



Short Reading Selections and Students' Perceived Reading Comprehension: A Correlational and Comparative Study in South Cotabato Public High Schools

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Abstract

Reading comprehension constitutes a foundational competency in academic learning; whereas, a significant proportion of students encounter persistent challenges when engaging with extended or conceptually dense texts, thereby impeding their capacity for critical analysis and scholarly integration. This research investigates the impact of short reading selections on self-reported reading comprehension among Grade 10 students at selected public high schools in South Cotabato, Philippines. The study employed a quantitative, descriptive, correlational, and comparative design, involving 400 randomly selected students from three public high schools. A validated 5-point Likert scale questionnaire assessed students' exposure to short reading selections and their self-reported reading comprehension levels. Findings revealed strong agreement that short reading selections were readable, relevant, and effective for improving their perceived reading comprehension. The Kendal-Tau B analysis revealed a moderately positive correlation between exposure to short reading selections and their self-reported reading comprehension ($\tau = 0.422$, $p < 0.001$). The Kruskal-Wallis H-test reveals substantial differences in self-reported reading comprehension among tenth-grade students across the participating public high schools ($\chi^2 (2) = 22.40$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that short reading selections offer distinct advantages, particularly in resource-limited classrooms. Short reading selections appear to offer students a significant advantage, particularly in classrooms where books, time, and training materials are scarce. Clear, concise, short reading selections are perceived to help lay the foundation for stronger reading comprehension and may contribute to improve literacy rates. To determine if these perceived gains are sustained and reflect actual comprehension, future studies should conduct performance-based assessments and intervention studies to enhance students' understanding of the effects of short reading selections.

Keywords: short reading selections, reading comprehension, public high school, academic reading, Philippine education



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INTRODUCTION

Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory posits that beliefs of reading ability affect motivation, strategies, and persistence. In this light, this study focuses on the perceived reading comprehension of students as it aims to examine their motivational and metacognitive mechanisms through which short reading selections may work across schools. This choice is based on the assumption that

perception may help determine if students are engaged in reading, especially in class. These assessments evaluate students' confidence with their emotional and cognitive responses to reading in linguistically diverse and resource-limited environments, such as public high schools in South Cotabato. The study emphasizes students' self-assessments – an essential component of reading that comprehension testing cannot quantify. This strategy helps teachers see how students read

and understand texts in different types of classrooms, especially when standard tests don't show how complicated the process of making meaning is. Short reading selections are increasingly recognized in education. Contemporary cognitive models conceptualize reading as an active interaction between decoding and meaning making. Bottom-up processes such as word recognition must integrate with top-down inference generation to achieve comprehension (Aryadoust, 2019).

Metacognitive monitoring further refines this process, although it is rarely taught explicitly in classrooms (Abbasi, 2022). One practical and scalable approach involves brief, focused readings that minimize cognitive overload while allowing for fruitful class discussions. Across Asia, short reading portions in intervention studies have been shown to increase reading comprehension and vocabulary achievement (Lutfia et al., 2023). Indonesian post-test attainment significantly improved within four weeks of short-reading intervention (Lutfia et al., 2023).

Philippine data, however, remain scarce and fragmented. Filipino fifteen-year-olds, in the words of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), averaged only 340 reading points, making them last place among the participating countries (OECD, 2019). For Region XII, the Department of Education in 2022 reported that several South Cotabato learners lagged behind the standard of proficiency. Previous investigations in T'boli Grade 9 classes proved the persistence of comprehension weaknesses among older students (Laluna & Ambayon, 2025). These findings indicate the importance of investigating whether short reading texts are able to supplement the comprehension of Grade 10 students in the South Cotabato public national high schools.

Despite remedial efforts such as reading camps, Grade 10 comprehension levels across Mindanao remain critically low. Cabural and Infantado (2023) reported a mean accuracy rate of only 37% on PISA-style passages, while

Caraig and Quimbo (2022) found that only 7% of senior high school learners in Calamba achieved mastery. Regional assessments placed 88% of tested South Cotabato Grade 9 students at the frustration level (Laluna & Ambayon, 2025). These findings show a continuous difference between curriculum expectations and actual classroom performance. There has been limited research into whether brief, topical readings might bridge this gap for Grade 10 students. Teachers cite limited time and resources for curating and implementing such materials, and policymakers require localized evidence before scaling new instructional strategies. Addressing this gap is both necessary and timely.

Reading comprehension problems limit scholastic development in subjects like physics, history, and mathematics. Long-term poor reading skills lower graduation rates and reduce workforce preparation (Buraga, 2025). Conversely, short, engaging readings require minimal additional class time yet offer potential for steady skill improvement (Picardal, 2025). Although international studies support this approach, Philippine classrooms present unique linguistic and resource-related challenges. Short reading selections, if proven useful, may improve students' comprehension, academic achievement, and self-confidence. Educators would possess customizable, cost-efficient materials aligned with curricular standards, whereas educational administrators could employ evidence-based strategies to optimize their literacy expenditures. These potential gains, however, remain hypothetical without localized research, which this study seeks to provide.

Prior interventions further justify the present investigation. T'boli classes using a literacy module "demonstrated a marked improvement in reading comprehension" (Laluna & Ambayon, 2025). Similarly, Cabural and Infantado (2023) observed that "inferential and evaluative comprehension is difficult" for Grade 10 readers. However, no studies have evaluated public

Grade 10 classes in South Cotabato or explored outcomes among multilingual learners navigating Filipino, English, and local languages. This lack of empirical support lies at the base of the justification for the present study. Without successful intervention, poor PISA results will continue, and graduates will be unable to read important documents like contracts, ballots, or work manuals. Teachers will continue to instruct what the majority of the class does not understand, companies will struggle to staff workers with literate employees, and the government will be wasting precious funds on remediation at enormous expense instead of prevention. Evidence-based solutions are therefore in order.

Statement of the Problem. This study generally aims to examine the relationship between the use of short reading selections and the self-reported reading comprehension of Grade 10 students in three public high schools in South Cotabato, Philippines. In addition, it seeks to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists in students' self-reported reading comprehension across the participating schools, thereby exploring potential contextual or institutional influences on reading outcomes. To address this overarching aim, the study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What is the level of exposure to short reading selections of Grade 10 students in terms of:
 - 1.1 Text Complexity;
 - 1.2 Content and Genre Types;
 - 1.3 Reading Length and Readability;
 - 1.4 Exposure and Frequency; and,
 - 1.5 Presentation Style?
2. To what extent do Grade 10 students perceive their reading comprehension skills when exposed to short reading selections in terms of:
 - 2.1 Basic Knowledge;
 - 2.2 Inferential Comprehension;
 - 2.3 Analytical Skills and Critical Thinking;
 - 2.4 Retention and Reading Proficiency; and,
 - 2.5 Reading Engagement and Motivation?

3. Is there a significant relationship between exposure to short reading selections and self-reported reading comprehension of Grade 10 students in public high schools in South Cotabato?
4. Is there a significant difference between grade 10 students' self-reported reading comprehension across public high schools in South Cotabato?

Hypotheses. At 0.05 level of significance, the following hypotheses were tested by the study:

Ho₁. There is no significant relationship between exposure to short reading selections and self-reported reading comprehension among Grade 10 students in public high schools in South Cotabato.

Ho₂. There is no significant difference between grade 10 students' self-reported reading comprehension across public high schools in South Cotabato.

Theoretical Framework. In this study, three main theories explained how students comprehend short reading passages and how they affected reading comprehension: Schema, Metacognitive, and Cognitive Comprehension theories.

The cognitive theory of comprehension states that reading requires word recognition and meaning formation. Due to fewer details, concise reading selections help students comprehend information. This helps them focus on inferences, summarizing, and predicting, essential abilities for higher knowledge. This study suggests that brief, clear reading materials may improve pupils' understanding.

The schema theory explains how students learn from previous knowledge. When short readings are familiar, students may relate to them. This link improved content comprehension. Students in South Cotabato from varied language and cultural backgrounds have different schemas that affect how they see reading success.

Students' learning reflections are central to metacognitive theory. It emphasizes the need for students to acknowledge their true understanding. This study will examine how students' ability to reflect on their reading experiences, including perplexity, confidence, and content coherence, greatly affects perceived knowledge.

The study was also motivated by three main ideas: short readings improve comprehension, prior knowledge affects comprehension, and students' self-evaluation. This helps the study answer its main question: how short reading selections influence the perceived reading comprehension of Grade 10 students.

Significance of the Study. This research aims to provide practical suggestions on how concise, relevant short readings can promote understanding, especially in educational institutions with limited resources. It also aims to inform students about the advantages of diverse and engaging reading materials, thus increasing their motivation and reading competence. More so, this study makes a novel contribution by examining students perceived reading comprehension of short reading selections within the multilingual Philippine public high school context, addressing a gap in existing research that has largely focused on measured performance in non-Philippine settings. This study will therefore enhance the overall literacy approach in public high schools by promoting materials that meet students' actual comprehension needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To comprehend a text, readers need diverse cognitive, reflective, and language skills. Academic achievement and literacy development require these skills. Researchers have examined numerous theoretical frameworks to better understand processes related to reading comprehension. This review explores fundamental concepts underlying reading comprehension, focusing on themes such as cognitive processes during reading, the role of Theory of Mind, cognitive and

metacognitive strategies, instructional approaches, the impact of short reading selections on comprehension, and related empirical studies. By synthesizing existing research, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how different theoretical models contribute to developing reading comprehension.

Cognitive Processing Models in Reading Comprehension. Reading comprehension relies on both bottom-up and top-down processing. Aryadoust (2019) presents a comprehensive cognitive theory of reading and listening that emphasizes perceptual (bottom-up) and inferential (top-down) processes for understanding. The research highlights perception, word recognition, and mental imagery, which reading studies sometimes overlook. This approach aligns with recent cognitive theories that view reading as reciprocal. Abbasi (2022) found that reading comprehension involves cognitive and metacognitive processes to analyze, integrate, and evaluate material.

Cognitive approaches may assist students in assessing understanding, interpreting language, and predicting future events. This research illustrates how bottom-up and top-down mechanisms influence reading. Bottom-up (from print to words to sentences). Readers first convert visual features to letters and sounds, then access word meanings and parse syntax. Accurate parsing then assembles propositions that form a coherent text base (top-down, from knowledge and goals to meaning). In parallel, readers use background information to set goals, forecast incoming content, and produce bridge and elaborative inferences to fill gaps and preserve coherence. Bottom-up and top-down processes work together. When decoding is slow, readers may lean more on knowledge-driven predictions; when knowledge is thin, strong decoding and syntax can partially compensate. This interactive-compensatory pattern explains why students with different profiles can reach similar comprehension or struggle for different reasons.

The Role of Theory of Mind in Reading Comprehension. Researchers in literacy are increasingly interested in the relationship between Theory of Mind (ToM) and reading comprehension. Osterhaus et al. (2024) investigated the long-term association between advanced Theory of Mind components and reading competence during middle childhood. Even after adjusting for overall ability and prior successes, social cognition predicts reading comprehension. Osterhaus et al. (2024) found that these perspective-taking and social-inference skills contribute uniquely to reading comprehension beyond general cognitive ability, suggesting that understanding others' feelings and intentions supports the construction of richer and more coherent text interpretations. This conclusion implies that understanding others' feelings may improve reading comprehension and engagement. In line with this, Kelly and Cummings (2023) explore how Theory of Mind (ToM) may enhance understanding among less skilled readers using dialogic reading approaches. Their study further shows that dialogic reading practices, which prompt students to speculate about characters' emotions and beliefs, foster these inferential processes in less skilled readers, enabling them to identify underlying themes and draw more accurate conclusions. Thus, ToM functions not only as a social-cognitive skill but also as a strategic tool for deep comprehension. The findings suggest that Theory of Mind (ToM) is an important cognitive skill that enhances reading comprehension and fosters deeper engagement.

Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies in Reading Comprehension. Effective readers employ various cognitive and metacognitive strategies to comprehend short texts. Gajria and McAlenney (2020) investigate the challenges that students with learning disabilities face in understanding basic concepts, forming conclusions, and appraising their knowledge. Their study recommends teaching cognitive skills, including summarization, question formulation, and text structure analysis, to improve reading outcomes. Abbasi (2022) posits that

monolingual learners require metacognition, as they may not comprehend concepts as effectively as their multilingual peers. His research indicates that explicit training in metacognitive processes may enhance reading comprehension. Self-monitoring, prediction, and decision-making are key components of these processes.

Instructional Interventions for Enhancing Reading Comprehension. The classroom practices have explicitly targeted cognitive processing and social-cognitive pathways to improve comprehension. Gajria and McAlenney (2020) define reciprocal teaching as a comprehensive technique in which students alternate predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing group talks. It develops cognitive processes (identifying significant ideas, developing conclusions) as well as metacognitive control. Kelly and Cummings (2023) explored Theory of Mind-based dialogic reading activities, in which educators guide student debates about characters' ideas, feelings, and motives, linking these features to book themes and conclusions. The direct experience of connecting textual evidence with inferred mental processes in these organized dialogues improves engagement and understanding, especially for challenged readers. Both studies indicate that teaching cognitive skills and social thinking can improve students' text comprehension.

The Role of Short Reading Selections in Comprehension Development. The utilization of shorter reading selections, such as short stories and paragraphs, has improved students' reading comprehension in a variety of circumstances. Lutfia et al. (2023) found that short stories substantially improved pre- to post-test scores among MAS Raudlatul Asror Tebo students. These findings suggest that succinct, compelling texts may be used as effective teaching tools for improving evaluated comprehension. Nonetheless, most of the present research has focused on performance-related outcomes outside of the Philippine context. There is limited understanding of how students in multilingual Philippine classrooms,

where English is often used as a second or third language, evaluate their own knowledge while interacting with short reading passages. This study looks at perceived comprehension as a motivational and metacognitive notion, offering new insights into the influence of brief, intelligible texts on learners' confidence, engagement, and self-monitoring in reading

Empirical Studies on Short Reading Selections and Reading Comprehension. Tefera's (2022) research indicated that carefully chosen short stories can enhance students' reading comprehension, whereas Abdulaziz et al. (2024) demonstrated that these texts fostered creative reading skills in EFL college students compared to conventional methods. Ahmed and Eljack (2021) observed that reading short tales improved high school pupils' sentence construction and paragraph development, strengthening their literacy abilities. Ghafar and Zubaedah's (2023) review of seventeen ESL/EFL research studies found that short tales speed up vocabulary learning, increase self-motivation, and encourage professional growth, underlining the need for selecting relevant and captivating texts. These results emphasized the significance of short reading selections in education, especially those that focus on global performance goals. Limited research has been undertaken on Philippine public high school students, many of whom use English as a second or third language. This study evaluates the short reading selections and the perceived reading comprehension in Philippine public high school students. This perspective affects children's reading motivation, strategies, and preparedness, all of which influence their long-term success in reading. Thus, this study offers a novel perspective by evaluating short reading selections and their perceived reading comprehension within a multilingual context, correlating them with cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational theories.

METHODS

Research Design. A descriptive, correlational, and comparative research designs were utilized to examine the relationship between

exposure to short reading selections and the self-reported reading comprehension of Grade 10 students in public national high schools in South Cotabato as well as to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists in students' self-reported reading comprehension across the participating schools.

Population and Sampling. The study was conducted in three (3) public national high schools in South Cotabato, Region XII, Philippines. This focus allows for an in-depth understanding of the economic and educational context influencing short reading selection and reading comprehension among Grade 10 students within these specific public national high schools. A total of 400 Grade 10 students voluntarily participated in the study from the three schools. Participation was based on willingness and availability, making the sampling approach a form of non-probability voluntary response sampling. The breakdown of samples is as follows: One hundred thirty students from National High School – A (NHS-A), one hundred forty (140) students from NHS-B, and one hundred thirty (130) from NHS-C. All participants have willingly volunteered to participate in the study. To guarantee curricular and instructional homogeneity, the study excluded private schools and other grade-level students and concentrated on Grade 10 students from the three selected public national high schools. Students with learning disabilities or special education needs were excluded to avoid prejudice. More so, to preserve a suitable breadth and consistent educational climate, the study excluded educational institutions beyond the chosen three colleges.

Instrumentation. A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was developed and validated to gather data from a large sample of Grade 10 students across three public national high schools. The survey measured two (2) primary aspects:

1. **Short Reading Selections.** Questions assessed the exposure of students in short reading selections in text complexity, content and genre types, reading length and

readability, exposure and frequency, and presentation style.

2. **Reading Comprehension.** This part of the survey gauges the self-reported level of reading comprehension among students within the participating public high schools, including basic knowledge, inferential comprehension, analytical skills and critical thinking, retention and reading proficiency, and reading engagement and motivation.

The application of a conventional 5-point Likert-type survey ensured the reliable measurement of the variables. This has also facilitated both correlation and group-difference analysis. For reference of the Likert survey, please refer to Table 1.

Table 1
5-Point Likert Scale (Pimentel, 2010)

| Legend | Verbal Interpretation |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1.00 - 1.79 | Strongly Disagree |
| 1.80 - 2.59 | Disagree |
| 2.60 - 3.39 | Neither Agree nor Disagree |
| 3.40 - 4.19 | Agree |
| 4.20 - 5.00 | Strongly Agree |

The research adviser and an experienced educational researcher reviewed the questionnaire to assess item validity, Likert scale reliability, and the inclusion of critical characteristics such as short reading selection and self-reported reading comprehension. Their comments resulted in minor adjustments to language, structure, and item phrasing to improve clarity, and the questionnaire's validity accurately matched the variables being examined. No pilot tests were conducted.

Data Collection. The research was approved by the college president, the ethics committee, and three South Cotabato public high school administrators. The participants were Grade 10 students and minors; therefore, parents or legal guardians provided written informed consent. In the classroom, where the survey occurred, the researcher presented a short overview of the study's objectives and procedures and asked for

voluntary participation. The researchers read to the participants the components of the questionnaire appropriate for their grade level. The questionnaire was read quietly in a short timeframe. Surveys were administered in calm, well-lit classrooms with enough spacing between students to prevent peer impact. In addressing procedural questions, the researcher did not present any signals or explanations that may influence replies. Participants were given a certain time to finish the reading and the questionnaire. Forms were immediately collected, checked for completeness, and sealed. The resulting dataset had no identifying information, and all items were carefully stored for future research.

Data Analysis. Appropriate statistical tools were employed to analyze the collected data. The mean and standard deviation quantified the exposure level of short reading selections in terms of text complexity, content and genre types, reading length and readability, exposure and frequency, and presentation style. Similarly, these tools quantified the extent of self-reported reading comprehension among students within the participating institution, including basic knowledge, inferential comprehension, analytical skills and critical thinking, retention and reading proficiency, and reading engagement and motivation.

A Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to assess the normality of students' reading comprehension scores. The results showed a significant deviation from normality ($W = 0.978$, $p < .001$); thus, there is a violation of the assumption of normal distribution. As a result, non-parametric statistical tests were employed. Kendall's Tau-B was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between exposure to short reading selections and students' self-reported reading comprehension. In addition, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to assess significant differences in self-reported reading comprehension among Grade 10 students across the three public high schools. Test of hypotheses were at 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical Considerations. This study received approval from the College President, the Research Ethics Committee, and the heads of three public high schools of South Cotabato. The participants were minors; therefore, written informed consent was initially obtained from their parents or legal guardians via consent forms that were sent home and returned prior to data collection. Also, research participants provided their assent before data collection. To obtain permission, research aims and methods were explained, including voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, privacy measures, and health issues. The concept of confidentiality was largely upheld as a means to prevent harm to research participants (Baez, 2002). To protect participants' anonymity, several measures were implemented: every study paper and publication used pseudonyms. The data is securely stored on devices protected by passwords. Identifying elements were removed from reports and transcripts.

RESULTS

Level of exposure to short reading selections of Grade 10 students.

Table 2
Descriptive analysis of exposure to short reading selections in terms of text complexity

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|---|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. The choices are at my reading level, which helps me grasp them. | 4.17 | 0.727 | Agree |
| Q2. I understand the readings since the words are familiar to me. | 4.16 | 0.772 | Agree |
| Q3. The reading choices are at the right level for me, so they are simple to grasp. | 4.18 | 0.787 | Agree |
| Q4. I can understand the choices since I know the language. | 4.11 | 0.836 | Agree |
| Q5. The clear wording used in the reading selections helps me comprehend better | 4.13 | 0.808 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 4.15 | 0.595 | Agree |

The interpretation of the students' responses in text complexity in a short reading selection is shown in Table 2. The scores on all five items come within the range of "agree" with a grand mean of 4.15 (SD = 0.60), suggesting that students generally found the texts clear, familiar, and appropriate for their reading level.

Table 3
Descriptive analysis of exposure to short reading selections in terms of content and genre types

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|---|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. Many interesting topics are accessible for reading. | 4.17 | 0.727 | Agree |
| Q2. Reading fiction and nonfiction improves my brainpower. | 4.16 | 0.772 | Agree |
| Q3. My reading choices mirror my personal experiences | 4.18 | 0.787 | Agree |
| Q4. The diverse reading options offer new perspectives and ideas. | 4.11 | 0.836 | Agree |
| Q5. The variety of genres in reading materials encourages me to continue reading. | 4.13 | 0.808 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 4.15 | 0.595 | Agree |

Table 3 illustrates the interpretation of students' responses regarding the content and genre types of short reading selections. The scores on all five items come within the range of "agree". The grand mean across all criteria was 4.07 (SD = 0.64), indicating that students generally have a strong perceived exposure to engaging content and multiple genres that sustain reading interest, with slightly less agreement that selections match students' personal experiences.

Table 4
Descriptive analysis of exposure to short reading selections in terms of reading Length and readability

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|--|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. Many unique and engaging topics are available for reading. | 4.02 | 0.833 | Agree |
| Q2. Both non-fiction and fiction enhance my cognitive abilities. | 4.01 | 0.833 | Agree |
| Q3. My writing is a reflection of my life experiences. | 4.07 | 0.839 | Agree |
| Q4. Diverse readings introduce me to new ideas. | 4.05 | 0.798 | Agree |
| Q5. The variety of reading genres keeps me engaged. | 4.15 | 0.823 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 4.06 | 0.603 | Agree |

The interpretation of the responses in students' perceptions of the length and readability of short reading selections is shown in Table 4. The scores on all five items come within the range of "agree". The grand mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.60) reflects a general agreement that the reading materials are readable, appropriately varied in length, and engaging.

Table 5
Descriptive analysis of short reading selections in terms of frequency and exposure.

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|--|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. I can enhance my reading skills through weekly reading alternatives. | 4.11 | 0.772 | Agree |
| Q2. Engaging with short passages has positively impacted my reading habits. | 4.12 | 0.865 | Agree |
| Q3. The frequency of these alternatives is sufficient for improving my understanding. | 4.05 | 0.827 | Agree |
| Q4. The time allocated for each choice allows me to grasp the meaning and connect with it. | 4.04 | 0.841 | Agree |
| Q5. Consistently reading short stories has boosted my reading comprehension. | 4.08 | 0.842 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 4.08 | 0.647 | Agree |

The interpretation of the responses in the perceptions of students' frequency and exposure to short reading selections is shown in Table 5. The scores on all five items come within the range of "agree". The grand mean of 4.08 (SD = 0.65) suggests that students generally feel the frequency and exposure to these readings is effective in supporting their reading development.

Table 6
Descriptive analysis of exposure to short reading selections in terms of presentation style

| Indicator | N | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|---|-----|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. The reading options are well-organized and look appealing. | 400 | 4.13 | 0.828 | Agree |
| Q2. Both print and digital versions are easy to understand. | 400 | 4.09 | 0.865 | Agree |
| Q3. I learn best with drawings, charts, and graphs. | 400 | 4.14 | 0.831 | Agree |
| Q4. The questions and activities that accompany my reading helps me understand and evaluate literature. | 400 | 4.16 | 0.869 | Agree |
| Q5. The layout of these reading tools makes reading more enjoyable. | 400 | 4.16 | 0.804 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 400 | 4.14 | 0.686 | Agree |

Table 6 illustrates the students' perceptions of the presentation style of short reading selections. The scores in all five items come within the range of: "agree". The grand mean of 4.14 (SD = 0.69) indicates that students generally found the presentation style to be clear, engaging, appealing and supportive of comprehension.

Perceived reading comprehension skills of Grade 10 students when exposed to short reading selections.

Table 7
Descriptive analysis of self-reported reading comprehension in terms of basic knowledge

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|---|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. I can easily identify the topic of a text. | 4.03 | 0.810 | Agree |
| Q2. I remember key details from the text. | 4.02 | 0.788 | Agree |
| Q3. I recognize and comprehend important information. | 4.05 | 0.839 | Agree |
| Q4. Contextual clues assist me in understanding unfamiliar terms. | 3.91 | 0.854 | Agree |
| Q5. I can readily answer factual questions after reading a book. | 3.96 | 0.897 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 3.99 | 0.659 | Agree |

Table 7 illustrates the students' self-reported reading comprehension in terms of basic knowledge. Mean scores ranged from 3.91 to 4.05, with all items reflecting agreement. The scores of all five items come within the range of 'agree'. The grand mean of 3.99 (SD = 0.66) suggests that students generally perceive themselves as capable of understanding main ideas and recalling key details from short reading selections.

Table 8
Descriptive analysis of self-reported reading comprehension in terms of inferential comprehension

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|--|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. I can understand a text despite my lack of information. | 3.82 | 0.881 | Agree |
| Q2. I can rationally predict future events based on books. | 3.92 | 0.925 | Agree |
| Q3. I can identify cause-and-effect relationships in my reading. | 4.07 | 0.833 | Agree |
| Q4. I grasp implicit messages and ideas in texts. | 4.04 | 0.857 | Agree |
| Q5. Literature reveals character emotions, intentions, and perspectives. | 4.08 | 0.840 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 3.99 | 0.664 | Agree |

Table 8 illustrates the students' perceptions of their inferential reading comprehension skills. The scores in all five items come within the range of "agree". The grand mean of 3.99 (SD =

0.66) suggests that students generally feel confident in making inferences and interpreting deeper meanings in their reading comprehension. This shows that short reading selections may have given students manageable, targeted texts to practice cause-and-effect linkages, implicit notions, and character perspectives without cognitive overload.

Table 9
Descriptive analysis of self-reported reading comprehension in terms of analytical skills and critical thinking.

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|---|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. I can evaluate textual arguments. | 3.97 | 0.853 | Agree |
| Q2. I can identify the author's aim and viewpoint from a given portion. | 4.00 | 0.847 | Agree |
| Q3. I can effectively assess ideas from various perspectives | 3.93 | 0.887 | Agree |
| Q4. I can differentiate between facts and opinions while reading. | 3.98 | 0.912 | Agree |
| Q5. I can recognize textual biases and analyze their impact. | 3.97 | 0.869 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 3.97 | 0.680 | Agree |

Table 9 illustrates the students' self-assessed reading comprehension in terms of analytical skills and critical thinking. The scores on all five items come within the range of "agree". The grand mean of 3.97 (SD = 0.68) suggests that students generally believe they possess strong analytical and critical thinking abilities in their reading comprehension. This result indicated a link to the use of short reading selections, as concise, well-structured texts often require readers to focus intently on key arguments, and viewpoints.

Table 10 illustrates the students' perceptions of their reading comprehension in terms of retention and reading proficiency. The scores of all five items come within the range of "agree". The grand mean of 3.96 (SD = 0.70) suggests that students generally feel confident in their reading retention and overall proficiency. These outcomes are associated with the use of short reading selections, as brief, focused texts can help readers process and remember

information more effectively by reducing cognitive load.

Table 10
Descriptive analysis of self-reported reading comprehension in terms of retention and reading proficiency

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|--|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. I understand literature easily without rereading. | 3.94 | 0.936 | Agree |
| Q2. I can remember a lot from the text. | 4.01 | 0.851 | Agree |
| Q3. I can accurately explain a paragraph while maintaining its essence. | 3.98 | 0.864 | Agree |
| Q4. I read and comprehend quickly. | 3.92 | 0.861 | Agree |
| Q5. I quickly recognize and understand words, phrases and sentences while reading. | 3.96 | 0.857 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 3.96 | 0.697 | Agree |

Table 11 illustrates the students' responses regarding their reading engagement and motivation. The scores of all five items come within the range of "agree". The grand mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.68) suggests that students are positively motivated and actively engaged in reading across different genres and contexts. This high level of engagement may be linked to the use of short reading selections, which can sustain interest by offering varied and accessible materials that are less overwhelming than lengthy texts.

Table 11
Descriptive analysis of self-reported reading comprehension in terms of reading engagement and motivation

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|--|------|-------|----------------|
| Q1. All literary genres fascinate me. | 4.08 | 0.850 | Agree |
| Q2. They encourage me to read beyond course requirements | 4.01 | 0.864 | Agree |
| Q3. I know I can read and evaluate writing. | 4.04 | 0.829 | Agree |
| Q4. I often argue and read. | 4.05 | 0.868 | Agree |
| Q5. I find reading instructive and enjoyable. | 4.12 | 0.862 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 4.06 | 0.682 | Agree |

Relationship between exposure to short reading selections and self-reported reading

comprehension of Grade 10 students in public high schools in South Cotabato.

Table 12
Correlational analysis between exposure to short reading selections and self-reported reading comprehension of grade 10 students

| | | Short Reading Selections | Reading Comprehension of Grade 10 Students |
|--|-----------------|--------------------------|--|
| Short Reading Selections | Kendall's Tau B | — | — |
| | p-value | — | — |
| Reading Comprehension of Grade 10 Students | Kendall's Tau B | 0.422 | — |
| | p-value | < .001 | — |

Analysis was undertaken using Kendall's Tau-b to assess the association between the exposure to short reading selections and the self-reported reading comprehension of Grade 10 students. The results are presented in Table 12. The analysis revealed a Kendall Tau B correlation coefficient of $\tau = 0.422$ between exposure to short reading selections and self-reported reading comprehension, with a corresponding p-value of < 0.001 . The correlation indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. It means that, when the exposure to short reading selections increases, the self-reported reading comprehension also increases. In addition, the relationship is statistically significant, as the p-value ($p < .001$) is less than the significant threshold of 0.05. The finding shows that students' exposure to short reading selections is indeed related to their self-reported reading comprehension, and this relationship is not just a random coincidence, but statistically meaningful. It means that the hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between exposure to short reading selections and self-reported reading comprehension of Grade 10 students in South Cotabato, was rejected.

Difference between grade 10 students' self-reported reading comprehension across public high schools in South Cotabato.

Table 13
Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

| | W | p |
|--|-------|--------|
| Reading Comprehension of Grade 10 Students | 0.978 | < .001 |

Note: A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of normality

A Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to assess the normality of students' reading comprehension scores. The results indicated a significant deviation from normality, $W = 0.978$, $p < .001$, suggesting that the assumption of normality was violated. Consequently, a non-parametric alternative to one-way ANOVA was employed.

Table 14
Kruskal-Wallis Test of Differences in Students' Reading Comprehension Across Schools

| School | n | Mean Rank |
|--------|-----|-----------|
| NHS-A | 130 | 161.52 |
| NHS-B | 140 | 214.59 |
| NHS-C | 130 | 224.30 |
| Total | 400 | — |

$\chi^2 (2, N = 400) = 22.40, p < .001, \epsilon^2 = .056$

Table 15
Kruskal-Wallis H test of the significant difference between exposure to short reading and self-reported reading comprehension

| | χ^2 | df | p | ϵ^2 |
|---------------------------------|----------|----|--------|--------------|
| Students' Reading Comprehension | 22.4 | 2 | < .001 | 0.056 |

Table 16
Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner Pairwise comparisons - Students' Reading Comprehension

| | | W | p |
|-------|-------|------|--------|
| NHS-A | NHS-B | 5.65 | < .001 |
| NHS-A | NHS-C | 5.85 | < .001 |
| NHS-B | NHS-C | 1.30 | 0.629 |

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to determine whether students' self-reported reading comprehension scores differed significantly among NHS-A, NHS-B, and NHS-C. Results revealed a statistically significant difference, $\chi^2(2, N = 400) = 22.40, p < .001, \epsilon^2 = .056$, indicating a small-to-moderate effect size. The mean ranks showed that NHS-C ($M_r = 224.30$) and NHS-B ($M_r = 214.59$) students had higher average comprehension scores compared with NHS-A ($M_r = 161.52$).

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using the Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner test indicated

that both NHSC vs. NHSA ($p < .001$) and NHSB vs. NHSA ($p < .001$) were statistically significant, while NHSB vs. NHSC ($p = .629$) was not. These results suggest that students from NHSC and NHSB reported relatively stronger reading comprehension compared to their NHSA counterparts, but there was no meaningful difference between NHSB and NHSC.

DISCUSSION

The persisting difficulties experienced by Grade 10 students in achieving appropriate reading comprehension levels need real and effective solutions. This study examined at the relationship between exposure to short reading selections and perceived reading comprehension levels among Grade 10 students in selected public high schools in South Cotabato. The goal was to determine whether there were significant differences in self-reported reading comprehension among the participating schools. The results revealed that students not only demonstrated regular exposure to short reading selections but also showed corresponding improvements in their self-reported reading comprehension.

This suggests that the more frequently learners encounter short reading selections, the stronger their ability to analyze, retain, and engage with reading materials.

This study revealed a moderately significant relationship between students' exposure to short reading selections and their self-reported reading comprehension. The results were supported by a Kendall's Tau-B correlation coefficient of $\tau = 0.422$, with a p -value < 0.001 . This finding indicates that Grade 10 students at public national high schools, who consistently encountered short reading selections, demonstrated improved reading comprehension. Participants reported improved information retention and greater confidence in analyzing meaning. These results are substantially consistent with the current literature and recognized psychological ideas about reading.

These findings align with those of Aryadoust (2019), Cabrera (2019), and Hernandez (2020), who reported that frequent engagement with short reading selections helps students absorb theoretical concepts more effectively. The results provide credence to cognitive processing theory, which states that comprehending what you read requires both bottom-up processes, such as word recognition, and top-down ones, such as inference. Concise reading alternatives reduce the demands on working memory, allowing children to learn more effectively. Furthermore, schema theory is supported in this case since it holds that previous knowledge significantly enhances reading comprehension. Concise readings may help students engage and use their cognitive frameworks, improve their understanding of new knowledge, and make predictions. Similarly, the results corroborate metacognitive theory by emphasizing and highlighting the importance of organized short readings for improving self-regulation in reading tasks.

The study determined the overall relationship between short reading selections and comprehension while also investigating variations among schools. A Kruskal-Wallis H test found a significant difference in self-reported reading comprehension among Grade 10 students at three public high schools in South Cotabato ($\chi^2 (2) = 22.40, p < .001$). Nevertheless, a thorough investigation of Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner pairwise comparisons yielded complex results. NHSC students did better than NHSA students ($W = 5.85, p < .001$) and NHSB students to NHSA students ($W = 5.65, p < .001$). The mean rank results confirmed that NHSC students had the highest rank ($M = 224.3$), followed by NHSB ($M = 214.59$) and NHSA ($M = 161.52$). This indicates that NHSC students consistently perceived themselves as more competent readers compared to their peers in the other two schools. The higher mean rank of NHSC suggests stronger implementation of short reading selection strategies, better alignment of classroom practices, or greater access to reading resources.

There was no significant difference between the NHSB and NHSC schools ($W = 1.30, p = .629$). One possible reason for this could be that the classroom settings and teaching styles at NHSB and NHSC are similar. If both schools used equivalent teaching approaches and had equal access to reading resources, the variation in student results may have been minimized. The findings indicate that short reading selections improved reading comprehension and reveal variations in reading practices across schools. This shows that educators, curriculum developers, and educational leaders can gain from equitable access to effective reading practices to mitigate learning disparities among schools. The results indicate that shorter reading selections will be beneficial for both students and teachers, with administrators playing a crucial role in standardizing support across educational institutions. Several potential biases and confounding variables may have influenced the results. The study employed self-reported data, which may introduce subjectivity and potential response bias, as respondents may overstate their comprehension of the reading materials. Another potential bias is if teachers vary implementation practices. Additionally, the study's focus on three public national high schools limits the generalizability of the findings to private schools. The sample size, while appropriate, may not fully represent the public high schools in South Cotabato.

The study's limitations must also be addressed. The study employed a cross-sectional design, which precludes causal inferences and limits the exploration of the relationship between exposure to short reading selections and perceived reading comprehension. This prevents exploring the significant relationship between exposure to short reading selections and perceived reading comprehension. The findings may not apply to other areas due to differing social and economic situations and cultural contexts in South Cotabato. Future research should employ triangulated data sources, such as performance-based comprehension tests and classroom

observations, and adopt longitudinal or experimental designs that incorporate objective measures of both short reading selections and reading comprehension. Future studies should also include performance-based comprehension exams, classroom observations, longitudinal or experimental methodologies, and objective measurements of short reading selections and comprehension to triangulate results.

The theoretical and practical implications of this study are noteworthy. Theoretically, the link between short reading selections and students' perceived reading comprehension indicates how difficult it is for students to think, apply what they know, and be aware of their reading abilities. Practically, the findings suggest that regular schooling should incorporate short reading alternatives as essential teaching tools, not just as supplementary resources. This method is particularly useful in schools, where there may be insufficient books, time, or training resources. Teachers may help their students become more confident and proficient readers by strategically including short reading choices in their sessions.

In conclusion, the results of this study support the notion that short reading selections enhance high school students' perceived reading comprehension. If adequately supported by teachers, students can excel in reading and feel at ease with it. Research work, school practice, and instruction methods must continually improve if such pedagogic instruments are to achieve their full potential.

Based on the findings, various recommendations are suggested. Classroom instruction should include short reading selections that match students' reading levels and that vary in theme and structure. They should also involve activities before and after reading to improve understanding. Furthermore, school administrators and education leaders must design teacher preparation courses specifically tailored to meet teachers' needs, focusing on strategies for

comprehension using short passages for reading. Due to the differences in mean ranks, schools with lower mean ranks (NHSA and NHSB) should take focused actions. These steps could include reading instruction seminars for teachers, better teaching materials, and evaluating short reading practices in the classroom. Fixing these difficulties can help all students read equally and reduce reading comprehension gaps. Future studies must conduct long-term research as well as measures of performance to determine short reading selections on comprehension for reading and motivation, as well as long-term academic achievement.

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