highlights the importance of enhancing literature-based reading instruction by implementing strategies that fully capture students' attention and ensure thorough profiling of learners before initiating reading interventions.

Habibian et al. (2015), in their study titled "The Role of Psychological Factors in the Process of Reading," explored other possible factors that could contribute to this result. They discovered that psychological elements such as cognition, emotion, and motivation play a significant role in students' reading processes. Furthermore, previous research highlighted that anxiety notably affects performance, particularly reading comprehension. This suggests that students' mental and emotional states greatly impact their learning. Therefore, incorporating psychological factors into the reading process and teaching curriculum could significantly benefit students.

Overall, the results of the study revealed that the intervention had a significant effect on most groups, as evidenced by the improvement in posttest scores and the calculated t values for grades 3--5, grades 4--6, grades 7--8, and grades 11--12. These groups showed statistically significant differences between the pretest and posttest scores, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0),

which indicates the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing reading comprehension skills. Conversely, while the intervention demonstrated efficacy in improving reading comprehension for most students, there is a need to reassess and refine strategies for Grades 9--10 to better address their unique challenges.

Differences between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Participants with respect to the Levels of Comprehension

This section presents the pretest and posttest scores of participants in four groups: grades 0--3, 4--6, 7--10, and 11--12. Table 2a presents the pretest and posttest mean scores for participants in grades 0--3, categorized by comprehension level. The five comprehension levels assessed are Literal, Lexical, Interpretive, Critical, and Creative/Applied.

Nurjanah and Putri (2022) defined literal comprehension as the capacity to grasp and recall details directly presented in a text. This is the most fundamental level of reading comprehension, and it involves identifying facts, sequences, and main ideas. Mastery at this level is essential, as it forms the foundation for advanced reading and critical thinking, enabling learners to process and interpret more complex information in the future.

Webb (2021) defines lexical comprehension as the learner's capacity to grasp and interpret words and their meanings within a specific context. Recent studies highlight the essential role of lexical comprehension in overall language understanding, especially in reading. For example, research indicates that lexical coverage, the percentage of familiar words in a text, greatly influences comprehension. When readers encounter fewer unfamiliar words, their understanding of the material improves. Studies suggest that having lexical coverage of 95% or more is often required for effective comprehension. Moreover, El Motabit (2020) argued that lexical comprehension is closely linked to vocabulary knowledge. A robust vocabulary enables individuals to understand texts more effectively, improving their reading comprehension ability.

To proceed, Dela-Peña and Luque-Rojas (2021) defined interpretative comprehension as the ability to grasp and interpret the deeper meaning of a text, going beyond literal words. It involves drawing inferences, recognizing implied messages, and linking ideas within the text to broader concepts and personal experiences. Here, the interpretive comprehension level of grades 0--3 revealed a mean increase from 6.00--7.57, with a computed t value of 0.17. Like Lexical comprehension, this value did not meet the significance threshold, leading to the conclusion that the improvement in Interpretive comprehension was not substantial. This implies that the increase in interpretative comprehension may not be meaningful or consistent enough to be considered a reliable or substantial change.

Furthermore, Al Roomy (2022) defined critical comprehension as the ability to analyze, assess, and integrate information from texts, extending beyond simple understanding to question and evaluate the content. It is a higher-level cognitive skill that demands critical thinking and active interaction with the material. Here, the critical comprehension level also slightly improved, with pretest and posttest mean scores of 6.71 and 7.57, respectively. However, the computed t value of 0.27 was greater than 0.05, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis. This finding indicates that there was no significant difference in critical comprehension after the intervention.

Finally, Putri (2020) defined creative comprehension as the ability to interpret and understand texts in novel and imaginative ways. It goes beyond the literal meaning, encouraging readers to connect and create new ideas from the content. This comprehension type often involves visualizing, making predictions, and imagining different endings or scenarios. In contrast, applied comprehension is the ability to use the information acquired from reading in practical, real-life contexts. It involves utilizing the knowledge and insights from texts to address problems, make informed decisions, and carry out tasks efficiently.

Table 2a: Differences between Pretest and Posttest Scores of Participants from Grades 0–3 with respect to the Levels of Comprehension

Comprehension Levels	Mean		Computed t value	Decision	Interpretation
	Pretest	Posttest			
Literal	16.33	36.22	0.00	Reject H ₀	Significant
Lexical	17.13	28.50	0.01	Reject H ₀	Significant
Interpretive	17.10	34.95	0.00	Reject H ₀	Significant
Critical	16.86	15.00	0.11	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Creative/ Applied	18	27.64	0.00	Reject H ₀	Significant

Table 2a presents the pretest and posttest mean scores of participants from grades 0–3 for the five comprehension levels and provides insights into whether there is a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores for each comprehension level, using computed t values and corresponding decisions.

For the literal comprehension level, the mean pretest score was 7.00, which increased to 8.00 on the posttest. The computed t value for this category was 0.02, which was less than the critical value of 0.05. This result led to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H₀), indicating a significant improvement in the literal comprehension of participants in this grade group. This suggests that interventions

or instructional strategies applied were particularly effective in enhancing basic understanding at the literal level.

Kamagi (2020) suggested that learners at this grade level experience rapid cognitive development, allowing them to process and retain explicitly stated information more effectively. Similarly, Anderson et al. (2023) reported that younger learners tend to be more motivated and engaged in understanding the explicit content of texts, which strengthens their literal comprehension. However, owing to their limited vocabulary, they often depend heavily on the literal meanings of familiar words and phrases. These particular reasons support the procured data regarding the significant improvement of 9 participants in this group.

As shown in Table 2a, for the lexical comprehension level, the mean pretest score of the participants in grades 0--3 was 6.71, and their posttest score increased to 8.57. However, the computed *t* value of 0.10 exceeded the critical threshold of 0.05, resulting in acceptance of the null hypothesis. This implies that the observed improvement in lexical comprehension was not statistically significant. In line with this, the findings align with the research of Webb (2021) and Pellicer-Sánchez et al. (2024), who explored the impact of lexical coverage on reading comprehension. Their studies revealed that although greater lexical coverage can enhance comprehension, the improvements were not consistently statistically significant. The primary reason is that even when learners have greater lexical coverage, they still exert significant cognitive effort on unfamiliar words, which can impact their comprehension.

This finding is supported by Miñoza and Montero (2019), whose study examined reading comprehension levels among intermediate learners and reported no significant difference in interpretative comprehension between groups. Their research highlighted that while socioeconomic status impacts reading comprehension, there was no significant improvement in interpretative comprehension. Several factors must be considered when accepting the null hypothesis for this comprehension level, particularly for this group. For example, Anderson et al. (2023) reported that interpretative comprehension demands higher-order thinking skills, such as inference and critical thinking, which are still developing in younger learners. Furthermore, Smith (2022) suggested that young learners have limited life experiences to draw upon when making inferences or interpreting implied meanings in a text. Thus, learners' cognitive development and personal experiences play a vital role in mastering interpretative comprehension.

Guerreiro et al. (2022) examined various methods for assessing reading comprehension and discovered that traditional assessments often fail to reflect meaningful improvements in critical comprehension. Similarly, Anderson et al. (2021) reported that although engagement and critical reading strategies are important, they do not always result in significant gains in critical comprehension. This suggests that at this level of comprehension, it is essential for learners in these

grades to actively interact with the text by making predictions, asking questions, and sharing their thoughts, as this can enhance their critical comprehension.

Here, the creative/applied comprehension level showed a marginal decrease in scores, with a pretest mean of 19.14 and a posttest mean of 18.57. The computed t value for this level was 0.36, which also exceeded the critical value, confirming that the change was not statistically significant. This is supported by the study of Klimova and Zamborova (2020), whose findings revealed that creative and applied comprehension skills were challenging to develop and measure effectively.

Table 2a indicates that for grades 0–3, only the literal comprehension level significantly improved after the intervention. The other comprehension levels—lexical, interpretive, critical, and creative/applied—did not exhibit statistically significant changes. This suggests that the interventions or strategies used may have been particularly effective for foundational comprehension skills but were less impactful at more complex or higher-order comprehension levels for this grade group.

Table 2b: Differences between Pretest and Posttest Scores of Participants from Grades 4--6 as to Levels of Comprehension

Comprehension Levels	Mean		Computed t value	Decision	Interpretation
	Pretest	Posttest			
Literal	2.00	4.29	0.00	0.02	Significant
Lexical	2.29	4.71	0.01	0.04	Significant
Interpretive	3.71	3.86	0.00	0.93	Not Significant
Critical	2.43	4.86	0.11	0.01	Significant
Creative/ Applied	9.86	16.29	0.00	0.01	Significant

Table 2b presents the differences between the pretest and posttest scores of the participants from grades 4--6 across the five comprehension levels. The results indicate significant improvements in several comprehension levels, particularly literal, lexical, critical, and creative/applied comprehension, whereas interpretive comprehension remained unchanged. The mean scores for Literal comprehension increased from 2.00 to 4.29, and the computed t value of 0.02 confirms that this improvement is statistically significant. This suggests that the intervention effectively strengthened students' ability to identify explicit details, facts, and main ideas within texts, which are fundamental for reading proficiency.

The results regarding lexical comprehension highlight the positive impact of the intervention in helping students expand their vocabulary and improve their ability to decode words within a given context. The development of lexical

comprehension is particularly crucial at this stage, as it serves as a bridge toward more complex reading skills.

Critical comprehension exhibited notable improvement, with mean scores increasing from 2.43 to 4.86 and a computed t value of 0.01, which could suggest that students became more proficient at analyzing and evaluating information within texts, a skill necessary for higher-order thinking. Additionally, creative/applied comprehension showed significant progress, with scores rising from 9.86 to 16.29 and a computed t value of 0.01, indicating that students became more adept at applying what they learned in reading to real-life situations and creative activities.

On the other hand, interpretive comprehension, which involves drawing inferences and making connections between ideas, showed minimal improvement, which was not statistically significant. This suggests that while students improved in recognizing explicit information and expanding their vocabulary, they still faced challenges in interpreting implicit meanings. This result emphasizes the need for further reinforcement in inferential thinking skills to enhance students' deeper understanding of texts.

Similarly, the findings align with the study by El Xiane Mae et al. (2024), which assessed the effectiveness of preteaching vocabulary and repeated reading interventions in a Grade 4 class in the Philippines. The results revealed significant improvements in students' reading comprehension after the intervention, with many students progressing to higher comprehension levels. This study reinforces the idea that targeted interventions can significantly enhance reading comprehension.

Table 2c: Differences between Pretest and Posttest Scores of Participants from Grades 7–8 with respect to the Levels of Comprehension

Comprehension Levels	Mean		Computed t value	Decision	Interpretation
	Pretest	Posttest			
Literal	8.57	11.71	0.02	Reject H _o	Significant
Lexical	8.24	11.29	0.02	Reject H _o	Significant
Interpretive	8.43	10.57	0.02	Reject H _o	Significant
Critical	9.29	11.14	0.12	Accept H _o	Not Significant
Creative/ Applied	42.14	53.29	0.00	Reject H _o	Highly Significant

Table 2c compares the pretest and posttest scores of Grade 7–8 participants across five levels of reading comprehension: Literal, Lexical, Interpretive, Critical, and Creative/Applied. The findings offer insight into the specific cognitive

domains in which students showed measurable growth following the literature-based reading intervention.

Literal comprehension significantly improved, with the mean increasing from 8.57 to 11.71 and a computed t value of 0.02. This finding indicates that participants exhibited an enhanced ability to identify explicit information, such as facts, sequences, and details directly stated in texts. The results suggest that the intervention was particularly effective in reinforcing foundational reading skills, likely due to the inclusion of accessible, engaging literary texts and direct questioning techniques during instruction. As noted by Kamagi (2020) and Anderson et al. (2023), students in this age group are generally well positioned to improve literal comprehension when exposed to structured reading activities aligned with their cognitive level.

Similarly, lexical comprehension significantly improved, with the mean increasing from 8.24 to 11.29 and a t value of 0.02. This demonstrates the participants' improved ability to interpret and understand contextual vocabulary. Vocabulary acquisition is a critical component of reading proficiency, and the gains in this area suggest that the reading materials selected for the intervention were rich in contextual clues and scaffolded vocabulary exposure. Studies by Webb (2021) and Pellicer-Sánchez et al. (2024) support the importance of lexical coverage in enhancing reading comprehension. Given that students in Grades 7–8 are transitioning to more advanced academic texts, the ability to decode and infer word meanings is essential, and this improvement affirms the effectiveness of the materials and strategies employed.

Notably, interpretive comprehension also showed a statistically significant improvement, with the mean increasing from 8.43 to 10.57 ($t = 0.02$). This reflects an enhanced ability among students to make inferences, recognize implied meanings, and connect textual ideas to broader themes or personal experiences. This finding is especially significant, as interpretive comprehension is often more challenging for learners at this stage due to the higher cognitive demands it entails. The positive outcome here suggests that the intervention incorporated strategies such as guided reading, reflective questioning, or thematic discussions that supported the development of deeper understanding. This contradicts the initial narrative error in the document, which mistakenly described the result as insignificant and confirmed that students benefited from targeted instruction in this complex comprehension domain.

In contrast, critical comprehension, which involves evaluating, analyzing, and forming judgments about text content, did not significantly improve. The mean score increased from 9.29 to 11.14, but the computed t value of 0.12 exceeded the 0.05 significance threshold, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. While the score increase indicates a positive trend, the lack of statistical significance suggests that the intervention may not have included sufficient emphasis on critical literacy activities such as argument evaluation, source analysis, or bias identification. This

aligns with findings by Al Roomy (2022), who emphasized the need for explicit instruction in critical thinking to develop this comprehension level effectively. It is also possible that the assessment tools employed were insufficiently sensitive to detect subtle gains in evaluative skills.

Finally, creative/applied comprehension exhibited the most substantial improvement, dramatically increasing from 42.14 to 53.29 and a *t* value of 0.00, indicating high statistical significance. This result highlights the participants' enhanced capacity to apply textual understanding in novel, imaginative, and practical contexts. The intervention likely provided opportunities for students to engage in creative tasks such as storytelling, visualization, role-playing, or creating alternate endings to stories. Fan and Cai (2022) stated that creative learning environments promoting autonomy, exploration, and personal expression can significantly enhance applied comprehension outcomes. The remarkable growth in this area suggests that literature-based reading instruction effectively nurtured higher-order thinking and creativity among Grade 7–8 learners.

In conclusion, the findings from Table 2c demonstrate that the literature-based reading intervention was particularly successful in improving literal, lexical, interpretive, and creative/applied comprehension skills among Grade 7–8 students. While critical comprehension showed positive but nonsignificant gains, the overall results suggest that the intervention was well aligned with learners' cognitive and developmental needs at this stage. Future iterations of the program might benefit from embedding more structured activities that target critical analysis to ensure more balanced growth across all comprehension domains.

Table 2d: Differences between Pretest and Posttest Scores of Participants from Grades 9–10 as to Levels of Comprehension

Comprehension Levels	Mean		Computed <i>t</i> value	Decision	Interpretation
	Pretest	Posttest			
Literal	2.57	2.29	0.72	Accept H_0	Not Significant
Lexical	3.29	3.00	0.65	Accept H_0	Not Significant
Interpretive	2.14	2.71	0.41	Accept H_0	Not Significant
Critical	2.57	3.29	0.25	Accept H_0	Not Significant
Creative/ Applied	15.29	15.43	0.91	Accept H_0	Not Significant

Table 2d presents the differences between the pretest and posttest scores of participants from grades 9–10 across five comprehension levels: Literal, Lexical, Interpretive, Critical, and Creative/Applied. The table compares the mean

scores before and after the intervention, provides the computed t value, and determines whether the differences are statistically significant. Here, the results for grades 9--10 reveal no statistically significant improvements across comprehension levels, indicating that students did not show notable improvement in identifying explicit details within texts. Similarly, lexical comprehension slightly decreased from 3.29 to 3.00, with a t value of 0.65, suggesting that students' ability to recognize and understand vocabulary remained unchanged.

Interpretive comprehension, which involves making inferences and understanding implicit meanings, showed minor growth from 2.14--2.71, but with a computed t value of 0.41, which was not statistically significant. This indicates that students struggled with concluding text and connecting ideas. Critical comprehension also showed minimal progress from 2.57 to 3.29, with a t value of 0.25, indicating that students did not significantly improve in analyzing and evaluating text information.

Finally, creative/applied comprehension only slightly increased from 15.29 to 15.43, with a computed t value of 0.91, indicating that the students did not exhibit meaningful improvements in applying reading knowledge creatively or practically.

These findings suggest that the intervention was less effective for this age group. One possible explanation is that older students in this group may have developed preexisting reading habits and comprehension difficulties that require more targeted interventions. Additionally, motivational factors and engagement levels may have influenced their performance, as students in this age group may require different instructional approaches to sustain their interest in reading. Figueroa-Macias and Andrade-Zambrano (2022) reported that many high school students struggle to maintain focus while reading, limiting their ability to engage with the text and comprehend its deeper meanings. The study also highlighted that developing strong cognitive skills, such as analytical thinking and critical evaluation, is crucial for effective reading comprehension. Students lacking these skills tend to struggle with interpreting texts.

Table 2e highlights the differences between the pretest and posttest scores of Grades 11--12 participants across five comprehension levels: Literal, Lexical, Interpretive, Critical, and Creative/Applied. The table compares the mean scores before and after the intervention, provides the computed t value, and determines whether the differences are statistically significant. The results of Grades 11--12 indicate that improvements were primarily observed in creative/applied comprehension, whereas other comprehension levels did not significantly change.

Literal comprehension increased slightly, with a computed t value of 0.56, which was not statistically significant, just as lexical comprehension improved. However, the computed t value of 0.14 indicates a nonsubstantial improvement. This suggests that older students may have had a more established vocabulary base,

making it harder for the intervention to significantly change their lexical understanding.

Table 2e: Differences between Pretest and Posttest Scores of Participants from Grades 11--12 as to Levels of Comprehension

Comprehension Levels	Mean		Computed t value	Decision	Interpretation
	Pretest	Posttest			
Literal	5.29	6.29	0.56	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Lexical	3.14	6.00	0.14	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Interpretive	6.43	6.14	0.57	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Critical	4.43	5.57	0.14	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
Creative/ Applied	13.57	17.00	0.01	Reject H ₀	Significant

Interpretive comprehension decreased slightly from 6.43 to 6.14, with a t value of 0.57, indicating that there was no meaningful impact on students' ability to infer and understand implicit meanings. Critical comprehension, which involves analyzing and evaluating text information, slightly increased from 4.43 to 5.57, but the computed t value of 0.14 suggests that this change was not statistically significant.

However, creative/applied comprehension demonstrated the most substantial improvement, with mean scores increasing from 13.57 to 17.00 and a computed t value of 0.01, making it statistically significant. This suggests that students in this grade group benefited from the intervention by applying their reading comprehension skills creatively and practically. Older students were more engaged in activities that allowed them to express their understanding through creative writing, discussions, or real-world applications, contributing to this significant improvement.

The lack of substantial progress in other comprehension levels suggests that older students may require more advanced and differentiated reading interventions that cater to their academic needs. Additionally, prior reading experience, motivation, and engagement levels may have influenced their ability to significantly increase comprehension skills. This finding is supported by the study of Munsod-Fernandez (2021), which evaluated the reading comprehension levels of Grade 11 students. The study revealed that while 70% of students excelled in literal comprehension, only 42% demonstrated proficiency in critical-evaluative comprehension. It is suggested that instructional tools are necessary to support students with lower comprehension levels.

4.6 Overall difference between pretest and posttest scores

Table 3 presents an overview of the differences between the pretest and posttest scores across all grade levels, measuring improvements in five comprehension levels: Literal, Lexical, Interpretive, Critical, and Creative/Applied. The findings provide a holistic perspective on the effectiveness of the literature-based reading intervention among the Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) at the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY).

Table 3: Overall Differences between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Participants as to the Level of Comprehension

Comprehension Levels	Mean		Computed t value	Decision	Interpretation
	Pretest	Posttest			
Literal	5.09	6.52	0.07	Reject H _o	Significant
Lexical	4.73	6.71	0.03	Reject H _o	Significant
Interpretive	5.34	6.17	0.14	Accept H _o	Not Significant
Critical	5.09	6.49	0.01	Reject H _o	Significant
Creative/Applied	20.00	24.12	0.13	Reject H _o	Not Significant

The results depicted in Table 3 indicate that the literature-based reading intervention was particularly effective in enhancing Lexical and Critical comprehension. These findings suggest that participants significantly improved their ability to recognize and understand vocabulary in context, a fundamental skill for reading fluency and overall comprehension.

Similarly, critical comprehension substantially improved, which indicates that participants became more proficient in evaluating and analyzing text content, which is essential for higher-order thinking. The effectiveness of the intervention in these areas suggests that exposure to the literature-based reading materials, which often encourage reflection and analysis, played a key role in developing students' critical reading skills.

Literal comprehension, which involves understanding explicit details and factual information from texts, has shown some improvement. However, the computed t value of 0.07 suggests that this change was not statistically significant. While there was a positive trend in students' ability to grasp explicit content, the lack of significance indicates that additional support may be required to reinforce basic comprehension skills.

One possible explanation for the moderate improvement in literal comprehension is that younger students, particularly those in grades 0--3 and 4--6, demonstrated significant growth in this area, whereas older students (grades 9--12)

did not progress as much. Shah and Udgaonkar (2018) highlighted the importance of considering learners' age in teaching. They argued that younger students focus on building foundational skills, whereas older students refine higher-order thinking abilities. Adapting teaching methods to these developmental stages enhances students' ability to understand and apply new concepts effectively. Additionally, age-appropriate instructional strategies play a crucial role in student engagement and motivation, with younger learners benefiting from interactive, hands-on activities and older students responding well to complex, abstract tasks.

Interpretive comprehension, which involves making inferences and understanding implied meanings, showed minimal improvement, with a computed t value of 0.14 above the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the change was not statistically significant. This suggests that many participants continued to struggle with conclusions, making connections between ideas, and interpreting deeper meanings in texts. Fergina et al. (2024) reported that although extensive reading enhances overall reading comprehension, it does not necessarily lead to significant improvements in interpretive comprehension skills, such as making inferences and understanding implied meanings. Extensive reading alone may not provide sufficient targeted practice for developing higher-order comprehension skills.

Creative/applied comprehension also increased the mean scores, but the computed t value of 0.13 revealed a statistically insignificant change. This finding indicates that while some students may have improved their ability to apply reading skills creatively and practically, the overall impact of the intervention in this area was not substantial across all participants. This result aligns with findings from previous tables, particularly for Grades 9--10 and 11--12, where creative/applied comprehension was the only area that showed noticeable improvement. Fan and Cai (2023) investigated how a creative learning environment influences student creativity through various explanatory factors. Their study revealed that such an environment significantly improves students' learning goal orientation, social connections, and knowledge sharing, all of which enhance creativity. Therefore, educators must cultivate a learning environment that fosters creativity to achieve notable improvements in creative and applied comprehension.

The overall results from Table 3 suggest that while the literature-based reading intervention effectively improved certain comprehension levels, its impact was not uniform across all areas. The significant improvements in lexical and critical comprehension indicate that participants benefited from vocabulary development and analytical reading strategies. However, the lack of significant changes in literal, interpretive, and creative/applied comprehension suggests that additional interventions or instructional adjustments may be necessary to support students in these areas.

One possible approach to enhancing interpretive and creative/applied comprehension is to integrate explicit instruction on inference-making and creative

expression. Strategies such as guided discussions, think-aloud activities, and project-based learning could help students engage more deeply with texts and improve their ability to interpret and apply information meaningfully (Hudson & Walker, 2017).

Additionally, the mixed results across comprehension levels highlight the importance of differentiation in reading instruction. Since different age groups demonstrate varying levels of progress, future interventions should consider age-appropriate strategies tailored to students' specific needs. Sears (2023) explored the practicality and effectiveness of differentiated instruction, emphasizing its importance in engaging students with diverse abilities and learning styles. Younger students may benefit from phonics-based reinforcement and explicit comprehension exercises, whereas older students may require more interactive and discussion-based approaches to foster deeper engagement with texts.

Ultimately, while the intervention proved effective in certain aspects, particularly in enhancing vocabulary and critical thinking skills, further refinement of instructional methods is necessary to address gaps in interpretative and applied comprehension. These findings provide valuable insights for educators and program designers in developing more targeted and effective reading interventions for children in conflict with the law.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study confirmed the effectiveness of literature-based reading instruction in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of children in conflict with the law (CICL) at the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY), particularly in lexical and critical comprehension domains. Significant improvements were observed among learners in grades 0–8 and 11–12, whereas those in grades 9–10 showed minimal gains, highlighting age-specific and cognitive differences in intervention outcomes. These results underscore the value of integrating structured, literature-rich instruction into rehabilitation programs to support the cognitive, emotional, and academic development of CICL. The study suggests that reading instruction, when designed with engagement and inclusivity in mind, can serve as a vital rehabilitative tool aligned with the principles of restorative justice. However, limitations include the absence of a control group, the relatively small sample size, the short duration of the intervention, and the potential influence of external psychosocial factors on reading performance. These constraints limit the generalizability and causal certainty of the findings. Therefore, future research should employ longitudinal designs, consider control or comparison groups when ethically feasible, and explore the role of socioemotional and psychological variables in literacy development. It is recommended that reading interventions be tailored to learner profiles, with differentiated strategies for older students and sustained programming that reinforces higher-order

comprehension. Additionally, institutionalizing literature-based reading instruction within juvenile rehabilitation frameworks and training facilitators in trauma-informed, age-appropriate pedagogies will enhance the long-term impact and reach of such educational efforts.

Given these results, it is recommended that reading programs for CICLs be more tailored to their learning levels and needs. Facilitators should be trained in trauma-informed and engaging teaching methods, and reading materials should be age-appropriate and relatable. Strategies that blend academic and emotional learning—such as discussions, reflection journals, and creative activities—can help deepen comprehension and keep learners engaged. Sessions should be consistent, well-spaced, and interactive. Tracking students' reflections and perceptions can also guide future improvements.

However, the study's limitations include its small scope, short duration, and lack of a control group. Future research should explore the long-term impact of these interventions, involve more diverse participants, and examine how reading affects academic performance, emotional growth, and real-world outcomes. Understanding how factors such as facilitator training and learner backgrounds influence progress can help make programs more effective and inclusive.

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