Assessing the Causes of Undergraduate Management Students' Reading Difficulties

E Pearlin[1], Dr. S. Mercy Gnana Gandhi[2], Oli Lamessa[3], Dr. Mohammed Shamsul Hoque[4], Dr. Thamarai Selvi M.D[5]

[1] Research Scholar, Department of English, Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Tamilnadu, India

[2] Professor, Department of English, Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Tamilnadu, India

[3] Lecture, Department of English, Kotebe University of Education, SSC, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[4] Professor and Former Head, Department of English, Daffodil International University, Bangladesh

[5] Assistant Professor, Department of Verbal and Life Skills, Saveetha School of Engineering, SIMATS, Thandalam, Chennai, India

Correspondence: Oli Lamessa, Lecture, Department of English, Kotebe University of Education, SSC, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Abstract

Reading is a vital skill that everyone must develop. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the major causes of management students' reading comprehension difficulties at Rift Valley University. For this study, descriptive research and a mixed research approach were employed. One hundred twenty-one samples were selected for the survey. A questionnaire and a classroom observation were used to collect data. SPSS version 26 was employed for the analysis of inferential statistics. The result identified the significant factors affecting students' reading comprehension. These factors are a lack of good teaching methods, a lack of practice, a limited number of reading activities, uninteresting reading activities, and a lack of knowledge of reading strategy. Teachers teaching methodology and reading activities are the most determinant factors that affect students' reading comprehension. The results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) that includes multiple comparisons among "mother tongue," "national language," and "English language." that the p-values show less than 0.05 which provides strong evidence that there was a significant difference among the groups. Besides the result of the correlation analysis reveals that majority of pairwise correlation coefficients are high and positive. Mobile device is suggested as an effective tool which is used to improve students' reading skills.

Keywords: assess**,** cause, difficulty, enhance, reading comprehension**,** mobile device

1. Introduction

English language is used by millions of respondents every year to communicate with others worldwide. Reading is one of the essential language skills. It is fundamental for education, personal development, and professional achievement. Since reading enables us to understand concepts, nature, and activities, it is an important skill for life. Due to the importance of English in today's globalized world, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education requires all courses to be taught in English. If this action is appropriately implemented, students will be more equipped to involve in a modern and information-based society and enhance their critical thinking and creative capacities. According to Harmer (2008), "Good reading texts can introduce interesting topics, stimulate discussion, excite imaginative responses and provide the springboard for well-rounded, fascinating lessons" (p. 99). Developing reading comprehension skills is one of the most challenging components of learning a new language, especially for non-native students.

There is a widespread problem with Ethiopian students' ability to read and comprehend written English. Lack of formal reading instruction and practice with various reading strategies are significant factors for Ethiopian students' reading difficulties. Learners at the secondary and tertiary levels still struggle with reading difficulties and understanding the texts. Particularly, Rift Valley University students have below-average reading comprehension abilities. For them, reading comprehension is a problem.

Therefore, the researchers need to investigate the root causes of the problems with reading comprehension among Rift Valley University students. Students have to overcome the challenge of learning English reading. Numerous researchers have shown that many students still struggle with reading comprehension. For example, Al-Ghazo (2016) suggests two primary reasons students need help understanding what they read. As a first point, most English as foreign language teachers do not bother teaching reading comprehension but instead focus on measuring students' comprehension at word and sentence levels. Secondly, students' poor comprehension may also be traced to a lack of reading comprehension resources or materials. Hsu (2012) shows that mobile devices can indeed be effective tools for delivering language learning materials (reading materials) to the student. The affordability and accessibility of mobile phones in developing countries offer unique possibilities for supplementing and enriching education for children, especially those who lack access to high quailty books or reading materials (Sung, Y et. al, 2016).

Reading in English is far more demanding and challenging than reading in one's native language because of the cognitive, cultural, and

linguistic challenges. In order to improve their reading comprehension, learners must first identify their weaknesses. That is the only way they will be able to find a workable solution to these problems. Therefore, the objectives of the study are:

- To assess the major causes of undergraduate management students' reading difficulties at Rift Valley University.
- To find solutions that improve Management students' reading comprehension at Rift Valley University.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Reading

The effects of reading on our everyday lives are profound. Since technology (mobile-assisted) is integral to our daily lives, imagining a world without reading is hard. In order to become proficient in English, one must master the four pillars of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Chawwang, 2008). Chen and Hsu (2008) claim that "mobile applications help learners to enhance their vocabulary and vocabulary knowledge; subsequently, it helps them to promote reading comprehension, (p.1).

Reading is a foundational skill that every learner should master. Besides, students should read various academic and non-academic materials to expand their minds. Students acquire a deeper understanding of their subjects through reading (Gilakjani and Sabouri, 2016). Day and Bamford (2000) state that reading is the mental act of deducing meaning from text. Since reading content is integral to daily life, it is considered a vital language skill.

According to Suwanaroa, (2021), reading is a complex task that requires a wide variety of linguistic, phonological, and mechanical abilities to decode the text's symbols and understand the information being exchanged between the author and reader. In order to understand the reading material, the reader's own experience is a significant element. Snow (2002) stated, "*Comprehension* is the process of simultaneously constructing and extracting meaning through interaction and engagement with print. It includes three elements: the reader, the text and the activity or purpose of reading" (Snow 2002, p. 11). The National Reading Panel (2000) stated that reading comprehension is intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader. The content of the meaning is influenced by the text and the reader's prior knowledge and experience that are brought to bear on it.

2.2 Reading Strategies

There are many strategies that learners can utilize to develop their reading skills. Brown (2001 p. 306) argued that "there are ten strategies that help learners to develop their reading comprehension." Almost every English as a foreign or second language reader has issues comprehending what they are reading. However, skilled readers may overcome these challenges with the help of several strategies (Tobing, 2013). Reading is explained as the process of communicating meaning to others. Therefore, readers must draw on their experiences to understand what they read.

Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004) argue that "when learners learn reading strategy, they build on their already-established cognitive abilities and background knowledge" (p. 183). According to Cain and Oakhill (2009), it is crucial to teach learners effective reading comprehension strategies to progress in reading skills. These strategies provide in-depth insight into how to improve reading comprehension. Therefore, it is important to adopt effective reading strategies based on the genre of the texts. Some readers use all the reading strategies when interacting with texts: infer, conclude, summarize, analyze, and evaluate (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

It is possible to improve reading comprehension skills using various techniques. These techniques are reading aloud, using reading strategies, applying prior knowledge, etc. These strategies boost students' reading comprehension skills. Students' reading comprehension is improved if teachers equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to understand texts (Pressley, 2002).

According to Pressley (2002), effective readers take an active interest in their reading and have certain objectives in mind. Before reading the text, they make assumptions about what will happen next, and while reading, they are continually anticipating what will happen in the following chapter. They also restate the original idea differently and raise questions. Because of these, they can read and learn more successfully (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Reading is required to expand students' knowledge through comprehending, summarizing and analyzing the texts. This is what teachers should have in mind while teaching reading skills. Generally, reading comprehension is the foundation of all other forms of communication, so it is essential to improve reading skills. Reading, such as analyses and critiques, can be used to learn various things (Hock & Mellard, 2005).

2.3 Theories of Learning in Reading

Here under, the most prominent reading learning theories are discussed. These theories include the Associationism, Unfoldment, and Structuralism perspectives, as well as the Mental Discipline Theory.

2.3.1 Mental Discipline Theory

The theory of "mental discipline" was among the earliest influential ideas ever. Ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle were the first to discuss it in their works. Plato and Aristotle were the first to try to explain the cosmos in terms of relational things (Gutek, 1972), but many ancient Greek philosophers attempted to do so. To put it simply, Aristotle elaborated on Plato's idea of mind. They said it's like a muscle in your head. Strength training is essential for athletes because it helps their muscles adapt to the demands of their sport and improves their performance.

Mental Discipline Theory may be found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, who argued that, like a muscle, the mind needs frequent

practice to operate efficiently and become strong. The central idea in mental discipline is that the mind, envisioned as a nonphysical substance, lies dormant until it is exercised. Faculties of the mind such as memory, will, reason, and perseverance are the "muscles of the mind"; like physiological muscles, they are strengthened only through exercise, and subsequent to their adequate exercise they operate automatically. Thus, learning is a matter of strengthening, or disciplining, the faculties of the mind, which combine to produce intelligent behavior (Bigge & Shermis, 1992).

2.3.2 Associationism

The second educational and psychological theory, associatinism, also has ancient roots; it explores the process of how learning takes place and is said to have been developed by the Greeks. It was Aristotle, once again, who was the first philosopher to propose this view. Tracey (2006) identifies three types of relationships that Aristotle posits in this theory: proximity, similarity, and difference.

When events happen close together in either space or time, we say that they are contiguous. It is possible for these concepts to be linked in your mind. Things like students, educators, classrooms, chalkboards, administrators, educational institutions, exams (both oral and written), and so on all have connections to one another. These occur frequently in the classroom. It is safe to argue that when we think about anything, additional memories pop into our heads that are somehow connected to the original thought. What, if anything, does this novel thing make us recall? Associations can also be of the similarity variety. The objects that share characteristics are easier to recall. So, if you're having trouble keeping track of all the names in your family tree, you might find it helpful to separate the female names from the male names. To rephrase, he is able to place individuals in distinct groups determined on their individual traits. Contrast is the third and final sort of relationship. The contrasts between the things, such as length and appearance, strength and weakness, and so on, aid in the retention of this information by the student. Since these connections are all intertwined, it's possible that one person may make use of all three at once.

The assumption that people are born wise was something he questioned (Tracey, 2006). Tabula Rasa, sometimes known as the "Black Tablet" idea, was his stance on education. In this view, a person's interactions with their surroundings are the causal factor in all of his or her subsequent learning. According to this theory, man has five senses that allow him to take in information about the world around him. The brain here is acting entirely as a passive receiver. On the other hand, what he thinks about is something that humans experience. According to this theory, it is from either the first or the second that all other thoughts in the mind develop. Locke, in contrast to Aristotle, stressed the significance of environmental influences in education (Tracey, 2006). Both addressed the knowledge on the assumption that the fundamental problem is in the process by which knowledge is created. A theory that is almost two millennia old is still relevant today since most texts are written with associations in mind, especially dictionaries.

2.3.3 Unfoldment Theory

From the 18th century forward, some practitioners have contended that learning is the result of the mind's natural unfolding, with individual curiosity and interest as the starting point and as the end goal (Tracey, 2006). Rousseau (1712–1778) was one of the early philosophers to investigate Unfoldment Theory. This theory proposes that teachers should adapt their pedagogy based on what pupils already know. According to this, theory students will not learn as much if he is made to study something he finds uninteresting. Students are left to his own devices to explore the world and satisfy his natural curiosity in his novel. The novel Emile is split in half. In the beginning, Emile is a little child who lives in a remote place and is fed only by his mother. Part Two of the narrative finds the now-orphaned Emile placed in the care of a teacher who is both a representation of society and a potential leader. After this he is released into the wild. To ensure his survival, Emile must observe the rules of nature. Everything at the school should be made with the requirements of learners and instructors in mind, and all the instructions needed to use them were readily available (Tracey, 2006). This theory believed that children required structured teaching from their teachers.

2.3.4 Structuralism

Many educators consider structuralism to be the first important for learning. In the field of linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) is credited with introducing structuralism ideas. It is a way to study a subject by breaking it down into its constituent elements as a whole. The perceptual framework hypothesis analyzed how the mind is put together. Reading-related topics, such decoding words, were his focus. Structuralism was summed up by Raphael (1996), as reported in Tracey (2006) expressing that reading was studied as a perceptual process by psychologists from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. This included measuring how quickly a person's eyes moved across the page, how fast they read, and even how their lips moved while reading silently.   For one reason or another (either the absence of related text or the assumption that meaning formation was outside the scope of the study), researchers in these fields paid hardly any attention to whether or not readers had understood the text. This theory suggests that variables associated with print quality may be at the root of a student's issue. According to this theory, adjusting the print size of the reading text might help a student who is having trouble reading since the problem may stem from elements connected to print perception.

2.3.5 Constructivism and Reading

Woolfolk (1998) the emphasizes on how much knowledge is actively constructed by humans. According to this theory, learning takes place when the student actively engages in the process and when the new information is integrated with existing knowledge. One of the earliest American constructivists, John Dewey, placed equal weight on the student, the learning environment, the instructor, and other factors that affect the learning process (Tracey, 2006). The process of learning is impacted by many aspects. Schema theory was developed by Anderson and Pearson (1988). This theory suggests that students should be familiar in the subject matter in order to make informed judgements.

Content schemas and cultural schemas are two examples of the sorts of schemas that this theory explores, along with the influence of both on the educational experience. As a means of assessing reading ability, however, this notion has been criticized. The idea fails to account for the potential influence of students' motivation and self-reflection while designing reading assessments. Reading, according to this theory is largely a learning process in which students rely on cueing systems like syntactic and semantic systems (for the grammar and syntax of language, respectively) to decipher text.

2.3.6 Cognitive Developmental Theory

In 1969, Piaget developed his theory of cognitive development. The concept of maturity became the focal point of his teaching. A student's ability to learn challenging skills improves as he gets older. On the other hand, this theory argued that a learner's development should be allowed to progress naturally before any formal education could begin. In basic education, for instance, students learn the alphabet, then words, and finally, sentences. Many reading books created in recent years reflect the widespread belief that students learn how to construct complex sentences in the second grade. Family Literacy Theory is the ultimate developmental theory (Tracey, 1995). The role of the parent was highlighted in this notion. The greater the diversity of experiences available, the deeper the learning. As a first step in preparing a student for success in school, parents should foster an atmosphere rich in reading materials at home.

2.3.7 Social Learning Theories

Tracey (2006) highlight the significance of social influences and interactions in improving students reading skills. Sociolinguistic Theory was the first theory to consider social learning. The significance of the learner's native language in reading is emphasized. In contrast, socio-Cultural Theory examines the influence of background and context on education (Tracey, 2006). Interactions with others are crucial to the growth of knowledge, as argued by Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Tracey (2006), Social Learning Theory was created by Bandura in 1969. The idea behind this is that it is by observing other people, rather than through one's own experiences, that one may learn the most. Jong et al. (2010) stated that sociocultural perspectives, where emphasis is on the social motive for second language learning.

2.3.8 Cognitive Processing Theories

In the second half of the 20th century, researchers shifted their focus from tangible mental processes to intangible ones, attempting to better understand how information is acquired and retained in the human brain. The first to apply the cognitive method specifically to reading was hypothesis of the Substrata-Factor by Holmes (1953) as mentioned in Tracey (2006). He claims that there is a correlation between variables and sub-variables. Individual elements like eye motions and fine motor abilities, he said, fall within the umbrella of variables. Students should have access to the reading texts at the learner's level if they are to benefit from reading (Carver, 1977). It is probable that the student is struggling to grasp the reading material for his or her current level of knowledge or maturity. Reading comprehension, for instance, should ideally be evaluated in terms of processing, rather of individual components like syntax, semantics, and vocabulary.

According to this theory, if one computer processing unit has a problem, the other processors in this model will work to make up for it. To illustrate, if the student is having trouble understanding the text, he should attempt to infer the meaning of the words on his own. Word meanings are dealt with on the linguistic level, sentence meanings on the conceptual level, and the message embedded in the text is dealt with on the situational level. According to the Parallel Distributed Processing Model (Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986), a reader's proficiency in reading is contingent on four factors: the reader's facility with automatic letter recognition, phonemic processing, vocabulary, and the reader's capacity to construct meaningful messages while reading. Both familiar and unfamiliar phrases were the primary emphasis of the Route Cascaded Model (Coltheart et al., 1993). For more information on reading impairments, check out "The Double-Deficit Hypothesis" (Wolf & Bowers, 1999). This theory divides reading impairments into three groups: those involving phonological deficiencies, those involving speeding problems, and those including both deficits simultaneously. Reading difficulties as a result of these causes are difficult to manage without taking urgent action to remedy or, at the very least, mitigate the situation.

Most recently, neuroscience, which focuses on brain function, has emerged as a viable theoretical framework (Tracey, 2006). There is no learning process more important than the involvement of the brain. The relatively new field of neurolinguistics, for instance, seeks to answer questions about the neural substrates underlying language processing, including the specific regions of the brain responsible for different linguistic abilities. Neuroscience, which probes how the brain works, is the most up-to-date and latest theoretical framework (Tracey, 2006). There is no learning process more important than the role of the brain. As an emerging subfield, neurolinguistics seeks to map the neural substrates involved in language processing to better understand the brain's role in language acquisition and comprehension.

2.4 Empirical Literature

The students' reading comprehension problems have been the focus of numerous studies. Suwanaroa (2021) found that students at all grade levels have trouble with reading-related problems, like reading without comprehension. Most students need to comprehend the concept, explain it, offer insight into the content, or provide a summary. Dennis (2008) states that a text's complexity impacts students' comprehension. This component is affected by the reader's fluency level and ability to use it in novel situations. The environment can have an impact on a student's ability to concentrate while reading. Discomfort in the classroom makes it harder for students to learn. Lamessa et al. (2023) reveled that a smaller class size gives students more opportunities for personalized instruction and practice, enabling teachers to spend more time with each student and create a more personalized learning experience. Noise from a television or radio could cause the reader to lose interest in their reading (Dennis, 2008).

According to Dennis (2008), anxiety is just one of many factors that can impair a student's reading comprehension. Many factors, like homework, tests, and group projects, can interrupt students' reading time. An important goal of teaching reading comprehension is to get learners interested in the material and involved (Dennis 2008). When reading material, paying attention to the text as a whole is challenging, and the reader misses some crucial information. Hollowell (2013) found that students' health problems impeded reading comprehension. The delayed diagnosis and treatment of a child's physical problem may cause comprehension difficulties later in life. In addition, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) found that word recognition (decoding) affected student reading comprehension. Students who have trouble decoding and identifying words have more difficulty in grasping the meaning of texts. Unlikely, students who invest the time to expand their vocabularies will have a significant advantage in comprehending the texts.

Similarly, Alshumaimeri (2011) examined how reading strategies influenced the comprehension levels of Saudi learners. This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of different reading strategies in boosting comprehension among 145 male Saudi EFL students in 10th grade. After administering questionnaires designed to test the participant's familiarity with the three texts (oral, silent and sub-vocalizing). The results showed that silent reading and sub-vocalizing were distinct from oral reading. Oral reading has been shown to be more effective in helping students comprehend what they read than the other two modes. The majority of respondents agreed that oral reading is the most effective method of gaining comprehension. According to the responses, reading aloud is favored because it helps with memorization, concentration, and using the correct pronunciation of words in everyday life. Rahimi and Talepasan (2012) studied on, "Exploring EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Problems in Reading ESP Texts." Three hundred and eighty-five EFL students took part in the survey. Chi-square analyses of the data showed that 15 major syntactic categories create a severe challenge to reading ESP texts.

Furthermore, Elmadwi and Shepherd (2014) made a study, "A Critical Study of the Problems Faced by the Libyan Students in Reading and Comprehension of English as a Foreign Language." This research aimed to identify the most popular reading strategy used by university students in Libya and establish a causal link between the learners' strategy use and their level of English language proficiency. A total of twelve students (six males and six females) were randomly chosen. The result of this study showed that there were significant differences between the techniques used by male and female language learners. Besides, the results identified differences in students' linguistic abilities and the methods by which they were taught to learn reading skills.

In addition, Medjahdi (2015) conducted a study on "Reading Comprehension Difficulties among EFL Learners: The Case of Third-Year Learners at Nehali Mohamed Secondary School." The study aimed to understand better the reading difficulties experienced by high school juniors and senior students. The participants in this research are third-year students at Algeria's Nehali Mohamed Secondary School. The result shows that most students struggle with reading comprehension because of pronunciation, confusing words and the nature of the text.

Al-Jahwari and Al Humaidi (2015) did research on "Reading Comprehension in English as a Foreign Language: The Role of Prior Knowledge from the Perspectives of Omani Teachers." For this study, eighty-two teachers were chosen from Batinah North Region during the 2009/2010 school year. The results showed the major causes affecting reading comprehensions, such as lack of prior knowledge of reading comprehension, limited strategies, lack of language proficiency and teachers' unfamiliarity with schema theory and its pedagogical applications.

Despite the fact that a great number of studies have pinpointed the factors that contribute to students' difficulties with reading comprehension, there are still a great deal of elements that have not been discovered. Because of this, the researchers had a strong desire to fill in this gap that had been left by earlier researchers who were unable to touch it.

3. Materials and Methods

The primary objective of this research was to assess the primary contributing factors that are responsible for the reading difficulties that students experience. During the course of the completion of this research project, both a descriptive research design and a mixed research approach were employed. The research study involved a total of one hundred twenty-one (121) undergraduate management students from Rift Valley University in Burayu, Ethiopia. These students were chosen using simple random sampling techniques (lotter method) to participate in the research study. They were comprised of forty students in their first year, forty students in their second year, and forty-one students in their third year. In order to collect the data, the researchers used a questionnaire, analysis of an English textbook, and observations. In order for the researchers to successfully complete the data analysis, they made use of SPSS version 26 for descriptive frequency analysis, for inferential statistical analysis, for regression analysis, for T-test analysis for ANOVA analysis, and for correlation analysis. The findings are displayed for the reader in the form of tables and figures.

4. Result

4.1 Quantitative Analysis of the Questionnaire

The study employed descriptive statistics to analyze the collected data to assess the significant factors that affect Management students' reading skills at Rift Valley University.
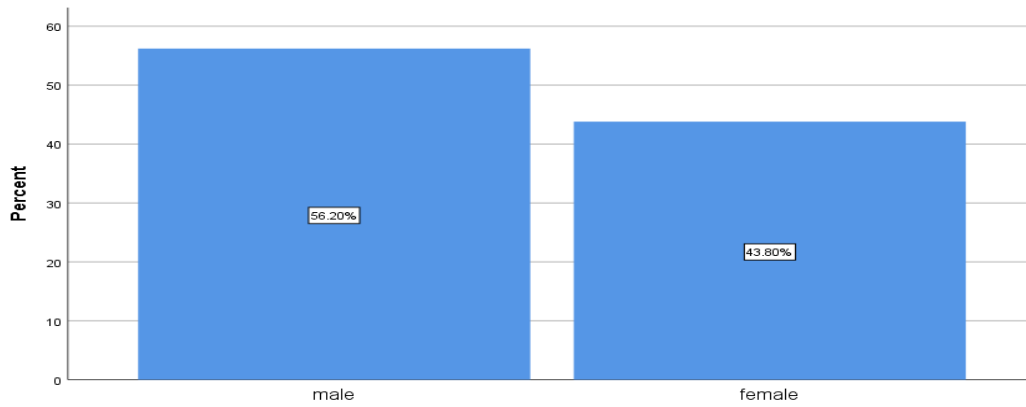
Figure 1. Percentage of participants

Figure 1 shows that 56.20% of male and 43.80% of female participants were involved in the study. This indicates that both genders participated in the study.

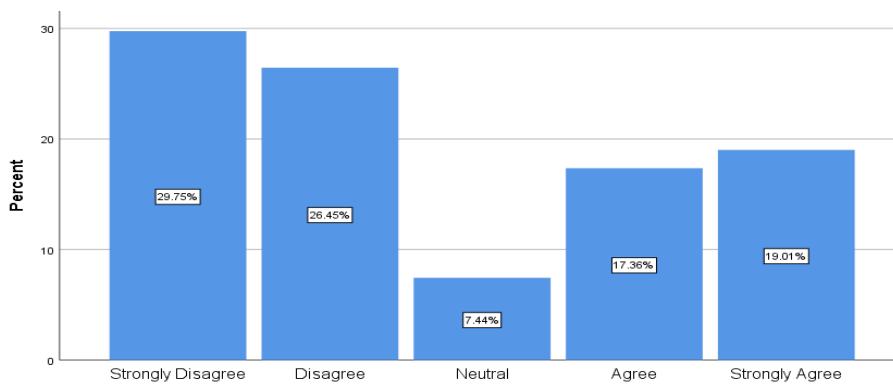**Q1. I have no reading problem**

Figure 2. Percentage of participants good at reading skill

Figure 2 depicts that 29.75% of the respondents strongly disagreed, indicating they had a reading difficulty. The respondents have difficulties with comprehension, fluency, or others. 26.45% of respondents disagreed about the statement. They believe their reading difficulties to be serious. They can have doubts about reading abilities. Only 7.4 % of responders answered neutral. The respondents did not indicate whether they agreed or disagreed, which suggests that they do not have confidence in their reading skills. It is possible that this viewpoint's neutrality is due to reading competency uncertainty. 17.36% of respondents agreed that they don't have a reading difficulty. These respondents may be confident in their reading skills. They may consider themselves good readers. 19% of respondents strongly agreed, exhibiting great reading confidence. The respondents think they read well, indicating a high self-image. The respondents have a positive view of themselves since they believe they are good readers. In conclusion, the majority of respondents either did not agree. This suggests that a large section of the respondents had difficulty reading ability. However, a significant number of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, indicating reading confidence and skill. Understanding these reactions has several benefits. Educators and other literacy specialists can use it to help identify pupils who could benefit from further reading support. Education initiatives and attempts to improve literacy might perhaps benefit from it as well. These remarks that the process of self-evaluation is subjective, demonstrating that learners' reading abilities can vary from one another.
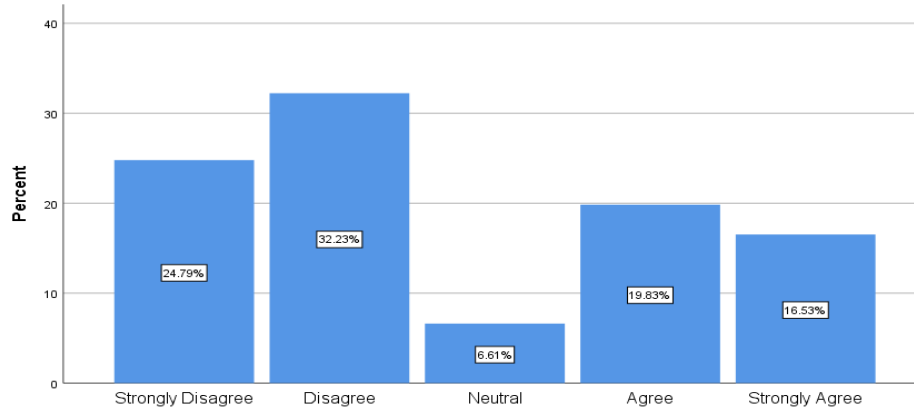
Q2. I usually practice reading skill

Figure 3. Percentage of respondents practicing reading

Figure 3 shows that 24.79% of the participants strongly disagreed that they usually practice reading. It might be because these learners don't like reading, don't have time, or don't value reading. They may also struggle with distractions or finding good books. 32.2% of the participants disagreed too. They may struggle to practice reading. A smaller percentage (6.6%) of learners were neutral when it comes to the statement. They might read once in a while, but probably not with the intention of improving their skills. 19.8% of learners agreed that they regularly engage in reading. It is likely that these respondents value reading and desire to get better at it. It is possible that they regularly read books, articles, and other forms of written material.16.5% of respondents were completely agreed, demonstrating a high level of commitment to reading practice. They appreciate reading for both their own personal development and intellectual expansion. The respondents may include readers who read in a structured manner in order to improve their reading skills. These responses show that learners have various reading skills practice, attitudes and behaviours. Personal interests, educational backgrounds, resources, and perceived reading advantages may impact these replies. Respondents' reading habits might change due to changing interests, living circumstances, school or professional needs. In general, participants' replies to the question regarding practising reading skills reveal the interactions that build reading habits.

Q3. My instructor uses good techniques to teach reading skills

Table 1. Percentage of respondents on teaching methodology

Valid Frequency		Percent
Strongly Disagree	32	26.4
Disagree	37	30.5
Neutral	26	21.4
Agree	16	13.2
Strongly Agree	10	8.2
Total	121	100.0

Table 1 depicts that 26.4% of participants strongly disagreed that their professors teaching reading skills method is not good. This response reveals a significant level of dissatisfaction regarding the instructional processes used by their teachers. These respondents get the impression that their instructors aren't teaching them sufficient reading skills. 30.5% of respondents disagreed about the statement. These respondents may have some questions about the methods employed by their instructors. They do not acknowledge their teachers' approaches to teaching. 21.4% of respondents were neutral, meaning they did not agree or disagree. The respondents may be unsure whether their professors' instructional methods good or bad. 13.2% of participants agreed, which suggests that their instructors provide good reading teaching methods. These students value the methods of instruction used by their instructors and consider themselves to be benefiting from them. A smaller (8.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed, indicating great trust in the educational techniques used by their teachers. They show a positive attitude towards their reading classes since they consider their instructors used good teaching methods. In conclusion, most respondents had doubts about their professors' teaching approaches. However, a lesser participants showed good views of their professors' teaching methods. The majority of the respondents feel that their teachers are teaching reading skills methods are not good, which can affect their learning experience and outcomes. These responses are essential for educational institutions and instructors to comprehend in order to improve instruction and student learning. Those teachers who were unsatisfied with their teaching might obtain criticism and professional development to help them become better teachers.

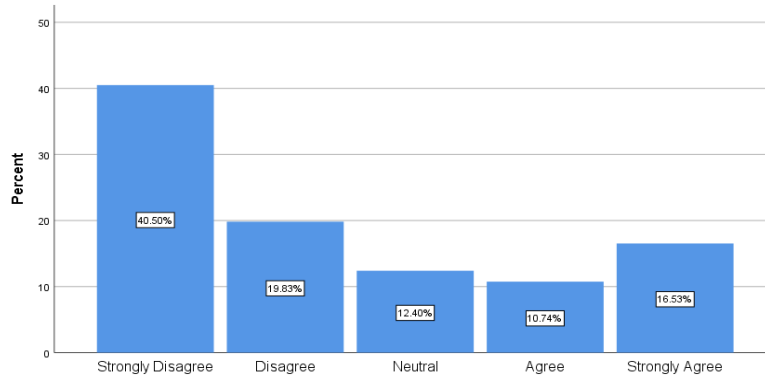**Q4. I use different reading strategies while reading**

Figure 4. Percentage of respondents on reading strategies

Figure 4 displays that 40.5% of respondents strongly disagreed about the statement, which suggests that they do not make use of a variety of reading strategies. This indicates that they may be reading in an inactive manner. When they read, they may not employ strategies to boost their understanding. 19,8% of respondents disagreed with the statement. The respondents do not make use of reading strategies occasionally. A smaller percentage (12.4%) of learners were neutral about the statement. They may use some approaches, but they are not strategic readers. 10.7% of respondents agreed, indicating that they make use of a variety of reading techniques. The respondents utilize a wide variety of approaches when interpreting the text. 16.5 % of learners were strongly agreed suggesting that they make an effort to use various read procedures. They are probably keen readers who employ a variety of strategies to increase their ability to comprehend what they are reading. They could connect with the topic by asking questions, making predictions, or visualizing what might happen. In conclusion, majority of the participants do not make use of a variety of reading strategies. According to Vimochana et al. (2023), the scaffolding reading strategy is the effective technique to develop students' reading skills. Lamessa et al. (2023) suggested that, "students should know reading methods like scanning, skimming, predicting, anticipation and previewing, which can enhance their reading comprehension skills," (p.9).

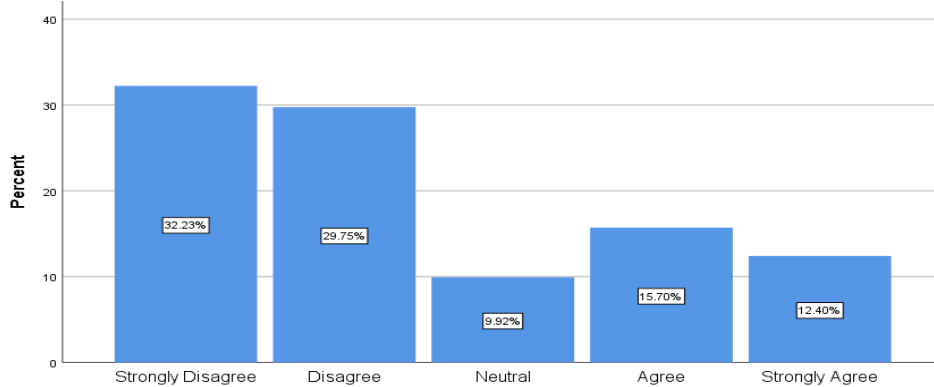**Q5. The activities in the reading class are authentic and interesting.**

Figure 5. Percentage of participants on authentic and interesting reading activities

Figure 5 shows that a significant number (32.2%) of participants disagreed the statement stating that the reading class activities are neither authentic nor engaging. This answer reveals a profound lack of satisfaction with the activity's overall importance. These respondents will think the activities to be unrelated to their everyday lives. 29.75% of learners disagreed the statement. They believe that the reading activities do not provide them opportunities to enhance and develop their reading skills. 9.9% of respondents were neutral to the statement. 15.7% of the participants agreed, suggesting that they believe the activities in their reading class to be authentic and interesting. These students believe that the activities are both entertaining and relevant, which may enhance their overall experience in the reading lesson. 12.4% of respondents strongly agreed demonstrating a high level of satisfaction with the activities. They consider the reading class activities to be both relevant and entertaining. In conclusion, the majority of the respondents had dissatisfaction over the activity's quality and engagement. Most respondents understand the activities as insignificant components of their overall educational experience, which may affect for both their level of motivation and their level of achievement in reading classes. Teachers also ask students to assist in the development of reading activities that provide to the students' individual interests and promote genuine educational growth.

Q6. The reading activities in the English course books are sufficient to develop my reading skills.

Table 2. Percentage of participants on sufficient reading Activities

Valid Frequency		Percent
Strongly Disagree	33	27.2
Disagree	44	36.3
Neutral	2	1.65
Agree	20	16.52
Strongly Agree	22	18.18
Total	121	100.0

Table 2 depicts that 27.2% respondents strongly disagreed the statement suggesting that they do not believe the reading activities in their English textbooks are sufficient to develop their reading abilities. This demonstrates that these students believe the material of the course is insufficient for improving their reading skills. They may find the content unchallenging, lacking in variety, or unengaging. 36.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. The respondents may not enjoy reading activities and find them unsuitable for reading skill development. Only 1.65% of participants consider themselves to have no opinion about the statement. The respondents may encounter both efficient and inefficient methods of activity in their textbooks. 16.52% of participants agreed with the statement, which demonstrates that the reading exercises in their English textbooks are sufficient for the improvement of their reading skills. The members of The respondents have the belief that the things assist them in reading. 18.18% of respondents had a strong agreed with the statement, suggesting that they feel the reading activities in their English textbooks assist them develop their reading abilities. They may find value in the learning goals, as well as the quality and relevancy of the resources. Reading abilities may increase as a result of the content covered in this course, according to the responses received. In conclusion, the majority of the participants to believed that the reading activities included in English textbooks are not sufficient and interesting.

Q7. My reading skills are affected by the amount of time I allocate for reading each day.

Table 3. Percentage of participants on reading skills are affected by the amount of time they allocate every day

Valid Frequency		Percent
Strongly Disagree	8	6.6
Disagree	13	10.7
Neutral	3	2.5
Agree	43	35.5
Strongly Agree	59	48.8
Total	121	100.0

Table 3 depicts that the respondents' answers to "My reading skills are affected by the amount of time I allocate for reading each day," and reveals the perceived association between time investment and reading competence. 48.8% of participants strongly agreed that daily reading time affects reading ability. These respondents may believe that they comprehend that everyday reading improves reading skills. They probably think frequent reading increases their reading speed, comprehension, vocabulary, and literacy. 35.5% of respondents agreed that a daily reading schedule is valued for improving their reading skills. When they practice reading consistently, the respondents may see progress. 10.7% of the respondents were neutral. For these respondents, the time allotted may seem less important than skill or the quality of the content they read. 6.6% of the participants strongly disagreed. These respondents maybe proficient readers who don't need to read much each day to improve their reading skills. 2.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the amount of time they allocate affects their reading abilities. Generally, most students agreed that the amount of their daily reading time allocated affects their reading abilities. In addition, the respondents stated that the difficulty of their reading competence is determined by time, background knowledge, reading materials, and overall language skills. This information helps educators and researchers to enhance teaching reading skills.

Q8. My confidence in my reading skills affects my overall reading performance.
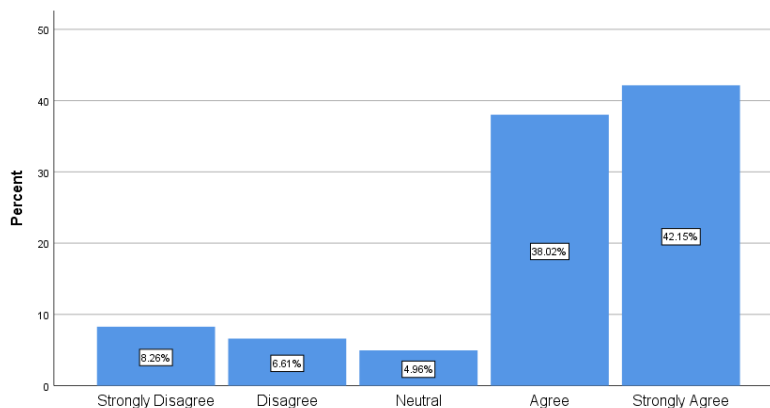

Figure 6. Percentage of participants on their confidence in reading skills that affects their overall reading performance

Figure 6 revealed respondents' answers to "My confidence in my reading skills affects my overall reading performance". 8.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed and (6.6%) of the respondents disagreed that their confidence in their reading skills affects their overall reading performance. The responders think that self-confidence doesn't affect their reading skills. Here. the respondents' talents may be judged by understanding, vocabulary, and previous knowledge rather than confidence. Many of these respondents may see reading proficiency as deterministic influences. 5% of the participants were neutral and they may be unsure or ambivalent regarding confidence and reading performance. Self-confidence may not be an obvious factor in their reading ability. Most respondents (38%) strongly agreed and 42.1% of the respondents agreed that their confidence affects their reading skills. The respondents agreed that reading confidence improves reading performance. They seem to believe self-confidence is essential to reading ability. Most participants may believe that self-confidence is important to enhance reading ability. They may think reading success depends on confidence, practice, strategy, and motivation. For most respondents, self-confidence is strongly linked to reading performance. They may see confidence as a motivator and focus for better reading abilities. These respondents will likely focus on self-confidence to improve their reading skills. Those respondents may recognize a tight relationship between confidence and performance. They believe that their self-efficacy, cultures and confidence affect reading performance. In general, many participants feel self-confidence improves reading skills. These replies may assist educators and researchers understand the relevance of creating self-confidence in literacy development programs to help students realize their maximum reading potential.

Q9. The lack of reading resources impacts my reading habits.

Table 4. Percentage of participants on the availability of reading resources impacts my reading skills

Valid Frequency		Percent
Strongly Disagree	12	10
Disagree	14	11.6
Neutral	9	7.4
Agree	44	36.4
Strongly Agree	42	34.7
Total	121	100.0

Table 4 reveals that respondents' answers to "The lack of reading resources impacts my reading habits". 34.7% of participants strongly agreed that reading resources affect their reading habits, highlighting the lack of access to materials in influencing their reading skills. The lack of books, articles, and digital resources may not motivate these students to read more often. Their lack access to reading resources may not encourage them to read often and try new genres and themes. Resources are important to 36.4% of agreeing participants. They realize that shortage of reading materials does not encourage students to read. Lack to resources may not help these respondents motivate and enjoy reading. 11.6% of respondents disagreed that the lack of reading resources impacts my reading habits. Their reading habits may be influenced by personal motivation, interest, or external causes unrelated to resource availability. 10% of respondents disagreed that the lack of reading resources impacts my reading habits. They may think that their reading habits may not be affected by lack of resource.   7.4% of participants were neutral and they may not have developed a view how lack of resource affects their reading habits properly. For this group, their reading habits can be affected by their reading interests. Teachers and governments should consider that resource availability and intrinsic motivation can improve students reading skills. Additionally, these results emphasize the need for access to reading resources to help all students acquire and maintain reading habits., Kalyan and Sunitha. (2023) argued that, "mobile device seem to be the powerful support for acquiring reading skills and interpreting comprehension which are the two challenging aspects of language learners to be knowledgeable enough," (p.1).

Q10. My reading skills are influenced by my prior knowledge of the topic.

Table 5. Percentage of participants reading skills are influenced by my prior knowledge of the topic

Valid Frequency		Percent
Strongly Disagree	8	6.6
Disagree	17	14
Neutral	11	9.1
Agree	46	38
Strongly Agree	39	32.2
Total	121	100.0

Table 5 shows that participant answers to "My reading skills are influenced by my prior knowledge of the topic," and it reveals how learners see the link between pre-existing information and reading ability. A large majority (32.2%) of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. The respondents think their reading skills are influenced by their prior knowledge of the topic. They may read with the hope that their prior knowledge will help them comprehend, which may improve comprehension. 38% agreed with the statement. They believe that their reading skills are influenced by their prior knowledge of the topic. They agree that previous knowledge is important and has an impact on their understanding the reading material.   9.1%, respondents were neutral. The respondents didn't decide since they may be unsure or haven't considered this element of reading. They may have neglected the link between previous knowledge and reading abilities in their own experiences or met instances where it is unclear. 14% of the participants disagreed with the statements. These participants said their past knowledge doesn't affect their reading. The difference may be that they value reading abilities like decoding words and understanding text

structure above background knowledge. 6.6% of respondents strongly disagreed with the assertion, suggesting a strong belief that past knowledge does not influence reading. Most respondents acknowledge that their past knowledge effects their reading skills. This highlights the literacy education argument about previous knowledge and reading competency.

Q11. My reading skills are influenced by the support and guidance I receive from teachers or mentors.
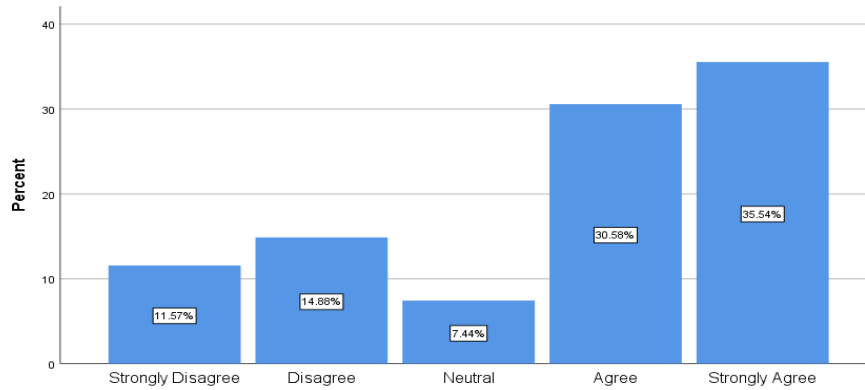

Figure 7. Percentage of participants reading skills are influenced by the support and guidance

Figure 7 displays that respondents' answers to "My reading skills are influenced by the support and guidance I receive from teachers " and reveals how educational assistance affects reading. 35.5% of the respondents strongly agreed. Teachers and mentors greatly impact reading ability, according to this group. These respondents strongly believe that educational help contributed to their reading competence. 30.6% of participants agreed with the statement. They may appreciate the value of teacher or mentor supervision in developing their reading skills. 7.4%, respondents were neutral. The respondents were undecided on whether teacher or mentor help impacts their reading ability. 14.9% of the respondents disagreed about the statement. They don't think that their teachers support affects their reading ability. Rather they believe that their reading abilities are built via own effort and autonomous reading then their teachers support. They may value autonomy in reading and think external supervision hardly matters. 11.6% of the participants strongly disagreed. These respondents firmly disagreed that instructors or mentors do not impact their reading abilities. They may claim that genuine reading competence comes through self-exploration rather than external help. These replies show that teacher or mentor assistance does not affects reading abilities. In general, it can be seen that some participants prefer external supervision, while others value individual effort and autonomy in reading development. This diversity of opinions highlights the complexity of reading skills and the many aspects that lead to great reading abilities. Teachers and mentors play a key part in cultivating a love of reading and literacy, but individual motivation and effort also matter.

Table 6. The effect of students' gender on their reading skills

t-Test 1						
	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Reading Skill	male	68	2.1711	.72821		
	female	53	4.3774	.56278	14.090	.000

Table 6 shows that the p-value that is connected with the t-test is displayed in this column under the heading "Sig." The statistical significance of the difference in mean scores between the two groups can be evaluated with the help of the p-value .000. The p-value: 0.000 suggests that there is a statistically significant difference between the male and female groups. This is evidenced by the fact that the female group has a much higher mean value for " Reading Skill " when compared to the male group.

Table 7. The effect of students' living location on their reading skills

t-Test 2						
	location	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Reading Skill	urban	38	1.6220	.50396		
	rural	83	3.8313	.85789	41.037	.000

Table 7 reveals the outcome of the "t-Test," which compares two groups based on " Reading Skill," by location (urban and rural). The results of a t-test that compared the "urban" and "rural" groups shows the significant difference. There is a difference between the mean value of urban and rural students in their reading performance.

Table 8. The effect of students' parent's education status on students' reading skills

t-Test 3						
	parents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Reading Skill	literate	44	1.7769	.61202	15.495	
	illiterate	77	3.9150	.83402		.000

Table 8 shows that it compares two groups based on " Reading Skill," at the literacy levels of the parents. The table provides the results of a

t-test that compares the "literate" and "illiterate" groups on " Reading Skill." The mean value for " Reading Skill " is much higher in the group of individuals who are illiterate (p 0.000), showing that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Table 9. The effect of students' instructional medium on their reading skills

ANOVA				
(I) medium	(J) medium	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
mother tongue	national language	-2.01367*	.12971	.000
	English language	-2.73737*	.17692	.000
national language	mother tongue	2.01367*	.12971	.000
	English language	-.72371*	.19322	.001
English language	mother tongue	2.73737*	.17692	.000
	national language	.72371*	.19322	.001

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 9 presents the results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) that includes multiple comparisons between "mother tongue," "national language," and "English language." The table presents the mean differences, standard errors, and p-values that were calculated for each of these comparisons of groups. It would appear from this that all three comparisons reveal mean differences that are statistically significant between the groups being compared. The p-values are used to describe the chance of observing these mean differences. The fact that the p-values is less than 0.05 provides strong evidence that there was a significant difference among the groups.

Table 10. The determination coefficient of the Variables

Regression				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.967[a]	.935	.934	.39093

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reading Skill

Table 10 reveals that the correlation or determination coefficient which is 0.935. The coefficient of determination, or R-squared, is a statistical measure that indicates how much of the relative variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. The predictor(s) in the model explain 96.7% of the dependent variable affects the independent variable (reading skill). According to these statistics, the model provides an adequate representation of the data. Values of R-squared and adjusted R-squared that are close to 1 indicate that the model explains a significant amount of the dependent variable's variance. The result shows that the model's predictions are accurate.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis of the Classroom Observation

The classroom observation data showed that teachers didn't use enough activities that promote their students reading skills. In class, professors relied only on traditional method of teaching reading skill. The English teachers were solely employing silent reading strategy. Most students in the reading classroom sat passively without practicing. The activities that designed in the course books were in sufficient, unauthentic and uninteresting one. In addition, the reading materials did not consider the language ability level of the students. In reading comprehension activities only few students actively participated and others abstain themselves since they did not understand the text they read. Generally, the classroom observation revealed that most learners face reading comprehension difficulty.

5. Discussion

According to the findings, there are three primary factors that influence the reading comprehension of Rift Valley Management students. These factors include a lack of a good teaching method, a lack of practice, a limited number of reading activities, uninteresting reading activities, and a lack of knowledge of reading strategy. According to Cain and Oakhill (2009), one of the most important things that teachers can do to help their students become better readers is to instruct them in the most efficient reading strategies.

In a similar vein, Harmer (2008) highlighted the idea that "good reading material can introduce interesting topics, stimulate discussion, excite imaginative responses, and provide the springboard for well-rounded, fascinating lessons" (p. 99). According to Wong and Looi (2010), very little attention is devoted to individuals' language learning strategies and learning styles such as employing mobile devices for language learning, especially reading skills. Huang and Lin (2011) point out that, "making reading on mobile phones more popular, the design of mobile phones can be improved based on the advantages of reading on other media." (p. 6)

The traditional teaching approach that the instructor uses causes difficulties in reading comprehension for the majority of the students. Learners are prevented from actively participating in their own education by using this method. In addition, the activities that were planned to teach reading skills did not take into account the students' existing language skills or their areas of interest in the language. In addition, a learner's lack of knowledge of reading strategy has a significant impact on that learner's reading comprehension skills. self-supported flexible learning system helps the students to learn effectively. In a similar vein, The National Reading Panel (2000, p. 4) stated that "The content of the meaning is influenced by the text and the reader's prior knowledge and experience". In addition, the majority of students struggle to find the motivation and interest necessary to practice their reading skills because they have a limited knowledge vocabulary. The result of this study shows that the textbooks do not include a sufficient number of reading exercises in their products to help students improve their reading abilities.

6. Conclusion

Reading in one's native language is much easier and less demanding than reading in English, which makes reading in English a much more demanding and challenging activity. Reading enables one to gain access to a wealth of information that is not limited to what can be communicated verbally. Drawing on one's own experiences to come up with new concepts is an approach to making sense of the world that is known as the strategy of reflective practice. For the purpose of determining the genuineness and veracity of the assertions made in the readings, the students are expected to rely on their personal experiences and the information they already possess. Reading is a skill that can only be developed through practice, so if students want to read more critically they need to read more.

According to the results of the study, Rift Valley University students had very poor reading skills, primarily as a result of a lack of practice and the traditional teaching method. Due to the institution's reliance on outdated teaching methods, Rift Valley University students frequently struggle with reading comprehension. This problem poses a significant challenge for the university. Another significant factor that plays a role in determining students' level of reading ability is the absence of sufficient reading activities in the curriculum that is being followed.

Therefore, researchers suggest the following points to boost students' reading skills: (1) ensuring students have access to sufficient reading materials; (2) providing students with enough opportunities to practice reading skills regularly; (3) assigning readings on a consistent basis; (4) developing genuine activities with engaging approaches; and (5) establishing a digital library that supports searching for reading materials. This study is beneficial to English teachers, students, and curriculum and syllabus designers in general because it assesses the major causes of students' reading difficulties and suggests better solutions to develop students' reading skills. The researchers also recommend using a modern method of teaching reading skills, providing students with various authentic reading activities, and motivating students to practice reading both in and outside the school to help learners enhance their reading comprehension skills.

Since it would take a lot of effort and resources to include students from a wide variety of universities in this research, the participants in this study are restricted to major management students from Rift Valley University. As a result, the researchers suggest that future researchers will conduct a similar study on the same topic, but this time they will incorporate universities from a wider geographical area.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial or non-financial interest and/or personal relationships that could influence this research article.

Author's Contribution

E Pearlin conceptualized and developed the arguments presented in the article and wrote the manuscript and **Dr. S. Mercy Gnana Gandhi** contributed to the literature review, validation of the arguments presented, provided critical insights and ensured the overall clarity of the paper. Besides, **Oli Lamessa** contributed to the development of the literature review. In addition, **Dr. Mohammed Shamsul Hoque** contributed to questionnaire development, data analysis, interpretation, the edition and revision of the paper. Furthermore, **Dr.Thamarai Selvi M.D** contributed to the edit and revision of the paper.

We, authors, discussed the research findings, contributed to the interpretation of the results, reviews and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Obtained.

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The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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