

# Motivational Factors to Improve Reading and Communication Skills of Children at Home During COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** This article aimed to ensure some motivational factors to improve reading ability and communication skills of children at home during Covid-19 Pandemic. The deadly corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has caused a dramatic impact to the country's educational system. The impact resulted into the postponement of the regular opening of classes in June to October and the cancellation of the traditional face-to-face classes as substituted by a modular distance learning approach in the entire Philippines. With this current teaching-learning approach, school children's reading ability and communication skills could decline during the pandemic. COVID-19 could have led to a great loss in learning compared to a regular school-year thus, motivational factors to improve kids' reading ability and communication skills at home is crucial.

**Keywords:** communication skills, motivational factors, reading ability.

## 1. Introduction

Reading is a process of communication between author and reader. It is a complex process that requires a great deal of active participation on the part of the reader. Huffman (1998) defines reading as "asking questions of printed text and reading with comprehension becomes a matter of getting his questions answered. "Reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and throughout his life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and eventually the assurance of job success will inevitably be lost. Reading is a means of language acquisition, of communication, and of sharing information and ideas.

Children are expected to learn to read in the primary grades, kindergarten through third, when most reading instruction is given. By fourth grade, pupils are expected to read to learn.

Over time, learning to read becomes more complex, with the heightened demands on the learners to use reading skills to analyze or to solve problems digitally as commonly used nowadays. Good reading skills are required to study geography do math assignments, and conduct experiments. Even motivated, hard-working pupils are severely hampered in their schoolwork if they cannot read well by the end of the third grade.

Children at the emergent stage should be motivated, trained

and encouraged to improve their reading ability and communication skills at home during this pandemic. Communication skills are abilities we use when giving and receiving different kinds of information. While these skills may be a regular part of our day-to-day work life, communicating in a clear, effective and efficient way is an extremely special and useful skill especially in this uncomfortable condition of the entire world.

With the advent of this Covid-19 Pandemic in the entire globe reading ability and communication skills of the school children has greatly affected and deteriorated. Indeed, parents are also worried with the present teaching-learning approach because tutoring their children in answering modules at home is a great burden on their shoulders especially in the remote provinces like Jolo, Sulu wherein internet connectivity is insufficient more often than not.

## 2. Reading Ability of Kids in Remote Area

Reading ability of children in a remote province like Sulu particularly in some municipalities is considered very poor. Undoubtedly, you can see and meet school children at sixth grade who could not read well and with this consequence some of them eventually look for a gateway to exit from school and will not return anymore and somehow get influenced to be an out-of-school-youth gang. The conquest, so to speak, of the Covid-19 Pandemic showed staggering impact on global education particularly those from underserved communities with special needs in the Philippines specifically the province of Sulu.

The government should take a look assertively for an alternative course of action because the need is great. Public schools in particular have difficulty in setting up online learning activities for beginning readers and many in poorer communities have no access to online courses particularly in most municipalities in the province of Sulu, Philippines. School children in the remote provinces like province of Sulu is deprive from the opportunities of online learning courses especially in developing reading ability and communication skills compared to school children in the urban communities wherein internet access is sufficient.

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Illiteracy and socio-economic problems of parents in some municipalities in the province of Sulu is considered great factors that hamper the improvement of reading ability and communication skills of children during this Covid-19 Pandemic. Illiterate parents are impossible to sustain assistance to their children in reading and in communicating in English language. They need to hire tutor to help their children to improve their reading ability and communication skills if they wished to. But considering the present crisis in this pandemic, hiring tutor is none voluntary and tokens in any form should be available.

### 3. Motivational Factors for Reading

Motivation has very important role in reading process. Motivation also requires discovering and understanding reader drives and needs, since it originates within an individual both young and adult. Positive acts in reading and communicating performed by children with the aid of positive motivators. Children will be more motivated to read and communicate well when they have clear goals to achieve. For instance, the motivator says, “if your reading ability will improve, you’ll be rewarded and therefore, you should engage yourselves in reading at least one to two hours in the morning likewise in the afternoon. And not only that, if you spend more time in reading at home you will become honor student in your class and you will be successful in life someday.” Then the motivator should immediately select the most important and interesting texts to read and distribute it while children are still invigorated with the motivation. The group of words below may be interesting to them.

#### Understanding Local and Global Concerns

Gaining insights on what is happening around us, not only locally but also globally, is every man’s concern. There is a need to know the problems regarding health, safety and environment and what man’s role is resolving them. One does not only take responsibility for oneself but also for the world in general, an understanding of these issues allows everyone to view the world as one – different races, different cultures, different social classes – working together to find solutions to matters that affect the community and the whole world.

Although a few human activities occur without motivation, nearly all conscious behavior is motivated, or caused. It requires no motivation to grow hair, but getting a haircut does. A motivator’s job is to identify the drives and needs of a child he is motivating to read and to channel a child’s behavior, to motivate him to engage himself in reading and communicating regularly. People tend to develop certain motivational drives as a product of the cultural environment in which they live, and these drives affect the way people view their works and approach their lives. It is for this reason that parents should be always careful to refrain from showing undesirable behavior at home to children for they are the model to be emulated by their children. When a child is motivated to read and communicate, reading habit will be developed and his reading ability and communication skills will be definitely improved, with that,

unnoticeably reading comprehension will take place in him and he will become an advanced reader. Wise children when properly motivated to read and communicate they wish to achieve objectives and advance up the ladder of success. Accomplishment is seen as important primarily for its own sake, not just for the rewards that accompany it. They may constantly drive themselves to seek ways of improving their reading ability and communication skills at home despite of Covid-19 Pandemic when they are enlightened that this would yield more success in their future.

### 4. Stages of the Reading Process

Marquez, Casela, and Sadorra in a Developmental Reading book state that, a number of models on reading development have been designed and have guided reading instruction in identifying the stages of reading where a particular child is in and where children in a heterogeneous class belong. The basic and progressive stages of reading generally serve as a guide in determining the reading skills of a particular child or of the whole class. However, it is important to note that, not all children pass through the same stages simultaneously and possess all the same skills. Therefore, an individual reader may be identified in terms of his readiness, skills, and own pace. Marie Clay (1991) Fountas and Pinnell (2001) have noted five main stages of literacy development that relate to both reading and writing.

#### A. Stage 1 – Emergent Readers

The age of emergent readers generally ranges from 2 to 7 years old. They begin to familiarize themselves with the concepts of print related to directionality, one-to-one correspondence between the spoken and written word, and the value of picture clues to the meaning of a story. They also develop an understanding that the printed word carries the main meaning of a story. They begin to make text-to-world connections and may be able to extend on what is written on the page.

#### B. Stage 2- Early Readers

Picking up from the concepts attained as an emergent reader, early readers now begin to rely more heavily on the printed text than on the pictures in a book. Most often, they begin to develop word recognition strategies such as monitoring, searching, crosschecking, and self-correction. This type of readers also begins to develop a data bank of sight words that allows them to read with increased speed as they are read more often in phrases rather single words. As a general rule, early readers are between the ages of 5 to 7. Because readers develop at varying rates, a teacher may have a class containing both emergent and early readers as well as readers in the next development stage, the transitional reader.

#### C. Stage 3- Transitional Readers

Transitional readers make the leap into fluent reading as they are generally able to read in meaningful phases with comfortable pace and appropriate voice intonation. They are able to enumerate the four cueing systems into their reading

with little disruption to meaning and flow. Transitional readers are able to read more lengthy texts with little reliance of pictures for text meaning. Again, these readers tend to range from 5 to 7 years.

#### *D. Stage 4 – Self-Extending Readers*

Readers progress into reading independence in the fourth developmental stage. They often read a variety of textual genres and use reading as a tool for gaining new knowledge or building upon existing knowledge. This type of readers are able to read more complex texts and begin to read for a variety of purposes. Often these readers range in an age from 6 to 9 years of age.

#### *E. Stage 5- Advanced Readers*

Advanced readers are those readers who have attained a level of mastery with reading. They are generally over the age of 9 and have become proficient in reading and in comprehending various text sources. They enjoy reading and use reading as means of gaining knowledge. They can also read fluently and can interpret texts at both concrete and inferential level.

Advanced readers connect what they have read to themselves to other texts and to the world around them. They have internalized a series of reading strategies that are used interchangeably as they read different texts. The goal in teaching reading is to help all students become advanced readers in the primary and secondary languages. Readiness to reading may be determined by cognitive, oral language, perceptual, affective and home environment and motivational factors which vary significantly in an individual learner.

### **5. To Improve Communication Skills**

With experience and practice, children can learn and improve their communication skills. Through the help of literate parents or anybody knowledgeable at home, they start by identifying children's strengths and then practice and develop those areas. Observe good communicators around you. Identify professionals, family and friends who constantly communicating ideas and information clearly with respect, empathy and confidence. Observe and take notes on the specific ways they communicate with others. Imitate and practice how do they use a certain tone of voice in some cases. Listen to them how they explain complex information, ideas or instructions. Observe what kind of emotion do they use when communicating if any, and internalize how do their communication affect others. Listen to a good speaker in the radio and watch how a good anchor delivered speech in television. It can be hard to know how you are perceived as a communicator because one's perception and interpretation differ from others. To get objective opinion, ask a trusted friend for their honest feedback. Knowing your weaknesses and understanding your areas of improvement for communication can help you identify what to focus on.

Many communication skills are habit you have developed over time. You can improve those skills by practicing new habits that make you a better communicator. That might include being more responsive to communications when they are sent, reminding yourself to give eye contact when communicating

even in an informal conversation, practicing giving positive feedback and asking questions in conversations.

Another way to improve communication skills is that, share time to attend workshops or classes. There are several online and offline seminars, workshops and classes that can help you be a better communicator. These classes may include instruction, role play and open discussions that make the attendees improve their facility of expressions and lessen their stage-fright while communicating. To develop confidence in communication, one must seek opportunities to communicate both on and off the job that require you to use communication skills. This will help you keep good skills fresh while also allowing you the opportunity to practice new skills.

While there are several communication skills you will use in different occasions, you should look into strategic way you can be a good and effective communicator to listeners of different level of intelligent quotients. Be clear and concise, it is known to many that good speech is concise. Conciseness, making your message as easy to consume as possible reduces the chance of misunderstandings and help others quickly understand your goals. Instead of speaking in long, detailed sentences, practice reducing your message down to its core meaning. While providing context is helpful, it is best to give the most necessary information when trying to communicate your idea, instruction or message. Understanding your listener's feelings, ideas and goals can help you when communicating with them. You should always respectful in conversation and it is important to remain calm when communicating with others especially to persons who are not well known to you. Keeping an even tone of voice while communicating can help you reach a conclusion peacefully and productively.

Any student or anybody among us professionals should develop an appreciation of the importance of speech communication. In one's daily activity as a step towards better communication, it should be recognized that speech communication does not refer only to public addresses. Although such speaking is important, the person spends more time communicating in less formal speech situations. In our daily affairs, we exchange ideas with others at home or among neighbors using a common language so that we can come up with our objectives of sharing. It is impossible for us to achieve our target without communication. Parents at home who are tutoring their children to read are engaging in communication in order to understand each other. The importance of communication then can be viewed through participating in building a stable condition of the country. The country's economy, health, and other aspects of human life nowadays can no longer be understood. People will remain innocent unless they will not be informed why it happened and how to go away from it. The solution to the problems of why and how can be best be solved through effective communication.

### **6. Conclusion**

The advent of COVID-19 Pandemic has caused a dramatic impact to the educational system globally. The impact resulted into the postponement of the regular opening of classes in June to October and the cancellation of the traditional face-to-face

classes substituted by a modular distance learning approach in the entire Philippines. With this modular teaching-learning approach in our midst school children's reading ability and communication skills could decline during the pandemic as speculated. COVID-19 could have led to a great loss in learning compared to a regular school-year thus, motivational factors to improve children's reading ability and communication skills at home is very much crucial.

Parents should be very meticulous to ensure patience and perseverance in exerting extra efforts in nurturing their children to replenish the lost contact hours with their teachers during face-to-face classroom instruction by encouraging them to read and communicate at home regularly while we are putting a block to the wild punches of Covid-19 Pandemic. Parents' guidance and counseling is a great motivational factors to improve the reading ability and communication skills of children at home while their teachers could only meet them once in a while physically and may meet them occasionally in a virtual form due to insufficient internet connectivity.

### **7. Recommendation**

The worsening Covid-9 Pandemic continues to pose as a serious threat to the health and stability of the educational system in the entire globe, thereby rendering its vision to

achieve high quality education nearly impossible particularly in the poorest communities in the Philippines like the province of Sulu and its underserved municipalities.

With this catastrophe, it is fervently recommended that local government, school heads and stakeholders should collaboratively take a look for a collective wisdom and energy and continue to demand their utmost dedication, sincerity and forbearance to find ways and means to cope with the disruption in our educational system while we are resisting from this present gloomy.

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