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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMERGENT LITERACY SKILLS AND KINDERGARTEN READINESS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the correlation between emergent literacy skills and kindergarten preparedness among young learners in designated public schools within the Division of Rizal for the School Year 2024–2025. Rooted in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Clay's Emergent Literacy Theory, the research highlighted the significance of social interaction and early exposure to print and language in cultivating foundational literacy skills. The research employed a descriptive-correlational methodology, utilizing kindergarten teachers as respondents to evaluate children's literacy competencies and readiness levels. Critical emergent literacy domains – phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and language skills – were assessed in conjunction with two facets of school readiness: academic and social-emotional development. Research indicated that kindergarten students often exhibit emerging literacy skills, especially in alphabet recognition, although these competencies remain underdeveloped. Educators noted that although students are typically academically equipped, their social-emotional preparedness is comparatively underdeveloped. The statistical analysis indicated no significant direct correlation between emergent literacy and overall school readiness, implying that other factors may exert influence. Contextual factors, including teacher-child interactions, the quality of early education programs, and access to learning resources, were recognized as crucial determinants of school readiness, although they did not directly influence emergent literacy. Among the literacy domains, alphabet knowledge proved to be the most significant predictor of readiness. An intervention program was proposed to improve emergent literacy and readiness outcomes, in accordance with the DepEd Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) framework. The study advocates for a comprehensive approach to early education that integrates intellectual and emotional development, while improving the quality of learning spaces and pedagogical methods. These strategies seek to facilitate equitable and efficient transitions into formal education for all young learners.

KEYWORDS: *Academic Achievement, Access to Early Learning Materials, Alphabet Knowledge, Early Childhood Education Program Quality, Emergent Literacy Skills.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Understanding child development principles and the impact of early experiences on learning is crucial for ensuring all children receive the necessary education. Early childhood educators play a vital role in school readiness programs, aiming to enhance the learning, behavior, and social development of children aged 3 or 4. Research methodologies have transformed the relationship between young children and written language, leading to the redefinition of essential terms and the focus on early childhood emergent literacy. Studies show that young infants enter kindergarten with considerable knowledge of reading and writing, challenging conventional beliefs on readiness for these skills. Emergent literacy refers to the initial phases of literacy development, emphasizing that children begin to acquire reading abilities before formal education. The study of early childhood literacy is complex and requires a more profound understanding. Despite these challenges, educators continue to uphold traditional teaching methods, despite prevailing trends and advancements in academia.

Emergent literacy is the early reading and writing experiences of young children before they develop conventional literacy skills. It starts at birth and is crucial for future literacy outcomes. To promote kindergarten readiness, comprehensive strategies are needed to develop emergent literacy skills. Incorporating phonological awareness and letter recognition into early childhood curricula has shown benefits. A comprehensive literacy environment, including written materials and interactive activities, is essential, especially for children from underprivileged homes. A comprehensive plan integrating educational initiatives with nurturing family environments is essential for ensuring all children are well-equipped for formal education.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association emphasizes that children's speech and language development is crucial for literacy skills, beginning at birth and evolving through early childhood. This process, known as emergent literacy, lays the groundwork for reading and writing as children learn to express their thoughts and communicate. Curriculum studies highlight that no single educational approach is superior, viewing education as complex and dynamic. Research indicates that investing in early childhood care significantly impacts long-term educational outcomes, including reduced dropout rates and improved skills and income. Effective educational support requires understanding

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child development, individual needs, and the social and cultural contexts of children. Schools must adapt their practices to foster an environment conducive to children's growth, recognizing literacy as a complex construct that necessitates a nuanced approach to early reading development.

This research integrates Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) with Clay's Emergent Literacy Theory (2000) to explore the development of emergent reading skills in young children and their impact on kindergarten preparedness. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions and cultural experiences in learning, highlighting that children learn through collaborative discourse with knowledgeable others. A key concept is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which describes the gap between a child's current abilities and their potential with support. For instance, a child may initially recognize only the first letter of their name but, with a teacher's help, can progress to articulating words and understanding narratives. This structured learning is essential for early reading skill development, which lays the groundwork for future education, as Vygotsky argues that language is vital in shaping cognition and learning through social engagement.

Clay's Emergent Literacy Theory suggests that literacy development begins early in life and is a continuous process influenced by children's interactions with print and their environment. Key skills such as phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print awareness are developed prior to formal reading instruction through activities like pretending to read, engaging with stories, and exploring language. Clay highlights the importance of early exposure to books and storytelling in enhancing children's understanding of print and language. Additionally, when combined with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, it underscores the role of social interactions and cultural experiences in fostering emergent literacy, particularly through collaborative reading experiences between parents and children.

This study uses the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model to examine the relationship between emergent literacy skills and kindergarten readiness. It assesses phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, learning engagement, print awareness, and language skills, as well as academic and social-emotional readiness. The process part involves questionnaire development, validation, pilot testing, data collection, interpretation, and analysis. The output part presents a proposed intervention program focusing on enhancing emergent literacy skills as predictors of kindergarten readiness.

The study examined the relationship between emergent reading skills and kindergarten readiness in public elementary schools in the Rizal Division. It focused on teachers' perceptions and evaluations of these skills and the factors influencing their impact on kindergarten preparedness. The research used a descriptive correlational methodology and a custom questionnaire, focusing on general developing children. It also assessed school readiness and examined contextual factors such as teacher-child interactions, early childhood education program quality, and access to resources.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

1. What is the composite mean on the level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners prior to entering kindergarten in terms of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and language skills?
2. What is the composite mean on level of school readiness of kindergarten learners as observed by the teachers in terms of Academic readiness and Social-emotional readiness?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners prior to entering kindergarten and the level of school readiness of kindergarten learners as observed by the teachers?
4. What is the composite mean on contextual elements that may moderate the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners in terms of Teacher-child interaction, Quality of early childhood education program, and Access to early childhood education learning materials?
5. Which specific emergent literacy skills are the strongest predictors of kindergarten readiness?
6. Are there significant differences in the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners based on the contextual elements that may moderate the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners?
7. What intervention program could be developed to improve emergent literacy skills as predictors of kindergarten readiness?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Alampay and De Guzman (2023), assert that children who regularly engage in rhyme and sound-based games demonstrate superior reading outcomes in their first year of education, with a significant correlation between phonological awareness and early reading ability. Torrefranca and Ramos (2021) similarly discovered that regular phonological exercises in preschool settings enhanced learners' proficiency in segmenting and blending sounds, directly influencing their preparedness for kindergarten.

The research of Garcia and Reodica (2022), emphasized that early exposure to letter-sound correspondence and contextual print recognition significantly improves reading readiness. Lopez and Francisco (2021) noted that recognizing letters in one's name usually signifies the preliminary phase of alphabet knowledge acquisition; nonetheless, the capacity to write and distinguish letters from numbers requires direct instruction and guided practice.

Delos Santos and Javier (2022), emphasizes that early exposure to print-rich environments significantly enhances a child's understanding of print conventions and reading readiness. Fernandez and Ramos (2021) found that Filipino infants who participated in consistent print-related activities, such as collaborative reading and print referencing, demonstrated improved text tracking and symbol recognition.

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Manalili and de Leon (2023), demonstrated that kindergarten students who participated in more frequent structured dialogues and guided storytelling showed improved comprehension and expressive language abilities. Cruz and Balingit (2021) highlighted that Filipino preschool learner participating in interactive dialogues, such as play, storytelling, or regular classroom discussions, demonstrate improved vocabulary and narrative sequencing skills.

Cortez and Enriquez (2022) supports that by showing that Filipino toddlers with improved pre-literacy skills, specifically phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge, performed better on early-grade reading assessments. Moreover, Velasco and Tan (2021) highlighted that the advancement of emergent literacy skills is irregular when spoken language is not integrated into the curriculum. Their research promotes a holistic approach that integrates print, auditory components, and linguistic play in childcare and early education environments to improve all aspects of developing reading skills.

Flores and Mendoza (2023) shows that Filipino children exposed to more structured pre-kindergarten programs demonstrated higher proficiency in reading and numeracy. Santos and Domingo (2021) emphasized the importance of fine motor abilities and symbolic understanding, such as letter-sound correspondence and handwriting, in forecasting early academic success.

Alvarez and Montalban (2022), indicated that Filipino toddlers participating in social-emotional learning activities at ECCD centers exhibited increased classroom engagement and peer collaboration. Lopez and Bartolome (2021) similarly found that early intervention programs focusing on emotional literacy and self-regulation significantly improved children's adjustment to formal education. These findings align with contemporary evidence, underscoring the importance of integrating emotional and interpersonal skill development with academic preparation in early childhood education.

According to research by De Guzman and Carandang (2022), Filipino kindergarten pupils who had stronger social-emotional preparation were more likely to succeed academically and have an easier time adjusting to school routines. Reyes and Villanueva (2021) emphasized the growing recognition in Philippine ECCD policy that emotional competence and behavioral regulation are critical factors influencing academic success, proposing their integration into pre-kindergarten curricula.

Cortez and Dizon (2021), indicates that while literacy skills are important, social-emotional competencies are more critical predictors of successful adjustment in kindergarten among Filipino children. Velasco and Santos (2023) noted that early learning outcomes in rural Philippine communities were more closely linked to caregiver involvement and socio-emotional development than to early academic indicators.

Cebuano and Reyes (2023), emphasizing that communicative and emotionally responsive learning environments significantly improve children's confidence and language development in Philippine preschools. Yoon and Kwon (2022) similarly found that teacher warmth and scaffolding tactics significantly influenced the development of emergent literacy and school adjustment in early learners.

Yoshikawa et al. (2022), emphasized that the structural and process Quality of preschool environments significantly influences emergent literacy outcomes, particularly in low- to middle-income countries. Barros and Tayag (2021) found that Philippine early childhood classes utilizing balanced teaching strategies and enhanced environmental settings result in superior school readiness scores and language development.

Neuman et al. (2021), states that exposure to print-rich environments and tactile materials significantly improves vocabulary and print awareness. Domingo and Ballesteros (2022) observed that Filipino children in resource-rich early learning environments exhibited enhanced preparedness outcomes, especially in reading and language domains. Furthermore, UNESCO (2023) noted that consistent Access to books, multimedia resources, and manipulatives is strongly correlated with enhanced emergent literacy scores, particularly in developing countries where the distribution of structured early learning materials is often inequitable.

Piasta et al. (2020), revealed that teacher-child interactions have a significant influence on the transfer of reading skills in early childhood schools. Cabell et al. (2022) similarly emphasized that the Quality of early learning environments—particularly those that incorporate play, structure, and language-rich interactions—correlates with improved school readiness among diverse populations. UNICEF Philippines (2023) disclosed that students in centers with high-quality programs and sufficient resources in Southeast Asia showed significantly enhanced pre-literacy and early academic skills.

The research of Lonigan and Phillips (2021), believes that alphabet knowledge is a key early predictor of eventual reading performance. Neuman and Moland (2022) determined that print awareness and phonological sensitivity are essential for promoting reading readiness in diverse educational settings. Castro and Reyes (2023) observed that in Philippine preschools, children with early exposure to systematic letter-sound activities and language instruction demonstrated significantly higher readiness scores upon entering kindergarten.

Yoshikawa et al.'s (2021) supports that while there are several ways to teach basic literacy skills, contextual Quality—which includes supportive interactions and well-resourced environments—is crucial for improving children's readiness outcomes. Malinao and Tuazon (2023) found that in Philippine public preschool settings, children in structured classes with attentive educators had enhanced adaptive behavior and learning attitudes, despite similar emergent reading scores. Ansari and Pianta (2020) established that the Quality of classroom procedures exerts a markedly more substantial impact on socio-emotional and academic adjustment outcomes than on literacy acquisition alone.

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II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design to analyze the distribution of specific variables and examine the relationship between emergent literacy skills and kindergarten readiness as perceived by teachers (Vale, 2023). This approach allowed for the identification of individual causes of variance, although such causal explanations were complex and context-specific (Mõttus et al., 2020). Correlational research, while not establishing causation, was beneficial in situations where manipulation of variables was unethical (Sullivan, 2024). Ultimately, the design facilitated an understanding of teachers' perceptions and assessments of emergent literacy skills and their influence on kindergarten readiness.

Population and Sampling

The target population of the study consisted of kindergarten teachers in public elementary schools within the Division of Rizal. The respondents were selected using a stratified sampling technique, in which schools were grouped and respondents were randomly selected from each group.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of kindergarten teachers from the selected public elementary schools in the Division of Rizal. The respondents included two hundred sixty (260) kindergarten teachers who provided the data needed to determine the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and school readiness of the kindergarten learners they handled.

Research Instrument

The researcher created a questionnaire to assess the relationship between emergent literacy skills and kindergarten learners' school readiness. The questionnaire assessed phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, learning engagement, print awareness, and language skills. It measured academic and social-emotional readiness, and addressed contextual elements like teacher-child interaction, early childhood education program quality, and access to learning materials. A Likert scale was used to rate and interpret the data.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study involved approval from the Division Office of Rizal and school heads of selected elementary schools in Rizal province. Kindergarten teachers were selected and a validated questionnaire distributed. Data was analyzed using SPSS, and conclusions and recommendations were drawn. The study's findings led to the development of an intervention program to enhance emergent literacy skills among young learners.

Statistical Treatment

The study analyzed data on emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners, their school readiness, and contextual factors influencing their readiness. Weighted mean was used to determine phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, learning engagement, print awareness, and language skills. Pearson r was used to determine the relationship between literacy skills and school readiness. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to identify the strongest predictors of readiness, and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to identify significant differences.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher followed ethical principles in conducting a study, ensuring proper citation, citation, and referencing. They secured approval from the Superintendent of the Division of Rizal and School Heads of selected public elementary schools, ensuring clarity of information, anonymity of respondents, and confidentiality of data collected. The study aimed to protect kindergarten learners and ensure safety for all involved.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Composite Mean on the level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners prior to entering kindergarten in terms of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and language skills.

Table 1 Composite Mean on the level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners in terms of Phonological awareness, Alphabet Knowledge, Print Awareness, and Language Skills

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Phonological Awareness	3.33	0.27	Often Observed
Alphabet Knowledge	3.48	0.30	Often Observed
Print Awareness	3.23	0.30	Often Observed
Language Skills	3.11	0.33	Often Observed
LEVEL OF EMERGENT LITERACY SKILLS AMONG KINDERGARTEN LEARNERS PRIOR TO ENTERING KINDERGARTEN	**3.29**	**0.16**	**Often Observed**

Legend: 4 3.50 - 4.00 Always Observed 3 2.50 - 3.49 Often Observed
2 1.50 - 2.49 Rarely Observed 1 1.00 - 1.49 Never Observed

Table 1 shows the composite mean on the level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners in terms of Phonological awareness, Alphabet Knowledge, Print Awareness, and Language Skills.

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The study shows that kindergarten students in the Philippines have emergent literacy abilities, with a composite mean of 3.29, indicating they are still at a developmental level. Alphabet knowledge is the highest score, followed by phonological awareness, print awareness, and language skills. All domains consistently fall within the "Often Observed" range, indicating nascent literacy competencies. Although children demonstrate readiness in basic reading areas, their abilities are still at a developmental level, requiring ongoing support. The study suggests that educators and policymakers in the Philippines should enhance pre-kindergarten programs by providing enriched literacy exposure, particularly in oral language, phonemic awareness, and print concept development.

Alampay and de Guzman (2023) found that children who participate in rhyme and sound-based games show better reading outcomes in their first year of education, highlighting the link between phonological awareness and early reading skills. Similarly, Torrefranca and Ramos (2021) reported that phonological exercises in preschool enhance sound segmentation and blending, aiding kindergarten readiness. Garcia and Reodica (2022) supported these findings, noting that early exposure to letter-sound correspondence and print recognition boosts reading readiness. Additionally, Lopez and Francisco (2021) indicated that recognizing letters in one's name marks the beginning of alphabet knowledge, while writing and distinguishing letters from numbers necessitate direct

Research by Delos Santos and Javier (2022) indicates that early exposure to print-rich environments enhances children's understanding of print conventions and reading readiness. Similarly, Fernandez and Ramos (2021) found that Filipino infants engaged in print-related activities showed better text tracking and symbol recognition. Manalili and de Leon (2023) further supported these findings, revealing that kindergarten students involved in structured dialogues and guided storytelling improved their comprehension and expressive language skills. Additionally, Cruz and Balingit (2021) noted that Filipino preschoolers participating in interactive dialogues, such as play and storytelling, exhibited enhanced vocabulary and narrative sequencing abilities.

The study by Cortez and Enriquez (2022) supports the conclusion by showing that Filipino toddlers with improved pre-literacy skills, specifically phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge, performed better on early-grade reading assessments. Moreover, Velasco and Tan (2021) highlighted that the advancement of emergent literacy skills is irregular when spoken language is not integrated into the curriculum. Their research promotes a holistic approach that integrates print, auditory components, and linguistic play in childcare and early education environments to improve all aspects of developing reading skills.

Composite Mean on the level of school readiness of kindergarten learners as observed by the teachers in terms of Academic readiness and Social-emotional readiness.

Table 2 Composite Mean on the level of school readiness of kindergarten learners as observed by the teachers in terms of Academic readiness and Social-emotional readiness.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Academic Readiness	3.36	0.30	Often Observed
Social-Emotional Readiness	2.97	0.32	Often Observed
LEVEL OF SCHOOL READINESS OF KINDERGARTEN LEARNERS	**3.17**	**0.23**	**Often Observed**

Legend: 4 3.50 - 4.00 Always Observed 3 2.50 - 3.49 Often Observed
2 1.50 - 2.49 Rarely Observed 1 1.00 - 1.49 Never Observed

Table 2 shows the composite mean on the level of school readiness of kindergarten learners as observed by the teachers in terms of Academic Readiness and Socio-Emotional Stress.

Kindergarten students' school readiness level is rated as "Often Observed" with a mean score of 3.17. Academic preparedness is higher at 3.36, while social-emotional readiness is lower at 2.97. This indicates that kindergarten students typically excel in basic academic tasks, but struggle with social-emotional behaviors, indicating a disparate preparedness profile across developmental areas. A more equitable approach to early childhood education is needed, focusing on both cognitive-academic and social-emotional competencies. Students with inadequate social-emotional readiness may struggle in structured classrooms, affecting their academic achievement. Enhancing comprehensive school readiness programs, particularly in underprivileged areas, and implementing customized educator training and social-emotional learning activities can help mitigate these deficiencies.

Flores and Mendoza (2023) found that structured pre-kindergarten programs enhance reading and numeracy skills in Filipino children. Santos and Domingo (2021) highlighted the role of fine motor skills and symbolic understanding in predicting early academic success. Alvarez and Montalban (2022) reported that toddlers engaged in social-emotional learning at ECCD centers showed better classroom engagement and peer collaboration. Similarly, Lopez and Bartolome (2021) noted that early intervention programs focusing on emotional literacy and self-regulation improved children's adjustment to

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formal education. These studies collectively emphasize the need to integrate emotional and interpersonal skill development with academic preparation in early childhood education.

According to research by De Guzman and Carandang (2022), Filipino kindergarten pupils who had stronger social-emotional preparation were more likely to succeed academically and have an easier time adjusting to school routines. Reyes and Villanueva (2021) emphasized the growing recognition in Philippine ECCD policy that emotional competence and behavioral regulation are critical factors influencing academic success, proposing their integration into pre-kindergarten curricula.

Significant relationship between the level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners prior to entering kindergarten and the level of school readiness of kindergarten learners as observed by the teachers

Table 3 Correlation between the level of emergent literacy skills among the kindergarten learners prior to entering kindergarten and the level of school readiness of kindergarten learners as observed by the teachers

		Level of school readiness of kindergarten learners
Level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners prior to entering kindergarten	Pearson correlation	0.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.209
	N	150

Table 3 shows the significant relationship between the level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners prior to entering kindergarten and the level of school readiness of kindergarten learners as observed by the teachers.

The Pearson correlation coefficient shows a slight positive relationship between emergent literacy skills of kindergarten learners and their school preparedness, but the p-value is above the standard significance level of 0.05, indicating insufficient evidence to establish a meaningful association between the two variables. This suggests that the extent of one variable's direct prediction is negligible. Emergent literacy is crucial for academic achievement, but school readiness in the Philippines may be influenced by non-literacy factors like socio-emotional development, familial support, cultural expectations, and early childhood education access. A multifaceted approach is needed, addressing behavioral, emotional, and social competencies in early learners.

The research conducted by Cortez and Dizon (2021) indicates that while literacy skills are important, social-emotional competencies are more critical predictors of successful adjustment in kindergarten among Filipino children. Velasco and Santos (2023) noted that early learning outcomes in rural Philippine communities were more closely linked to caregiver involvement and socio-emotional development than to early academic indicators.

Composite Mean on the contextual elements that may moderate the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners in terms of Teacher-child interaction, Quality of early childhood education program, and Access to early childhood education learning materials.

Table 4 Composite Mean on the contextual elements that may moderate the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners in terms of Teacher-Child Interaction, Quality of early childhood education program, and Access to early childhood education learning materials.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Teacher-child interaction	3.52	0.25	Strongly Agree
Quality of early childhood education program	3.54	0.25	Strongly Agree
Access to early childhood education learning materials	3.50	0.19	Strongly Agree
Contextual elements that may moderate the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners	**3.52**	**0.16**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: 4 3.50 - 4.00 Strong Agree 3 2.50 - 3.49 Agree
2 1.50 - 2.49 Disagree 1 1.00 - 1.49 Strongly Disagree

Table 4 shows the over-all mean table on the contextual elements that may moderate the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners in terms of Teacher-Child Interaction, Quality of early childhood education program and Access to early childhood education learning materials.

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The study found that contextual factors significantly influence the relationship between emerging literacy and kindergarten preparation. Teacher-child interaction, quality of early childhood education programs, and access to learning materials received favorable evaluations, indicating that teachers recognize these factors as crucial for promoting children's literacy and readiness skills during early childhood. Strong teacher-child interactions, organized programs, and adequate resources create a conducive environment for young learners. Contextual supports translate emergent literacy development into comprehensive school readiness. Addressing inequalities in early childhood education in the Philippines can close performance gaps and improve basic learning outcomes, emphasizing the need for systematic investment in teacher training and curriculum development.

Cebuano and Reyes (2023) highlight the importance of communicative and emotionally responsive learning environments in enhancing children's confidence and language development in Philippine preschools. Similarly, Yoon and Kwon (2022) found that teacher warmth and scaffolding significantly impact emergent literacy and school adjustment in early learners. Yoshikawa et al. (2022) support these findings, emphasizing that the quality of preschool environments affects literacy outcomes, especially in low- to middle-income countries. Barros and Tayag (2021) reported that balanced teaching strategies and improved environmental settings in Philippine early childhood classes lead to better school readiness and language development. Neuman et al. (2021) noted that print-rich environments and tactile materials enhance vocabulary and print awareness. Domingo and Ballesteros (2022) observed that Filipino children in resource-rich environments showed better preparedness in reading and language. Additionally, UNESCO (2023) indicated that access to books and multimedia resources correlates with improved emergent literacy scores in developing countries where the distribution of structured early learning materials is often inequitable.

The findings are supported by the research of Piasta et al. (2020), which revealed that teacher-child interactions have a significant influence on the transfer of reading skills in early childhood schools. Cabell et al. (2022) similarly emphasized that the Quality of early learning environments—particularly those that incorporate play, structure, and language-rich interactions—correlates with improved school readiness among diverse populations. UNICEF Philippines (2023) disclosed that students in centers with high-quality programs and sufficient resources in Southeast Asia showed significantly enhanced pre-literacy and early academic skills.

Specific emergent literacy skills are the strongest predictors of kindergarten readiness

Table 5 Specific emergent literacy skills are the strongest predictors of kindergarten readiness

Source		F	Sig.	Decision	Remarks
Level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners before entering kindergarten	Phonological awareness	1.74	0.01	Reject	Significant
	Alphabet knowledge	3.32	0.00	Reject	Significant
	Print awareness	3.23	0.00	Reject	Significant
	Language skills	3.05	0.00	Reject	Significant

Table 5 shows the specific emergent literacy skills are the strongest predictors of kindergarten readiness.

The study found that four literacy skill domains - Phonological Awareness, Alphabet Knowledge, Print Awareness, and Language Skills - are significant predictors of kindergarten readiness. Alphabet Knowledge was the most reliable predictor, followed by Print Awareness and Language Skills. Phonological Awareness had a lower predictive capacity compared to the other domains. To prepare young children for kindergarten, it's crucial to enhance key emergent literacy elements like alphabet knowledge and print awareness. Early childhood programs should focus on letter recognition, sound-letter correspondence, and environmental print exploration. Customized interventions can help mitigate school readiness disparities, especially in resource-constrained or marginalized environments.

Its excellent predictive validity is confirmed by the research of Lonigan and Phillips (2021), which emphasizes that alphabet knowledge is a key early predictor of eventual reading performance. Neuman and Moland (2022) determined that print awareness and phonological sensitivity are essential for promoting reading readiness in diverse educational settings. Castro and Reyes (2023) observed that in Philippine preschools, children with early exposure to systematic letter-sound activities and language instruction demonstrated significantly higher readiness scores upon entering kindergarten.

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Significant differences in the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners based on the contextual elements that may moderate the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners.

Table 6 Test of significant differences in the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners based on the contextual elements that may moderate the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners

		F	Sig.	Decision	Remarks
Level of emergent literacy skills among kindergarten learners before entering kindergarten	Between Groups	0.922	0.567	Accept	Not Significant
Level of school readiness of kindergarten learners	Between Groups	2.278	0.002	Reject	Significant

Table 6 presents the significant differences in the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners based on the contextual elements that may moderate the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and readiness of kindergarten learners.

The study found no significant difference in emergent literacy levels based on contextual factors, with mixed results on teacher-child interaction, program quality, and material accessibility, indicating no significant impact on school readiness. The study suggests that children's preparedness for school is influenced by environmental and programmatic elements, such as emotionally supportive teacher interactions, organized routines, and varied learning resources. It emphasizes the need for investment in learning environments and high-quality teaching, rather than solely on reading instruction, for policymakers and early childhood educators in the Philippines.

Yoshikawa et al.'s research from 2021 supports the conclusion that while there are several ways to teach basic literacy skills, contextual Quality—which includes supportive interactions and well-resourced environments—is crucial for improving children's readiness outcomes. Malinao and Tuazon (2023) found that in Philippine public preschool settings, children in structured classes with attentive educators had enhanced adaptive behavior and learning attitudes, despite similar emergent reading scores. Ansari and Pianta (2020) established that the Quality of classroom procedures exerts a markedly more substantial impact on socio-emotional and academic adjustment outcomes than on literacy acquisition alone.

Intervention program to improve emergent literacy skills as predictors of kindergarten readiness.

Rationale

This intervention responds to findings showing that **Alphabet Knowledge, Print Awareness, and Language Skills** are key predictors of school readiness and that **contextual factors significantly influence readiness but not emergent literacy alone**. The plan is aligned with the **DepEd Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) framework (2015)**, which emphasizes developmentally appropriate practices, responsive learning environments, and stakeholder collaboration.

"Enhancing Kindergarten Readiness through Emergent Literacy and Contextual Support"

Objectives	Strategies / Activities	Persons Involved	Expected Output	Estimated Cost (PHP)
1. Strengthen **Alphabet Knowledge**, the strongest predictor of readiness	Develop letter-sound integration activities using multisensory materials	Kindergarten Teachers, Learning Resource Coordinators	Improved alphabet recognition and phonemic awareness	2,000
2. Reinforce **Print Awareness** and **Language Skills**	Conduct storytelling and shared reading sessions with tracking and expressive language prompts	Teachers, Librarians, School Heads	Children demonstrate better sentence construction, book handling, and comprehension	1,000
3. Improve **Phonological Awareness** among learners	Integrate games and activities like rhyming, clapping syllables, and sound blending in daily routines	Teachers, SPED Coordinators	Increased phonological processing in classroom activities	5,000
4. Enhance **Teacher-Child Interaction** quality	Training on responsive interaction, feedback, and scaffolding techniques	Teachers, Division Trainers, Principals	Warmer, more effective engagement with children	1,000

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5. Upgrade **Program Quality** in classrooms	Curriculum review, balance academic and play-based learning, enhance daily schedules	Curriculum Planners, School Heads	Optimized daily routines and activities aligned with early learning standards	1,000
6. Improve **Access to Learning Materials**	Provide literacy kits (books, alphabet cards, manipulatives) and home learning kits for parents	School Heads, LGU, PTA	More exposure to print, phonics, and vocabulary-rich resources	3,000
7. Increase **Parental Involvement** in readiness support	Conduct literacy at home orientation and distribute home reading logs	Teachers, Parents, Guidance Counselors	Improved home-school collaboration on emergent literacy development	1,000
8. Monitor and evaluate intervention impact on readiness	Use checklist-based assessments, pre/posttests, classroom observations	School Head, District Supervisor, M&E Team	Data-driven improvements to the school readiness program	1,000
9. Provide technical assistance and mentoring to low-performing teachers	Regular peer mentoring and class demonstration schedules	Master Teachers, EPS in Early Childhood Education (ECE)	Increased teacher confidence in literacy instruction	1,000
Contingency (5%)	For unforeseen needs or supplemental materials	-	Smooth implementation of all activities	1,750
Total Estimated Budget				**PHP 17 750**

IV. CONCLUSION

Kindergarten learners typically have early literacy skills, but their social-emotional preparedness is underdeveloped. Teachers find no correlation between early literacy skills and school readiness. Contextual factors like positive teacher-child interactions, high-quality early education programs, and access to resources are critical for literacy development. Emergent literacy skills like phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and language skills are strongest predictors of kindergarten readiness. The proposed intervention program aims to address key areas influencing kindergarten preparedness, including letter knowledge, print awareness, and language proficiency, while acknowledging the influence of classroom atmosphere and teacher assistance.

The study emphasizes the need for improved early literacy programs, focusing on children's language and communication skills to ensure balanced school readiness. It emphasizes the importance of promoting both academic and social-emotional development in early childhood programs. The study also emphasizes the need for comprehensive school readiness, encompassing emergent literacy, social, emotional, and contextual factors. It emphasizes the importance of teacher-child interaction, program quality, and learning materials. It also emphasizes the importance of strengthening fundamental literacy skills, such as alphabet knowledge and print awareness, for kindergarten academic challenges. The intervention promotes a comprehensive approach to child development.

The study recommends focusing on children's language and communication abilities in early literacy efforts to ensure school readiness. A balanced approach involving academic and social-emotional growth is crucial for holistic kindergarten readiness. Effective school readiness programs should integrate cognitive, emotional, social, and environmental components. Improving teacher engagement and access to resources is crucial for closing early learning gaps. Core literacy foundations like alphabet knowledge and print awareness equip young learners for academic success. Investing in quality early learning settings and teacher capacity is more effective than literacy skills alone.

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