Profiles and Factors Associated with Emerging Reading Proficiency Among Key Stage 1 Learners in Schools of Borongan 1 District, Borongan City Division: Basis for a Proposed Early Literacy Framework

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative descriptive-correlational study examined learner, home, and teacher factors associated with emerging reading proficiency among Key Stage 1 learners in Borongan 1 District. The study involved 100 learners and 20 literacy teachers. Learner reading performance was assessed using the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment and selected Early Grade Reading Assessment subtasks covering phonological awareness, letter-sound identification, familiar-word recognition, and basic paragraph comprehension. Learners' overall reading proficiency was at the emerging level ($M = 66.04$, $SD = 15.29$), with basic paragraph comprehension obtaining the lowest mean ($M = 58.73$, $SD = 17.18$). Significant omnibus differences were reported according to age, grade level, maternal educational attainment, household income, and availability of reading materials, but not according to sex. At the teacher level ($n = 20$), specialized literacy training was positively associated with mean learner reading proficiency ($\rho = .512$, $p = .021$), whereas teaching experience and highest educational attainment were not significantly associated with proficiency. Home-related variables were also reported as significantly associated with reading proficiency, with availability of reading materials showing the strongest coefficient ($r = .548$). Because the manuscript did not contain a complete multiple-regression output, predictive claims were removed and the findings were interpreted as group differences and associations rather than independent predictive effects. The results informed a proposed, research-derived early literacy framework emphasizing early identification, explicit foundational-skills instruction, differentiated intervention, home-school partnership, teacher development, and continuous progress monitoring. The framework requires expert content validation and implementation testing before it can be presented as an established model.

Keywords: Emerging readers, Key Stage 1, early literacy, home literacy environment, teacher training, Borongan City Division

INTRODUCTION

Foundational literacy during Key Stage 1, from kindergarten to Grade 3, plays an important role in children's later learning. During these early years, learners begin to connect spoken language with print, recognize letters and sounds, read words with increasing accuracy, and understand the meaning of what they read. Reading is therefore more than the ability to pronounce written words. It develops gradually through language exposure, classroom instruction, practice, and meaningful interaction with texts. The World Bank (2022) emphasized that the ability to read and understand an age-appropriate text by around age 10 is an important indicator of

foundational learning because children who struggle with reading may also experience difficulty learning in other subject areas.

In the Philippines, reading proficiency continues to be a major concern. Results of the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment showed that Filipino learners performed below the OECD average in reading, mathematics, and science. Reading performance also showed no significant improvement compared with the country's results in 2018 (OECD, 2023). A 2024 review by the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department reported that the Philippines ranked 77th among 81 participating education systems in PISA 2022 and remained well below the OECD average (Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department [CPBRD], 2024). These results point to the importance of addressing reading difficulties as early as possible, before learning gaps become more difficult to overcome.

Recent evidence suggests that the challenge is particularly serious in the early grades. National literacy assessments examined by the Second Congressional Commission on Education showed that many Filipino learners still performed below expected reading levels, although improvements were observed during School Year 2025-2026. For Grades 1 to 3, the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment was used to identify learners' reading levels and monitor their progress (Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2026). The findings highlight the importance of identifying emerging readers early and providing appropriate intervention while foundational reading skills are still developing.

The Department of Education has introduced several initiatives to respond to these continuing literacy concerns. One of these was the Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs) Initiative under DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019, which encouraged schools to strengthen reading programs and provide appropriate interventions for struggling readers. More recently, the MATATAG curriculum placed renewed attention on foundational literacy and the development of learners' ability to communicate, understand, interpret, and construct meaning through language. The curriculum also recognizes learners' first language as an important resource in establishing a strong foundation for literacy development (Department of Education [DepEd], 2023).

These changes are especially relevant to Borongan 1 District, where schools serve learners from different social, economic, and geographical backgrounds. Learners do not necessarily have the same opportunities to practice reading outside the classroom. Some may have regular access to books and other reading materials at home, while others may have limited resources. Parents also differ in educational background and in the amount of time or support they can provide for home reading activities. Recent Philippine evidence has likewise pointed to the availability of reading materials, teacher preparation, and family and community involvement as important concerns in improving children's reading development.

Teachers in the district use different approaches to support beginning readers, including the Marungko Approach and other strategies for developing phonological awareness, letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, vocabulary, and comprehension. However, instructional approaches are more useful when they are supported by reliable assessment information. Knowing where a learner is experiencing difficulty allows the teacher to provide support that is more closely matched to the learner's actual needs. The MATATAG Reading and Literacy Curriculum similarly places importance on developing a strong literacy foundation that enables learners to understand and create meaning from language and texts (DepEd, 2023).

Despite the availability of reading assessments and intervention programs, there remains a need for local evidence explaining why some Key Stage 1 learners continue to experience difficulty in reading. In particular, limited information is available on how learner characteristics, household conditions, access to reading materials, and teachers' professional preparation are associated with the reading proficiency of emerging readers in Borongan 1 District. Understanding these relationships is important because reading difficulties do not develop within the classroom alone. Learners' experiences at home, access to resources, and the instructional support they receive may work together in shaping their literacy development.

This need for local evidence is also consistent with current national efforts to strengthen foundational learning. EDCOM II has emphasized the importance of investing in early childhood and primary education and improving learning outcomes by Grade 3 as a foundation for later learning and skill development. Rather than

relying on a single reading intervention for all learners, schools need evidence that can help identify which factors are most closely associated with reading difficulty and what forms of support are most appropriate for their particular context.

Against this background, the present study examined the profiles and factors associated with emerging reading proficiency among Key Stage 1 learners in Borongan 1 District, Borongan City Division. Specifically, it considered learner characteristics, socio-environmental conditions, home literacy resources, teacher profiles, and learners' performance across important foundational reading skills. The findings were intended to provide a clearer understanding of the factors associated with emerging reading proficiency and to serve as the basis for crafting an evidence-based Early Literacy Framework appropriate to the needs of learners and schools in Borongan 1 District.

Objectives

This study aimed to describe the profiles of Key Stage 1 learners and examine learner, home, and teacher factors associated with reading proficiency among Key Stage 1 learners in the public elementary schools of Borongan 1 District, Borongan City Division. The findings served as the empirical basis for a proposed early literacy framework.

1. Describe the profile of Key Stage 1 learners in terms of: Age; Sex; and Grade level.
2. Ascertain the socio-environmental profile of the learners' home environment in terms of: Maternal educational attainment; Household monthly income; and Availability of children's reading materials at home.
3. Determine the professional profile of Key Stage 1 literacy teachers in terms of: Years of early grade teaching experience; Highest educational attainment; and Number of specialized early literacy training programs attended.
1. 4Evaluate the reading status and proficiency level of Key Stage 1 learners across foundational literacy domains, specifically: Phonological awareness; Letter-sound identification; Familiar-word recognition; and Basic paragraph comprehension
4. Determine if a significant difference exists in the emerging reading proficiency of Key Stage 1 learners when grouped according to their learner profile.
5. Examine the relationships between emerging reading proficiency and selected learner, socio-environmental, and teacher-profile variables, using the appropriate unit of analysis for each test.
6. Develop and operationalize a proposed early literacy framework based on the empirical findings of the study, subject to expert validation and implementation testing.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design. The descriptive component summarized learner, home, and teacher profiles and learners' performance in phonological awareness, letter-sound identification, familiar-word recognition, and basic paragraph comprehension. The analytical component examined group differences and bivariate associations between selected profile variables and reading proficiency. No variable was manipulated, and the analyses did not establish causation. Although an earlier version described the study as predictive, a complete multiple-regression output was not available in the manuscript. Accordingly, predictive terminology was removed, and the results were limited to statistically supported differences and associations.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the public elementary schools of Borongan 1 District, Schools Division of Borongan City. The district included schools serving learners from varied geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, providing an appropriate setting for examining learner, home, and teacher factors associated with emerging reading proficiency.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of 100 Key Stage 1 learners from Kindergarten to Grade 3 and 20 literacy teachers from participating public elementary schools in Borongan 1 District. Learners provided individual reading-proficiency data. Each learner was linked, through an anonymized teacher code, to the literacy teacher primarily responsible for the learner's reading instruction. Learner- and home-level analyses used the learner as the unit of analysis (maximum n = 100, subject to complete data). Teacher-profile analyses used the teacher as the unit of analysis (n = 20): learner reading scores were aggregated by teacher, and each teacher's mean learner reading-proficiency score was associated with that teacher's professional profile. This aggregation prevented the same teacher profile from being treated as 100 independent teacher observations.

Sampling Procedure

The study used stratified random sampling to ensure representation of learners from the different school contexts and grade levels in Borongan 1 District. Eligible learners were grouped according to the sampling strata identified in the study, after which respondents were randomly selected from the official school records. The sample size was determined using the finite-population adjustment: $n = n_0 / [1 + (n_0 - 1)/N]$ where n represented the adjusted sample size, n_0 represented the initial sample-size estimate, and N represented the total population.

Research Instrument

Three instruments were used to gather the data required in the study. Socio-Environmental and Professional Profile Questionnaire A structured questionnaire was used to obtain information on learner and home characteristics, including maternal educational attainment, household monthly income, and availability of children's reading materials at home. The teacher component gathered information on teaching experience, educational attainment, and participation in specialized early literacy training. Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment The Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) was used to determine learners' reading status and identify those who required additional literacy support. The assessment provided information that helped describe the reading needs of the Key Stage 1 learners. Early Grade Reading Assessment Selected Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tasks were used to obtain more specific measures of foundational reading proficiency. The assessment covered phonological awareness, letter-sound identification, familiar-word recognition, and basic paragraph comprehension. Scores from these domains were used to describe and analyze emerging reading proficiency. The research instruments were subjected to appropriate validation procedures before their use. The profile questionnaire was reviewed for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the objectives of the study, while the standardized literacy assessments were administered according to their prescribed procedures. The combined instrument obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was carried out after securing permission from the appropriate education and school authorities. Coordination was undertaken with the district supervisor and school heads before the conduct of the study. Parents or guardians were informed about the study and appropriate consent procedures were completed. Learner assent was also obtained before assessment. The profile questionnaire was administered to obtain the required learner, home, and teacher information. The CRLA and selected EGRA tasks were then administered under appropriate testing conditions. Completed instruments were checked for completeness, organized, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis. Personally identifying information was removed or replaced with codes to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

Analysis of Data

The data were checked for completeness, coded, and analyzed at the level appropriate to each research question. Frequencies and percentages described categorical profiles, while means and standard deviations summarized reading scores. An independent-samples t test compared reading proficiency by sex. One-way analyses of variance compared proficiency across age, grade level, maternal educational attainment, household

income, and availability of reading materials. For significant omnibus tests, effect sizes were estimated using eta squared (η^2 = SSbetween/SStotal; equivalently, η^2 = df_between × F / (df_between × F + df_within) when only F and degrees of freedom were available). Pairwise post-hoc conclusions were not stated because the manuscript did not include the required group means, mean differences, confidence intervals, or raw statistical output. These comparisons must be added from the verified dataset before submission. Pearson's r was used only for variables treated as continuous and meeting its assumptions. Ordered profile categories were to be analyzed using Spearman's rank-order correlation unless a defensible interval coding and assumption checks supported Pearson correlation. Learner/home correlations used learner-level cases; teacher-profile correlations used 20 teacher-level cases based on the mean proficiency of learners assigned to each teacher. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$, and exact analytic n was required for every inferential test. Multiple linear regression was not reported because a complete verified regression model, including model fit, coefficients, diagnostics, and case count, was not available.

Limitations

The study was limited to 100 Key Stage 1 learners and 20 literacy teachers in public elementary schools of Borongan 1 District. Learner- and home-level findings were based on learner observations, whereas teacher-level findings were based on only 20 aggregated teacher cases and therefore had limited statistical power and generalizability. The cross-sectional, nonexperimental design supported interpretations of differences and associations but not causation. Teacher-linked learner observations were clustered within teachers; aggregation reduced pseudoreplication in the teacher-level correlations but did not replace a multilevel analysis. Some profile measures were categorical or ordinal, which required nonparametric treatment or explicit justification when represented numerically. In addition, the absence of verified post-hoc output and a complete multiple-regression model limited the conclusions that could be drawn from the reported omnibus and bivariate analyses. The proposed framework was research-derived but had not yet undergone formal expert validation or field-effectiveness testing.

Research Ethical Considerations

The study observed established ethical standards throughout the research process. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate education authorities and participating schools. Informed consent from parents or guardians and assent from the Key Stage 1 learners were obtained before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning codes instead of using respondents' names in the database and statistical analysis. Reading assessment results and personal information were handled securely and used solely for research purposes. The findings were reported in aggregate form to protect the identity of individual learners, teachers, and participating schools. Because the learner respondents were minors, particular care was taken to protect their welfare, privacy, and dignity during the administration of the CRLA, EGRA, questionnaires, and other research procedures.

RESULTS

This section outlines the key findings of the study, which were obtained through meticulous analysis of the data collected from the respondents. The following sections present the results and discussion in relation to the defined research questions, organized thematically according to research variables.

Profile of Key Stage 1 Learners According to Age

Table 1 presented the age profile of the 100 Key Stage 1 learners. The largest group consisted of 28 learners who were 7 years old, representing 28.0% of the sample. This was followed by 24 learners or 24.0% who were 6 years old, 23 learners or 23.0% who were 8 years old, 13 learners or 13.0% who were 9 years old, and 12 learners or 12.0% who were 5 years old. Thus, more than half of the respondents were 6 or 7 years old, while the remaining learners were distributed across the younger and older age groups.

The distribution showed that emerging readers were present across the different ages represented in Key Stage 1. In particular, the presence of 8- and 9-year-old emerging readers suggested that difficulties in foundational reading were not limited to learners who were just beginning formal schooling. This finding underscored the importance of identifying reading difficulties as early as possible and providing continued support when these difficulties persisted. The global learning poverty report emphasized that children who had not developed the ability to read and understand a simple text by around age 10 were at greater risk of experiencing difficulties in subsequent learning because literacy serves as a foundation for learning across subject areas (World Bank et al., 2022). Similarly, EDCOM II (2025) identified foundational literacy as a major concern in Philippine basic education and emphasized the need to strengthen early learning and address gaps before they became more difficult to overcome.

Age	**f**	**%**
5 years old	12	12.0
6 years old	24	24.0
7 years old	28	28.0
8 years old	23	23.0
9 years old	13	13.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Table 1. Profile of Key Stage 1 Learners According to Age

The variation in age also indicated that the learners may have differed in their exposure to formal reading instruction, classroom activities, and opportunities to engage with print. However, age alone should not be treated as an indication of a learner's reading ability. Learners of similar ages may demonstrate different levels of proficiency in phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondence, decoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. Recent Philippine studies have shown that structured and targeted reading interventions can improve the foundational literacy skills of Key Stage 1 learners, particularly when instruction is responsive to identified areas of difficulty (Lorenzo & Magulod, 2025; Basañez et al., 2026). These findings reinforced the importance of assessing the actual reading skills of individual learners rather than assuming that children of the same age possess similar levels of reading proficiency.

From a classroom perspective, the findings suggested that reading intervention should be based primarily on learners' identified needs rather than chronological age. For instance, two learners who were both 7 years old may not require the same type or intensity of intervention. One learner may need additional support in letter-sound correspondence and decoding, while another may require greater assistance with reading fluency or comprehension. Recent intervention research involving Key Stage 1 learners has supported systematic and developmentally appropriate approaches that provide targeted instruction according to learners' specific literacy difficulties (Lorenzo & Magulod, 2025; Basañez et al., 2026). This approach allows teachers to organize flexible groups, adjust instructional pacing, monitor learners' progress, and provide appropriate reading activities based on demonstrated needs.

Overall, Table 1 revealed a developmentally varied group of emerging readers across the 5- to 9-year-old age range. The findings supported a reading intervention system that begins with early identification but continues throughout Key Stage 1 for learners who require additional support. This direction was consistent with recent national and international efforts to strengthen foundational literacy and address learning gaps during the early years of education (World Bank et al., 2022; EDCOM II, 2025). More importantly, the findings suggested that age should be treated as a descriptive characteristic rather than the sole basis for determining reading

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intervention. Diagnostic and progress-monitoring results should guide the type, intensity, and duration of reading support provided to each learner.

Profile of Key Stage 1 Learners According to Sex

Table 2 showed the distribution of the 100 Key Stage 1 learners according to sex. Of the respondents, 53 or 53.0% were male, while 47 or 47.0% were female. The difference of only six percentage points indicated that male and female learners were nearly equally represented in the study. This relatively balanced distribution provided a reasonable basis for examining whether reading proficiency differed according to sex, as neither group substantially dominated the sample.

The distribution was particularly relevant because recent evidence has shown that differences in reading achievement between male and female learners may occur during the primary grades. Results from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021 showed that fourth-grade girls had higher average reading achievement than boys in almost all participating countries, with an average advantage of 16 points across the 43 countries assessed at the end of Grade 4. However, the size of the difference varied across countries, and some education systems showed little or no significant difference between boys and girls (Mullis et al., 2023). This variation suggests that sex may be associated with reading performance but should not be regarded as a direct or sole explanation of a learner's reading ability.

Recent studies further indicate that differences in reading outcomes may be associated with learners' engagement, attitudes, learning strategies, and reading experiences. Leng and von Davier (2025), using PIRLS 2021 data from Finland, Germany, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates, found that girls generally demonstrated higher reading achievement, but the achievement gap was substantially reduced among learners who displayed engaged test-taking behavior. Similarly, Qin, Zhou, and Wang (2024) found relationships between learning strategies and reading achievement among primary school learners and reported that some of these relationships differed according to gender. These findings indicate that observed differences between male and female learners need to be understood alongside the learning behaviors and experiences that contribute to reading development.

Sex	**f**	**%**
Male	53	53.0
Female	47	47.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Table 2. Profile of Key Stage 1 Learners According to Sex

Reading motivation and engagement are also relevant when interpreting sex-related patterns in reading. A recent UNESCO brief based on PIRLS 2016 and 2021 data reported that fourth-grade girls generally showed greater enjoyment of reading, stronger reading confidence, and more frequent reading outside school than boys. The report also found positive relationships between reading enjoyment, confidence, and reading achievement, while cautioning that the direction of these relationships could not necessarily be established (Eck et al., 2024). This evidence supports the view that differences in reading proficiency should not be attributed to sex alone. Instead, reading motivation, opportunities to engage with texts, family reading practices, classroom experiences, and learners' individual literacy needs should also be considered.

The finding also has relevance to the Philippine educational setting. A recent study involving public primary teachers in Northern Mindanao emphasized the importance of addressing gender disparities in reading through inclusive classroom practices, supportive learning environments, appropriate instructional materials, and attention to socioeconomic and contextual barriers (Gaviola et al., 2024). Although this evidence should not be interpreted as establishing that Filipino boys or girls are inherently stronger readers, it reinforces the

importance of ensuring that reading instruction provides equitable opportunities for all learners and avoids gender-based expectations or stereotypes.

From an instructional perspective, therefore, the nearly balanced distribution of male and female emerging readers reinforced the need for inclusive and assessment-based reading intervention. Teachers should determine learners' specific strengths and difficulties through their actual reading performance rather than assuming that one sex is naturally more capable in reading. For example, learners may differ in decoding, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension regardless of whether they are male or female. Recent research among primary school learners has shown that reading achievement is associated with learning strategies and that these relationships may vary between boys and girls (Qin et al., 2024). Consequently, instructional grouping, intervention activities, pacing, and progress monitoring should primarily respond to identified literacy needs.

Overall, Table 2 established that the respondents were reasonably balanced according to sex, providing an appropriate basis for the subsequent statistical comparison of reading proficiency between male and female learners. Although recent international evidence has documented sex-related differences in reading achievement, the magnitude of these differences varies across contexts and may be associated with reading engagement, motivation, learning strategies, and other educational experiences (Mullis et al., 2023; Leng & von Davier, 2025; Eck et al., 2024). Therefore, sex was appropriately treated in the present study as a profile and comparative variable rather than as an inherent explanation of reading proficiency. Reading interventions should remain inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the assessed needs of each emerging reader.

Profile of Key Stage 1 Learners According to Grade Level

Table 3 presented the grade-level profile of the 100 Key Stage 1 learners. Grade 1 had the largest number of respondents, with 30 learners or 30.0%, followed closely by Grade 2 with 29 learners or 29.0%. Grade 3 accounted for 26 learners or 26.0%, while Kindergarten had 15 learners or 15.0%. Thus, the sample included learners from all grade levels covered by the study, although Kindergarten had the smallest representation. The distribution provided a useful basis for examining whether reading proficiency varied according to grade level and whether emerging reading needs continued as learners progressed through the early grades.

The presence of emerging readers from Kindergarten through Grade 3 indicated that foundational literacy difficulties were not confined to the beginning of formal reading instruction. Some learners may continue to experience difficulties with foundational skills even after progressing to succeeding grade levels. Recent Philippine research supports the need for sustained early-grade intervention. Duque and Fortes (2023) found varying levels of phonological and phonemic awareness among Filipino primary learners, with more than half demonstrating deficiencies in phonological awareness, highlighting the need for targeted reading instruction and intervention. Likewise, Mejala (2024) reported that early language and reading interventions among Grade 1 pupils were positively associated with word recognition, reading speed, and reading comprehension, emphasizing the importance of strengthening foundational literacy during the beginning grades.

Grade level was particularly relevant because learners encountered increasingly complex reading expectations as they moved through the early grades. Foundational competencies developed during the beginning stages of literacy instruction serve as building blocks for more advanced word reading, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In the Philippine context, Abejuela et al. (2023) found that reading competencies in basic education are organized and developed across year levels, while also identifying concerns regarding alignment among the written, implemented, and assessed reading curriculum. These findings suggest that simply progressing to a higher grade level does not necessarily mean that all learners have fully mastered the literacy competencies expected in earlier grades. Consequently, both grade-level expectations and learners' demonstrated reading abilities need to be considered when providing intervention.

The need for intervention across grade levels is further supported by recent Philippine evidence involving Grades 1 to 3. Bete (2025) examined the National Reading Program among Grade 1 to Grade 3 learners and found statistically significant improvements in reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary following structured and daily interventions. Similarly, Factor (2025) reported improvements among struggling readers

in Grades 1, 2, and 3 after participation in structured literacy interventions, while emphasizing the importance of regular monitoring, stakeholder involvement, and personalized reading materials. These findings are particularly relevant to the present study because they show that reading intervention should not be concentrated only in Grade 1 but should continue across the succeeding primary grades when learners remain below expected reading levels.

Grade level	**f**	**%**
Kindergarten	15	15.0
Grade 1	30	30.0
Grade 2	29	29.0
Grade 3	26	26.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Table 3. Profile of Key Stage 1 Learners According to Grade Level

Continuous assessment was therefore essential in determining how reading instruction and intervention should respond to learners at different grade levels. Current Department of Education resources provide grade-specific Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment materials for Grades 1, 2, and 3, indicating that literacy development is monitored across multiple grade levels rather than through a single assessment at the beginning of schooling. The Department of Education also provides reading instruction and intervention materials for Key Stage 1, including grade-specific resources for beginning readers. These practices reinforce the importance of using assessment information to determine the reading competencies learners have mastered and those that continue to require intervention.

The finding is especially relevant to the setting of the present study because Department of Education Regional Office VIII implemented the Key Stage 1 Foundation for Effective Learning Transitions (K–3 FELT) Project from School Year 2023–2024 to School Year 2025–2026. The initiative included a Kindergarten Learning Program and a Learning Recovery Program for Grades 1 to 3 specifically intended to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy and address learning gaps across the early grades. This regional initiative provides strong contextual support for the present finding because it recognizes that foundational learning requires systematic attention throughout Kindergarten to Grade 3 rather than intervention within only one grade level.

From an instructional perspective, intervention should therefore be responsive to both grade-level expectations and each learner's actual reading skills. Kindergarten and beginning Grade 1 learners may require intensive development of oral language, phonological awareness, print concepts, letter knowledge, and letter-sound correspondence. Learners in Grades 2 and 3 who remain emerging readers may still require reinforcement of these foundational competencies while receiving increasing support in decoding, automatic word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Recent Philippine intervention studies support this differentiated approach. A 2026 study of Grade 1 learners receiving structured reading recovery found substantial improvement in foundational literacy, particularly in decoding, blending and segmenting, phonological awareness, and letter-sound correspondence, while some learners continued to require intervention in fluency, automatic word recognition, and comprehension. Similarly, a phonics-based intervention among Key Stage 1 learners produced significant improvements in letter-sound recognition, word decoding, oral reading fluency, and comprehension, while indicating the need for continued comprehension-focused instruction.

These findings further support the use of flexible rather than strictly grade-based instructional grouping. Learners within the same grade may demonstrate different reading profiles and therefore require different amounts and types of support. Tortola (2024) emphasized early intervention, parental engagement, and individualized or multi-tiered support in addressing reading difficulties among learners in Philippine public

elementary schools. More recent Philippine research also found that sustained, assessment-informed reading intervention and systematic instructional support could strengthen foundational reading skills, although learners who remained below expected benchmarks required continued intervention. Thus, instructional placement should not depend solely on the learner's grade but should also consider diagnosed literacy needs and evidence of progress.

Overall, Table 3 showed that emerging reading needs were present throughout Kindergarten to Grade 3, supporting a comprehensive literacy framework that extends across the entire early-grade continuum. Recent Philippine evidence shows that structured interventions can improve reading outcomes among Grade 1 to Grade 3 and Key Stage 1 learners, particularly when instruction is targeted, regularly monitored, and responsive to identified literacy difficulties (Bete, 2025; Factor, 2025). Therefore, grade level should be considered alongside learners' actual reading proficiency when determining the nature and intensity of intervention. Continuous assessment, flexible grouping, differentiated instruction, and sustained progress monitoring would allow teachers to support learners who are progressing appropriately while providing more intensive assistance to those whose foundational reading difficulties persist.

Socio-Environmental Profile According to Maternal Educational Attainment

Table 4 described the maternal educational attainment of the 100 Key Stage 1 learners. The largest group consisted of 39 mothers or 39.0% who had reached or completed junior or senior high school. This was followed by 34 or 34.0% who had attended or completed college, 18 or 18.0% who had reached or completed elementary school, and nine or 9.0% who had postgraduate education. Overall, 73.0% of the mothers had reached at least the secondary or college level, indicating considerable variation in the educational backgrounds of the learners' mothers. This profile was relevant because parental educational attainment may be associated with differences in the types of educational support and literacy experiences available to children at home.

Maternal education may contribute to children's literacy development through opportunities for language interaction, assistance with schoolwork, encouragement to read, and access to literacy materials. However, educational attainment should be regarded as a contextual factor rather than a direct determinant of a child's reading ability. Recent Philippine evidence supports the importance of what families actually do to promote literacy at home. Tan and Macaraeg (2024), in their study of Grade 1 pupils, found that parental guidance and access to reading materials were associated with children's phonemic awareness and decoding skills, emphasizing the importance of shared reading and a supportive home literacy environment. Similarly, Hernandez and Decena (2024) found that parental engagement in reading activities, access to print materials, and regular communication between parents and teachers were associated with stronger reading outcomes among elementary school learners.

The variation in mothers' educational attainment therefore should not be interpreted to mean that mothers with lower levels of formal education were less capable of supporting their children's literacy development. Rather, families may differ in their familiarity with school-based reading strategies, confidence in assisting with academic activities, access to appropriate materials, and opportunities to participate in children's learning. A Philippine study among Kindergarten parents found that parental educational attainment was not significantly related to parental involvement in the literacy dimensions examined, suggesting that formal education alone did not determine parents' participation in their children's early learning (Angligen, 2023). This finding is important to the present study because it supports a more balanced interpretation of maternal education and avoids assuming that lower educational attainment automatically results in weaker home literacy support.

Recent Philippine evidence further emphasized the importance of specific home literacy practices. Labareno and Gabuya (2025), in a study of Grade 1 pupils in Samar, found a significant relationship between family literacy support and learners' reading achievement as measured through the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment. Their study included practices such as reading aloud, storytelling, assisting with reading assignments, practicing letter and sound recognition, providing access to printed materials, and using educational media. This evidence is particularly relevant to the present study because it shows that practical

family literacy activities can contribute to early reading development and provides a geographically relevant perspective from Samar.

Maternal educational attainment	**f**	**%**
Elementary level/graduate	18	18.0
Junior/Senior High School	39	39.0
College level/graduate	34	34.0
Postgraduate	9	9.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Table 4. Socio-Environmental Profile According to Maternal Educational Attainment

Similar findings were reported among Grade 3 learners in Bukidnon. Fortaleza and Lomarda (2025) found a significant positive relationship between parental involvement and children's literacy outcomes, particularly in comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Learning at home and parenting practices were among the dimensions most strongly associated with literacy outcomes. Among primary-grade learners in Bulacan, Caparas et al. (2025) likewise found that parental reading activities were an important predictor of reading comprehension and emphasized the value of engaging parents in meaningful reading activities and providing appropriate reading materials at home. These findings further suggest that children's literacy experiences are shaped not simply by parents' formal educational credentials but also by the quality and consistency of literacy support provided at home.

For school practice, the findings supported the need for inclusive and differentiated family literacy programs that parents could participate in regardless of their educational background. Rather than expecting parents to independently understand formal reading instruction, teachers could demonstrate practical activities such as shared reading, storytelling, picture discussion, letter-sound games, word practice, retelling, and short comprehension conversations. This recommendation is consistent with recent Philippine research that emphasizes parent literacy workshops, accessible reading materials, school-home communication, and structured home reading routines as ways of strengthening children's early literacy development (Labareno & Gabuya, 2025; Fortaleza & Lomarda, 2025).

It is equally important for schools to recognize that parental involvement alone does not guarantee improved reading performance. A recent study involving Filipino preschool learners found high levels of parental engagement and strong performance in several early literacy skills, yet no statistically significant relationship was observed between overall parental involvement and literacy and numeracy scores (Sarmiento et al., 2025). Similarly, research involving Grade 1 learners in Cebu reported no significant relationship between overall parental involvement scores and oral reading skills, while recommending that home support be more deliberately aligned with classroom reading instruction and evidence-based practices (Auguis, 2026). These findings reinforce the need to interpret maternal education and parental involvement carefully and to avoid treating either as a single explanation for children's reading proficiency.

Overall, Table 4 highlighted the diversity of mothers' educational backgrounds and their potential relevance to the home learning environment of emerging readers. However, maternal educational attainment should not be viewed as a fixed predictor of children's reading capacity. Recent Philippine studies indicate that meaningful literacy practices, such as shared reading, storytelling, access to reading materials, guidance with reading activities, and communication between families and schools, are important components of children's literacy experiences (Tan & Macaraeg, 2024; Labareno & Gabuya, 2025; Caparas et al., 2025). Thus, schools should use information about maternal education to guide the accessibility and form of family support rather than to label or judge families. Providing straightforward instructions, appropriate materials, demonstrations of home

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reading activities, and sustained communication with parents could help families with different educational backgrounds participate meaningfully in the literacy development of Key Stage 1 learners.

Household Monthly Income

Table 5 presented the monthly household income of the 100 Key Stage 1 learners. Forty-two learners or 42.0% came from households earning below ₱10,000 per month. Another 31 or 31.0% belonged to households earning ₱10,001 to ₱20,000, while 17 or 17.0% were from households earning ₱20,001 to ₱30,000. Only 10 learners or 10.0% came from households earning ₱30,001 or more. Taken together, 73.0% of the learners belonged to households earning ₱20,000 or less per month. The distribution indicated that a substantial proportion of the respondents came from households with relatively limited financial resources.

Household income was relevant to the study because financial circumstances may influence the resources and learning opportunities available to children outside school. Families with fewer financial resources may have less flexibility to purchase children's books, supplementary learning materials, digital devices, or other educational resources after meeting essential household expenses. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) recognizes household income and expenditure as important indicators for examining differences in living conditions and spending patterns among socioeconomic groups in the Philippines. Recent Philippine literacy research has similarly identified family income and access to educational resources as socioeconomic factors associated with literacy development among elementary learners, particularly because economically disadvantaged households may have more limited access to books, technology, and supplementary educational opportunities.

However, the concentration of respondents in the lower-income categories should not be interpreted as evidence that children from these households inherently have lower learning potential. Household income represents one aspect of the environment in which learning occurs rather than an indication of children's intellectual or reading capacity. Socioeconomic conditions can affect the availability and consistency of educational opportunities, but learners' literacy development also occurs through classroom instruction, family interaction, access to school resources, and opportunities to practice reading. Recent research involving elementary learners in the Philippines has emphasized that socioeconomic influences on literacy operate alongside parental education, access to learning resources, language practices, and educational conditions. Consequently, household income should be considered a contextual variable rather than a direct explanation of an individual learner's reading performance.

The distribution also provided useful context for understanding possible differences in learners' access to literacy materials at home. With 73.0% of the respondents belonging to households earning ₱20,000 or less per month, some families may have needed to prioritize essential household expenditures over the regular purchase of books or supplemental learning materials. National household statistics demonstrate that income and expenditure patterns vary considerably across socioeconomic groups, and the PSA specifically uses its Family Income and Expenditure Survey to examine disparities in income, consumption, expenditure, and standards of living among Filipino families (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2026). These economic differences provide an important context for interpreting the home resources that may be available to emerging readers, although the actual availability of books and literacy activities within each participating household would need to be directly measured before a definite relationship could be established.

The finding therefore highlighted the importance of schools in ensuring that access to reading opportunities does not depend primarily on a family's capacity to purchase materials. Recent Philippine research on socioeconomic determinants of literacy has emphasized the need for equitable distribution of educational resources and community-based literacy initiatives to reduce learning disparities among economically diverse elementary learners. For Key Stage 1 learners, schools could respond by maintaining accessible classroom libraries, providing take-home reading materials, establishing rotating book boxes or reading kits, and developing low-cost literacy activities that children could practice with family members. These measures could help ensure that emerging readers receive regular exposure to suitable reading materials regardless of household income.

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Monthly household income	**f**	**%**
Below ₱10,000	42	42.0
₱10,001-₱20,000	31	31.0
₱20,001-₱30,000	17	17.0
₱30,001 and above	10	10.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Table 5. Household Monthly Income

The results also have implications for the design of family-based reading activities. Home literacy interventions should be simple, accessible, and inexpensive, rather than requiring families to purchase books, devices, or specialized materials. Teachers could provide reusable or printed reading passages, picture-based activities, word cards, storytelling prompts, letter-sound activities, and take-home reading folders appropriate to learners' assessed reading levels. Because socioeconomic differences are associated with disparities in families' resources and patterns of expenditure, interventions that minimize additional financial demands may be particularly appropriate for families with limited disposable income (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2026).

In addition, schools could strengthen partnerships with local government units, community organizations, parent groups, and other stakeholders to expand access to books and literacy materials without placing additional financial pressure on families. Such efforts are especially relevant when a substantial number of emerging readers come from lower-income households. Rather than lowering expectations for these learners, resource support should seek to ensure that economic circumstances do not unnecessarily limit opportunities for reading practice. Recent Philippine evidence emphasizes that socioeconomic and resource disparities should be addressed through equitable educational support, inclusive programs, and community-based literacy interventions.

Overall, Table 5 showed that household economic differences formed an important part of the context in which the emerging readers developed their literacy skills. The predominance of respondents from households earning ₱20,000 or less per month highlighted the importance of providing accessible reading resources and learning opportunities that did not depend heavily on a family's ability to purchase supplementary materials. However, household income should not be used to label learners, predict their capacity to learn, or lower academic expectations. Instead, it should be treated as a contextual variable that can help schools identify potential resource barriers and plan equitable literacy support. Providing appropriate reading materials, guided practice, regular assessment, and timely intervention could help ensure that every learner has meaningful opportunities to develop foundational reading skills regardless of economic background.

Availability of Children's Reading Materials at Home

Table 6 showed the availability of children's reading materials at home among the 100 Key Stage 1 learners. Thirty-eight learners or 38.0% had moderately adequate access to reading materials, while 31 or 31.0% had adequate access. The remaining 31 learners or 31.0% had limited reading materials at home. Taken together, 69.0% of the learners had at least moderate access to reading materials. However, nearly one-third had limited materials available for reading practice outside school. This finding showed considerable variation in the home literacy resources available to the respondents.

The availability of reading materials at home was particularly relevant because it provided learners with opportunities to interact with print beyond formal classroom instruction. A home environment with accessible books and other appropriate texts may encourage children to practice reading, become familiar with written language, and participate in literacy activities with family members. Recent Philippine research involving

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Grade 1 learners found a significant relationship between the home literacy environment and reading proficiency, emphasizing the importance of home resources and literacy support in the development of word recognition, phonemic awareness, and reading comprehension (Argueza, 2026). This supports the importance of considering the availability of reading materials when examining the conditions surrounding the reading development of emerging readers.

The finding that 31.0% of the learners had limited reading materials therefore deserves attention. Limited access does not necessarily mean that these learners received little literacy support at home, nor does it imply that they had lower learning potential. However, fewer available materials may reduce the range of texts that children can use for independent or guided reading practice. This concern is particularly relevant in the Philippine context. Plata, San Juan, Alontaga, and Quesada (2024) identified shortcomings in the availability and accessibility of learning resources for foundational reading literacy in Kindergarten to Grade 3 and emphasized the need to improve children's access to both traditional and technology-supported learning materials. Thus, the present finding highlighted access to appropriate reading materials as one practical area where additional school support could benefit emerging readers.

The nearly equal proportions of learners with adequate and limited access further showed that children did not necessarily experience the same literacy environment outside school. Some learners may have had several reading materials available for practice, while others may have relied primarily on texts provided by their teachers or schools. The Department of Education currently provides reading instruction and intervention resources specifically organized for Key Stage 1, including materials in English and Filipino and grade-specific learners' materials. The availability of these resources demonstrates that schools have opportunities to supplement learners' home resources, particularly when suitable reading materials are limited.

Availability	**f**	**%**
Adequate	31	31.0
Moderately adequate	38	38.0
Limited	31	31.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Table 6. Availability of Children's Reading Materials at Home

Recent Philippine evidence also reinforces the importance of combining home literacy resources with active support and guidance. Argueza (2026) found that both the home literacy environment and school-based support were significantly related to Grade 1 learners' reading proficiency and recommended stronger home-school collaboration and enriched literacy support. This is important because simply having reading materials in the home does not guarantee that children will use them regularly or effectively. Learners may still benefit from adult guidance, teacher-directed activities, opportunities for repeated reading, questioning, vocabulary discussion, and feedback on their reading.

From an instructional perspective, therefore, learners with limited reading materials at home could be prioritized in book-lending programs, rotating reading kits, take-home reading folders, and other school-based resource-sharing initiatives. Such support does not necessarily require expensive materials. The Department of Education maintains reading resources and intervention packages for Key Stage 1, including English and Filipino materials that can support differentiated literacy instruction. In addition, supplementary reading resources approved for enrichment under the National Reading Program illustrate the continuing emphasis on expanding learners' access to appropriate reading materials.

The selection of materials should also consider learners' age, grade level, language, interests, cultural context, and current reading proficiency. Providing a child with a book is most useful when the text is accessible

enough for meaningful engagement but also offers opportunities to develop new skills. Current Department of Education resources recognize differentiated literacy needs by providing grade-level materials and resources addressing areas such as phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. This supports the use of appropriately matched materials rather than simply increasing the number of books available to learners.

Parents and caregivers could likewise be shown how to make productive use of even a small number of available texts. A short story, for example, can be used several times for different purposes: first for listening and enjoyment, then for discussing unfamiliar words, predicting events, identifying characters, answering questions, retelling the story, or practicing selected words. In this way, families with limited reading materials can still provide meaningful literacy experiences when they receive practical guidance from teachers. The significant association between the home literacy environment and reading proficiency reported by Argueza (2026) further underscores the value of strengthening collaboration between families and schools rather than treating the availability of materials as an isolated factor.

Overall, Table 6 identified access to children's reading materials as an important and actionable component of the home literacy environment. Although most learners had adequate or moderately adequate access, the 31.0% with limited materials represented a substantial group that could benefit from additional school support. Recent Philippine evidence underscores the need to strengthen the availability of learning resources for foundational reading and to combine those resources with appropriate instruction and sustained home-school support (Plata et al., 2024; Argueza, 2026). Therefore, improving access should not be viewed as sufficient by itself. Reading materials are likely to be most useful when they are appropriate to learners' current reading levels and are accompanied by guided practice, regular use, feedback, and family involvement. This finding supports the inclusion of accessible reading resources and stronger home-school literacy partnerships in the proposed intervention framework.

Literacy Teachers According to Years of Early Grade Teaching Experience

Table 7 presented the distribution of the 20 literacy teachers according to their years of early grade teaching experience. Six teachers or 30.0% had 6 to 10 years of experience, representing the largest group. Five teachers or 25.0% had taught for 1 to 5 years, while another five or 25.0% had 16 years or more of teaching experience. The remaining four teachers or 20.0% had 11 to 15 years of experience. The distribution showed that the district had a diverse group of literacy teachers, ranging from those who were relatively new to early grade teaching to those who had accumulated considerable classroom experience.

This range of experience could be valuable in strengthening literacy instruction because teachers at different stages of their careers may contribute different forms of professional knowledge. More experienced teachers may bring practical knowledge developed through years of working with beginning and struggling readers, while teachers with fewer years of service may bring more recently acquired pedagogical approaches and greater familiarity with newer instructional resources. However, years of teaching experience alone should not be considered an indication of expertise in literacy instruction. Effective reading instruction also depends on teachers' knowledge of foundational literacy, assessment, instructional strategies, and their opportunities to participate in relevant continuing professional development. A recent systematic review of teacher professional development programs in the Philippines emphasized the importance of sustained and contextually appropriate professional development rather than relying only on teachers' previous training or accumulated years in the profession (Prudente et al., 2024).

The distribution further suggested that literacy teachers may have different professional learning needs depending on their previous experiences and preparation. Beginning or less experienced teachers may benefit from mentoring, classroom modeling, observation, and structured guidance in assessing emerging readers and implementing appropriate interventions. More experienced teachers, on the other hand, may benefit from opportunities to update their knowledge of current literacy research, assessment practices, intervention approaches, and curriculum expectations. The systematic review commissioned by the Second Congressional Commission on Education examined professional development programs for Filipino teachers specifically to generate evidence that could strengthen the country's in-service teacher development system (Prudente et al.,

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2024). This supports the importance of designing professional learning opportunities that respond to teachers' actual needs rather than providing the same form of training to all teachers regardless of experience.

The finding was particularly relevant within the present context of foundational literacy. The Second Congressional Commission on Education (2025) emphasized the urgency of strengthening early childhood and primary education and improving learning outcomes by Grade 3. Its Year Two Report also documented substantial foundational learning challenges, including evidence that many Grade 3 learners were performing below expected curriculum levels in reading and mathematics. These concerns underscore the importance of ensuring that teachers responsible for early-grade literacy have access not only to appropriate teaching materials but also to sustained professional support that helps them identify reading difficulties and respond with appropriate instruction.

Years of experience	**f**	**%**
1-5 years	5	25.0
6-10 years	6	30.0
11-15 years	4	20.0
16 years and above	5	25.0
Total	**20**	**100.0**

Table 7. Literacy Teachers According to Years of Early Grade Teaching Experience

The mix of teaching experience identified in Table 7 could therefore be used as an opportunity for collaborative professional learning. Instead of treating teachers' differences in experience as gaps, school leaders could organize mixed-experience teams where teachers jointly analyze learners' assessment results, identify specific reading difficulties, plan targeted interventions, observe or demonstrate lessons, and discuss learners' progress. Such an approach could allow practical classroom knowledge developed by experienced teachers to be combined with newly acquired strategies and current approaches introduced through professional development. Recent Philippine research on teacher development emphasizes the value of professional learning that is responsive to teachers' working contexts and supports the translation of professional knowledge into actual classroom practice (Prudente et al., 2024).

Professional development should also remain closely connected to the specific demands of teaching emerging readers. Teachers across experience levels may require continuing support in interpreting literacy assessment results, grouping learners according to identified needs, providing explicit instruction in foundational reading skills, selecting appropriate materials, monitoring progress, and adjusting intervention when learners do not respond as expected. This is particularly important because current Philippine education reforms place strong emphasis on improving foundational learning during the early grades (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2025). A common literacy framework, supported by coaching and regular professional dialogue, could therefore help promote greater consistency in reading assessment and intervention across classrooms and schools.

The finding also needs to be considered alongside the wider working conditions of teachers. The 2025 EDCOM II findings identified teacher workload and non-teaching responsibilities as concerns that may reduce the time teachers can devote to classroom instruction. Recent policy responses have attempted to reduce administrative work and clarify teacher workload so that teachers can focus more effectively on teaching and learning. Thus, strengthening literacy instruction requires more than simply providing additional training. Teachers also need sufficient time and school-level support to apply what they learn, analyze assessment data, plan interventions, collaborate with colleagues, and monitor emerging readers' progress.

From a school leadership perspective, the findings supported the establishment of structured mentoring, coaching, and professional learning communities that bring together teachers with different levels of experience. Beginning teachers could receive guidance and demonstration from colleagues with substantial early-grade teaching experience, while experienced teachers could participate in updating and refining instructional practices based on current evidence and assessment information. This reciprocal form of professional learning would avoid the assumption that knowledge flows only from experienced to less experienced teachers. Instead, teachers could contribute different forms of knowledge while working toward a common goal of improving foundational literacy.

Overall, Table 7 showed that the district had a potentially valuable range of early grade teaching experience. However, the significance of this profile did not lie simply in how long teachers had been teaching. More important was how their accumulated experience was strengthened through current professional knowledge, continuing development, collaboration, and opportunities to apply evidence-informed literacy practices. Recent Philippine education reforms have emphasized both the need to strengthen foundational learning and the importance of supporting teachers so that they can focus more effectively on early-grade learning outcomes (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2025; Prudente et al., 2024). Therefore, structured collaboration, mentoring, coaching, and literacy-focused professional development could help transform the district's varied teaching experience into more consistent and responsive support for emerging readers

Highest Educational Attainment of Literacy Teachers

Table 8 showed the highest educational attainment of the 20 literacy teachers. Eight teachers or 40.0% had earned master's units, seven or 35.0% held bachelor's degrees, four or 20.0% had completed master's degrees, and one or 5.0% had doctoral units. Overall, 65.0% of the teachers had pursued studies beyond the bachelor's degree, although only 20.0% had completed a graduate degree. The distribution indicated that many of the literacy teachers had sought further academic preparation, while their levels of formal educational attainment remained varied.

The number of teachers who had pursued graduate studies suggested an interest in continuing professional growth. Graduate education may broaden teachers' knowledge of education, research, curriculum, assessment, and reflective practice. However, educational attainment alone should not be interpreted as evidence of specialized competence in teaching emerging readers. The content and specialization of graduate programs may differ, and a higher academic qualification does not necessarily indicate that a teacher has had intensive preparation in reading assessment and intervention. This distinction is consistent with the professional-development framework of the Department of Education, which emphasizes the continuing development of teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional practice according to identified competencies and professional learning needs rather than academic credentials alone.

This distinction is particularly important in early literacy instruction. Teachers working with emerging readers need practical knowledge that enables them to identify specific reading difficulties, use assessment information, choose appropriate instructional strategies, and provide targeted intervention. In 2024, the Department of Education offered a Teacher Development Program in Transforming Access to Classroom Reading Practices specifically for elementary and junior high school reading teachers and reading coordinators. The program focused on analyzing literacy data to identify reading gaps, selecting research-based reading and comprehension strategies, conducting assessment activities, applying remediation techniques, and designing interventions responsive to learners' specific needs. The existence of such specialized professional development reinforces the view that effective literacy teaching requires competencies that extend beyond the possession of an academic degree.

The educational attainment profile also showed that teachers entered literacy instruction with different levels of formal academic preparation. While some had completed or begun graduate studies, others held bachelor's degrees as their highest qualification. These differences should not automatically be interpreted as differences in teaching effectiveness. Instead, they can help school leaders identify the professional learning opportunities that teachers may need. The Department of Education's professional development framework recognizes this principle by providing career-progression and subject-content programs designed to strengthen teachers'

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competencies according to their current career stages, identified professional needs, and specific instructional responsibilities.

Educational attainment	**f**	**%**
Bachelor's degree	7	35.0
With master's units	8	40.0
Master's degree	4	20.0
With doctoral units	1	5.0
Total	**20**	**100.0**

Table 8. Highest Educational Attainment of Literacy Teachers

For literacy instruction specifically, professional development should be closely connected to what teachers actually do in the classroom. Teachers need opportunities to strengthen their ability to analyze reading assessment results, recognize patterns in learners' errors, select appropriate reading materials, plan targeted intervention, and monitor whether learners are responding to instruction. The Department of Education's 2024 reading-focused professional development program placed particular emphasis on these competencies, including literacy-data analysis, evidence-based reading strategies, assessment, remediation, and intervention planning. Similarly, Department of Education professional-development resources for improving early-grade literacy emphasize building teachers' knowledge of literacy instructional strategies and the effective use of supplementary reading materials, particularly for Kindergarten to Grade 3 learners. These initiatives are directly relevant to the present study because the participating teachers were responsible for supporting emerging readers in the early grades.

The finding therefore supported a competency-based approach to professional development rather than one based solely on degree status. A teacher with master's or doctoral units may still require specialized preparation in particular aspects of beginning reading, just as a bachelor's degree holder may possess substantial practical knowledge acquired through classroom experience and literacy-focused training. What becomes important is whether teachers can translate their professional knowledge into appropriate assessment, explicit instruction, differentiated intervention, and progress monitoring. Current Department of Education professional-development programs similarly emphasize the application of knowledge and skills to classroom practice and the assessment of teachers' professional learning needs.

From a school leadership perspective, the results suggested the need to determine teachers' specific literacy competencies regardless of their highest educational attainment. Professional learning could focus on the areas most directly related to the needs of emerging readers, including assessment administration, interpretation of reading errors, instructional planning, appropriate use of reading materials, research-based reading and comprehension strategies, remediation, and monitoring of learners' progress. These areas closely correspond with the competencies emphasized in the Department of Education's reading-focused teacher development initiatives. Coaching, demonstration teaching, collaborative lesson planning, and peer observation could further help teachers translate professional learning into everyday classroom practice.

Overall, Table 8 reflected a group of literacy teachers with considerable formal educational preparation and evidence of continued academic pursuit, as 65.0% had undertaken education beyond the bachelor's level. However, the finding also emphasized that academic qualifications and specialized literacy competence should not be treated as equivalent. Formal education provides an important professional foundation, but effective support for emerging readers also requires continuing, literacy-specific development grounded in assessment and classroom practice. The current professional development direction of the Department of Education similarly emphasizes strengthening teachers' competencies according to identified professional and subject-

specific needs. Thus, the district could build on the teachers' existing academic preparation by providing focused professional development, coaching, collaborative learning, and classroom-based support specifically designed for foundational reading instruction and intervention.

Number of Specialized Early Literacy Trainings Attended

Table 9 presented the distribution of the 20 literacy teachers according to the number of specialized early literacy trainings they had attended. Eight teachers or 40.0% had participated in three to four trainings, six or 30.0% had attended one to two trainings, and four or 20.0% had completed five or more. Two teachers or 10.0% reported having attended no specialized early literacy training. Overall, 60.0% of the teachers had attended at least three trainings, while 40.0% had limited or no exposure. The distribution indicated that professional learning opportunities in early literacy were present among the teachers, although the level of exposure was not uniform.

The variation in training exposure was important because teaching emerging readers requires knowledge and skills that extend beyond general classroom instruction. Teachers need to identify specific reading difficulties, interpret literacy assessment results, select appropriate instructional strategies, and design interventions that respond to learners' demonstrated needs. The Department of Education's 2024 Teacher Development Program in Transforming Access to Classroom Reading Practices specifically emphasized analyzing literacy data, identifying reading gaps, selecting research-based reading and comprehension strategies, using assessment and remediation techniques, and designing interventions tailored to learners' needs. These competencies closely reflect the type of specialized preparation required when working with emerging readers. The finding that 40.0% of the teachers had attended only one to two trainings or none at all suggested a possible need to strengthen the consistency of professional learning opportunities across the district. This concern is consistent with recent national evidence showing that access to in-service training and teacher professional development in the Philippines remains uneven. Rivera et al. (2025) identified inequitable access, inconsistent funding, logistical constraints, workload concerns, and mismatches between available training and teachers' pedagogical needs as continuing barriers to effective professional development. This national evidence provides relevant context for the variation observed among the literacy teachers in the present study. The results should not, however, be interpreted to mean that teachers who attended more training were automatically more effective than those who attended fewer sessions. The number of trainings indicates professional-development exposure, but not necessarily the quality of the training, the depth of teachers' learning, or the extent to which new practices were applied in the classroom. Recent Philippine research on teacher professional development has emphasized the importance of making training relevant, practical, accessible, and responsive to teachers' identified professional needs (Rivera et al., 2025). Thus, the value of specialized literacy training should be considered not only in terms of attendance but also in terms of how teachers translate new knowledge into improved assessment, instruction, intervention, and monitoring of learners.

Number of trainings	**f**	**%**
None	2	10.0
1-2 trainings	6	30.0
3-4 trainings	8	40.0
5 or more	4	20.0
Total	**20**	**100.0**

Table 9. Number of Specialized Early Literacy Trainings Attended

The need for literacy-specific preparation is further supported by recent research on foundational reading in Philippine K to 3 settings. Plata, San Juan, Alontaga, and Quesada (2024) identified insufficient teacher

training as one of the barriers to the effective use of learning resources for foundational reading and recommended strengthening teacher preparation alongside improvements in the availability and accessibility of literacy resources. This finding is especially relevant to the present study because teachers working with emerging readers need to know not only what materials are available but also how to select and use those materials according to learners' specific reading difficulties.

Professional learning is likely to be more meaningful when it extends beyond one-time training sessions and becomes connected to teachers' actual classroom practice. Recent Philippine recommendations on teacher development include the use of school-based professional learning communities, stronger mentoring arrangements, and data-driven approaches to professional growth (Rivera et al., 2025). Similarly, in DepEd Region VIII, National Reading Program activities in 2024 included workshops on designing effective reading assessments as well as the development of lesson scripts for reading and literacy instruction. These initiatives reinforce the importance of linking professional learning with assessment, instructional planning, and actual literacy practices in the classroom.

From a district perspective, the variation shown in Table 9 therefore supported the development of a common literacy professional-development framework for all Key Stage 1 teachers. Training could focus on identifying reading difficulties, administering and interpreting assessments, providing explicit and systematic instruction, selecting appropriate reading materials, planning differentiated intervention, and monitoring learners' response to instruction. Follow-up activities such as coaching, demonstration teaching, classroom observation, collaborative lesson planning, and analysis of learner data could help teachers translate training into practice. DepEd Region VIII has similarly emphasized instructional supervision, classroom observations, teacher-leader dialogues, capability building, and technical assistance as mechanisms for strengthening teaching and learning under the MATATAG Curriculum.

The findings also aligned with current national priorities for improving foundational learning. The Second Congressional Commission on Education (2025) placed particular emphasis on strengthening foundational learning and improving learner outcomes during the early grades. Its subsequent National Education Plan for 2026–2035 identified the functional literacy of early learners as a major priority, including increasing the proportion of Key Stage 1 learners reading at grade level. Within this context, ensuring that teachers have equitable access to relevant and sustained literacy-focused professional learning becomes particularly important.

Overall, Table 9 showed that specialized professional learning in early literacy was present but unevenly distributed among the teachers. Although 60.0% had attended at least three specialized trainings, the remaining 40.0% had limited or no exposure, indicating a need for more consistent professional-development opportunities. Recent Philippine evidence supports professional development that is accessible, relevant to teachers' needs, connected to classroom practice, and reinforced through mentoring and collaborative professional learning (Rivera et al., 2025; Plata et al., 2024). Therefore, the district should not regard training attendance as an end in itself. The more important consideration is whether professional learning strengthens teachers' ability to assess emerging readers accurately, provide appropriate interventions, monitor progress, and adjust instruction in response to learner needs.

Reading Proficiency Across Foundational Literacy Domains

Table 10 presented the learners' proficiency across four foundational literacy domains. Letter-sound identification obtained the highest mean score at 72.15 (SD = 13.21), followed by phonological awareness at 68.42 (SD = 14.36). Familiar-word recognition recorded a mean of 64.87 (SD = 16.42), while basic paragraph comprehension obtained the lowest mean at 58.73 (SD = 17.18). The overall mean was 66.04 (SD = 15.29). Despite the differences in mean scores across domains, all four areas were interpreted at the emerging level, indicating that the learners had begun developing foundational reading skills but had not yet reached secure proficiency.

The pattern showed that learners performed relatively better in letter-sound identification and phonological awareness than in familiar-word recognition and paragraph comprehension. This suggested that many learners

had developed some awareness of the relationship between letters and sounds but continued to experience difficulty when these foundational skills had to be applied to recognizing whole words and understanding connected text. This pattern is consistent with the current emphasis of Department of Education Key Stage 1 reading resources, which assess and support literacy development across Grades 1 to 3 and provide instructional and intervention materials for learners at different stages of reading development. In DepEd Region VIII, the K–3 Foundations for Effective Learning Transition project similarly emphasizes the development of foundational literacy skills and targeted learning recovery for learners in Grades 1 to 3.

The relatively stronger performance in letter-sound identification was encouraging because knowledge of letter-sound relationships provides an important foundation for decoding written words. However, the mean of 72.15 remained within the emerging level, showing that this skill was not yet fully established across the group. Phonological awareness likewise remained emerging despite having the second-highest mean. These results indicated a need to continue explicit practice in identifying and manipulating sounds, connecting sounds with their corresponding letters, and applying these relationships when reading words. Current Key Stage 1 intervention resources from the Department of Education reflect this developmental sequence by providing grade-specific materials and formative assessments designed to support beginning reading skills before learners move toward increasingly complex reading tasks.

Literacy domain	**Mean**	**SD**	**Descriptive level**
Phonological awareness	68.42	14.36	Emerging
Letter-sound identification	72.15	13.21	Emerging
Familiar-word recognition	64.87	16.42	Emerging
Basic paragraph comprehension	58.73	17.18	Emerging
Overall	**66.04**	**15.29**	**Emerging**

Table 10. Reading Proficiency Across Foundational Literacy Domains

The lower mean in familiar-word recognition (M = 64.87, SD = 16.42) indicated that recognizing letters and sounds had not yet consistently translated into efficient recognition of familiar words. This finding is instructionally important because learners who continue to devote considerable attention to identifying individual letters and decoding words may have fewer cognitive resources available for understanding what they read. The progression reflected in current Key Stage 1 reading intervention materials similarly moves from foundational letter and sound skills toward word reading and connected-text activities, supporting the need to strengthen these skills together rather than treating them as isolated competencies.

Basic paragraph comprehension required the greatest attention, as it obtained the lowest mean (M = 58.73, SD = 17.18). Understanding connected text requires learners to do more than recognize letters or individual words. They must connect ideas across sentences and draw meaning from what they have read. For emerging readers, difficulty at the word-recognition level can therefore make comprehension more demanding. The current regional learning-recovery framework in Eastern Visayas recognizes foundational literacy as an interconnected learning priority and provides intervention for Grades 1 to 3 specifically to address persistent learning gaps. Likewise, Department of Education Key Stage 1 resources include both assessment and intervention materials across different grades, supporting the use of assessment results to identify where learners require more focused reading instruction.

The standard deviations further revealed meaningful differences among individual learners. Paragraph comprehension had the largest variability (SD = 17.18), followed by familiar-word recognition (SD = 16.42), phonological awareness (SD = 14.36), and letter-sound identification (SD = 13.21). The wider spread in

paragraph comprehension suggested that learners varied considerably in their ability to understand connected text, even though the group as a whole remained at the emerging level. This variation strengthened the need for assessment-based and differentiated intervention rather than one uniform reading lesson for all emerging readers. Current Key Stage 1 assessment resources likewise provide grade-specific assessment materials that allow reading needs to be examined across different levels of early literacy development.

From an instructional perspective, the results indicated that intervention should address the entire progression of foundational reading skills rather than concentrating on only one domain. Learners with weaker phonological awareness and letter-sound identification would need more intensive practice with sounds and the alphabetic system. Those who could identify letters and sounds but continued to struggle with familiar words would require systematic opportunities to blend sounds, decode words, practice familiar words, and develop greater accuracy and automaticity. Learners who demonstrated relatively stronger word-reading skills but weaker comprehension would require additional support through vocabulary development, guided oral reading, questioning, prediction, retelling, and discussion of short and appropriate texts. Department of Education Key Stage 1 intervention resources include materials for both reading instruction and formative assessment, providing a basis for matching instructional support with learners' identified reading needs.

The results were also highly relevant to the local setting of the study. DepEd Region VIII's K–3 FELT initiative was established as part of learning recovery efforts to improve literacy and numeracy and specifically included a Learning Recovery Program for Grades 1 to 3 aimed at developing foundational skills and addressing learning gaps. The fact that all four literacy domains in the present study remained at the emerging level reinforced the continued relevance of such targeted intervention. Rather than assuming that learners needed the same type of assistance, assessment results could be used to determine the appropriate starting point and intensity of support for each learner.

Overall, Table 10 presented a consistent picture of learners who had begun acquiring foundational literacy skills but had not yet developed secure proficiency across the four domains. Their relatively stronger performance in letter-sound identification and phonological awareness provided an important starting point, but lower performance in familiar-word recognition and particularly in paragraph comprehension indicated that foundational knowledge had not yet consistently developed into fluent and meaningful reading. The findings therefore supported a balanced, systematic, and differentiated literacy intervention in which phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge are continually strengthened while learners are progressively supported in word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Current Department of Education Key Stage 1 assessment and intervention resources, together with the DepEd Region VIII K–3 FELT initiative, similarly emphasize continuing assessment and targeted support for learners who have not yet attained expected foundational literacy skills.

Differences in Reading Proficiency According to Profile Variables

Table 11 presented omnibus tests of differences in reading proficiency across selected profile variables. Significant differences were reported for age, $F(4, 95) = 4.218$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .151$; grade level, $F(3, 96) = 6.731$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .174$; maternal educational attainment, $F(3, 96) = 3.947$, $p = .010$, $\eta^2 = .110$; household income, $F(3, 96) = 2.816$, $p = .043$, $\eta^2 = .081$; and availability of reading materials, $F(2, 97) = 5.102$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .095$. Sex was not significant, $t(98) = 1.284$, $p = .202$. The effect sizes indicated that the omnibus differences ranged from modest to comparatively substantial within this sample. However, an omnibus ANOVA identifies whether at least one group differs and does not identify the specific groups responsible for the difference. Because verified post-hoc output was not included in the source manuscript, no pairwise group claims were made.

The significant differences according to age and grade level suggested that reading proficiency was not uniform across learners at different developmental and educational stages. This finding was understandable because progression through the early grades generally provides additional exposure to formal reading instruction and increasingly complex literacy tasks. However, neither age nor grade level should be interpreted as a direct cause of higher or lower proficiency. Recent Philippine evidence has continued to show substantial variation in literacy performance across the basic education system. The Second Congressional Commission

on Education reported that foundational learning should be strengthened particularly during early childhood and primary education so that learners develop the competencies needed by Grade 3 (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2025). More recent national literacy assessment data likewise showed that although Filipino learners improved during School Year 2025–2026, approximately half remained below grade-level reading expectations by the end of the school year, demonstrating that advancement through grade levels does not always correspond to mastery of expected reading competencies.

The significant difference according to maternal educational attainment indicated that learners' reading proficiency differed across maternal-education groups. This result should be interpreted carefully because maternal education may reflect broader differences in the home learning environment rather than directly determining a child's capacity to read. This interpretation is consistent with PIRLS 2021, which examined parental education together with home resources and other socioeconomic indicators when describing learners' home socioeconomic circumstances. Accordingly, maternal education in the present study may represent one aspect of the environment surrounding literacy development, including possible differences in familiarity with school activities and access to educational opportunities. The significant result does not establish that mothers with higher educational attainment caused their children to become more proficient readers.

A statistically significant difference also emerged according to household income, showing that reading performance differed among the income groups represented in the study. This finding aligns with recent evidence identifying socioeconomic inequalities in learning outcomes. PIRLS 2021 reported a substantial difference in average reading achievement between learners from higher- and lower-socioeconomic-status homes internationally, with its socioeconomic measure incorporating parental education, occupation, and resources available in the home. More recently, SEA-PLM 2024 found continuing disparities between Filipino learners from richer and poorer households, even while improvements were recorded in reading and mathematics performance (UNICEF, 2025). The present result therefore supports attention to socioeconomic differences while also reinforcing that lower household income should never be interpreted as lower learning potential.

The availability of reading materials at home also produced a significant difference in proficiency, $F = 5.102$, $p = .007$. This finding was particularly relevant because access to appropriate reading materials can provide additional opportunities for children to encounter print and practice literacy skills outside formal classroom instruction. PIRLS 2021 identified home resources and early literacy experiences as important components of the home environment examined in relation to reading achievement. A more recent PIRLS analysis also reinforced the positive relationship between resources for learning at home and reading achievement across participating education systems (Leng et al., 2025). In the present study, however, the significant difference only established that reading proficiency varied across the categories of home reading-material availability. It did not by itself establish that access to reading materials caused the observed differences.

In contrast, sex did not produce a statistically significant difference in reading proficiency, $t = 1.284$, $p = .202$. This finding indicated that male and female emerging readers in the present sample performed similarly enough that the observed difference could not be considered statistically significant at the .05 level. This local result is noteworthy because international patterns do not always translate directly to individual school or district populations. PIRLS 2021 reported higher average reading achievement among girls in most participating education systems, while some systems showed no statistically significant sex difference. Similarly, SEA-PLM 2024 reported continuing differences between girls and boys across Southeast Asian primary education while also emphasizing inequalities associated with socioeconomic status, language, and other contextual conditions. Thus, the non-significant result in the present study reinforces the importance of basing intervention on individual assessment results rather than expectations associated with sex.

Profile variable	**Test**	**Statistic**	**p**	**Decision**	**Interpretation**	**df**	**eta squared**
Age	ANOVA	$F = 4.218$	.008	Reject H_0	Significant	4, 95	.151

Profile variable	Test	Statistic	p	Decision	Interpretation	df	eta squared
Sex	t test	t = 1.284	.202	Fail to reject H_0	Not significant	98	-
Grade level	ANOVA	F = 6.731	.001	Reject H_0	Significant	3, 96	.174
Maternal education	ANOVA	F = 3.947	.010	Reject H_0	Significant	3, 96	.110
Household income	ANOVA	F = 2.816	.043	Reject H_0	Significant	3, 96	.081
Reading materials at home	ANOVA	F = 5.102	.007	Reject H_0	Significant	2, 97	.095

Table 11. Differences in Reading Proficiency According to Profile Variables

Publication requirement: Add verified Tukey HSD or Games-Howell comparisons, as appropriate after assumption testing, including group means, mean differences, 95% confidence intervals, adjusted p values, and the exact analytic sample. These values cannot be reconstructed reliably from the omnibus F statistics alone.

Viewed together, the results showed that reading proficiency was associated with a combination of developmental, educational, and home-context variables. Age and grade level reflected differences across learners' stages of schooling, while maternal education, household income, and reading materials represented different aspects of the home learning environment. This broader pattern is consistent with PIRLS, which examines reading achievement alongside socioeconomic status, parental characteristics, home literacy activities, and resources for learning. SEA-PLM 2024 similarly demonstrated that learning inequalities in Southeast Asia remain connected with socioeconomic, gender, language, and other contextual factors. The findings therefore support examining reading performance within the broader conditions in which children learn rather than attributing difficulty to a single personal characteristic.

From a practical perspective, these significant differences provide useful information for planning intervention, but they should not be used to label individual learners or lower expectations for particular groups. Schools could use these profile variables to recognize possible differences in opportunities and contexts while relying primarily on direct literacy assessment to determine actual instructional needs. Learners who have fewer reading materials or limited learning resources at home, for example, could receive greater access to classroom libraries, take-home materials, and structured reading opportunities. At the same time, all learners should continue to receive intervention according to their demonstrated difficulties in phonological awareness, letter-sound identification, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension. This equitable and evidence-informed approach is consistent with current Philippine efforts to strengthen foundational learning and improve early-grade learning outcomes.

Overall, Table 11 demonstrated that reading proficiency differed significantly according to age, grade level, maternal educational attainment, household income, and availability of reading materials at home, but not according to sex. The results highlighted the importance of considering both learners' educational progression and the conditions surrounding literacy learning at home. At the same time, the findings did not establish that these characteristics caused reading success or difficulty. Rather, they identified meaningful areas of variation that can guide more responsive assessment, resource provision, family engagement, and reading intervention. Recent national and international evidence similarly demonstrates that literacy development occurs within wider socioeconomic, home, and educational contexts (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2025; UNICEF, 2025). A targeted but inclusive approach is therefore warranted, ensuring that additional resources reach learners who need them while maintaining high expectations and appropriate reading support for all.

Relationship Between Teacher Profile and Emerging Reading Proficiency

Table 12 presented teacher-level associations based on 20 teachers. For each teacher, the mean reading-proficiency score of the learners linked to that teacher was computed and associated with the teacher's profile. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used because teaching experience, educational attainment, and training exposure were represented by ordered categories. Teaching experience showed a weak, non-significant association with mean learner proficiency (rho = .214, p = .356), and educational attainment showed a weak, non-significant association (rho = .287, p = .219). Specialized literacy training showed a moderate positive and statistically significant association (rho = .512, p = .021). Given the small number of teacher cases, the result should be interpreted cautiously and as an association rather than a causal effect.

The non-significant relationship between teaching experience and learners' reading proficiency indicated that length of service alone was not significantly associated with reading performance in the present sample. Although classroom experience may contribute to practical knowledge, years of service do not necessarily reflect teachers' current competencies in assessing and supporting emerging readers. The Department of Education's professional development framework emphasizes continuous competency development based on identified professional learning needs, including subject-specific programs intended to strengthen teachers' instructional knowledge and practice (Department of Education, n.d.). Thus, teaching experience may be strengthened when accompanied by sustained professional learning and opportunities to apply evidence-informed literacy practices.

Similarly, the non-significant relationship between educational attainment and reading proficiency suggested that formal academic qualifications alone were not significantly associated with learner performance. Graduate studies may strengthen teachers' theoretical and professional knowledge, but they may not necessarily provide specialized preparation in foundational reading instruction. Effective support for emerging readers requires competencies in literacy assessment, phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and differentiated intervention. Current Department of Education professional development initiatives recognize this need through subject-specific programs for Key Stage 1 teachers that focus on literacy and numeracy learning recovery.

In contrast, specialized literacy training had a moderate and statistically significant relationship with learners' reading proficiency. The positive correlation (rho = .512) indicated that greater exposure to literacy-specific training was associated with higher learner proficiency in the participating classes. This finding is consistent with current Department of Education programs that equip reading teachers to analyze literacy data, identify reading gaps, apply research-based reading and comprehension strategies, conduct assessment and remediation, and design interventions responsive to learners' specific needs. Early-grade literacy professional development also emphasizes building teachers' knowledge of literacy instructional strategies and the effective use of supplementary reading materials for Kindergarten to Grade 3 learners.

Teacher profile variable	rho	p	Decision	Interpretation	n
Teaching experience	.214	.356	Fail to reject H_0	Not significant	20
Highest educational attainment	.287	.219	Fail to reject H_0	Not significant	20
Specialized literacy trainings	.512	.021	Reject H_0	Significant	20

Table 12. Relationship Between Teacher Profile and Emerging Reading Proficiency

The contrast among the three variables was noteworthy. Teaching experience and educational attainment showed positive but statistically non-significant relationships, whereas specialized literacy training demonstrated a significant association with learner proficiency. This pattern suggests that professional preparation directly aligned with literacy instruction may be particularly relevant to the needs of emerging readers. Rivera et al. (2025) similarly emphasized that teacher professional development should be aligned

with teachers' evolving pedagogical needs and recommended sustainable training frameworks, school-based professional learning communities, mentorship, and data-informed professional growth. In the Eastern Visayas context, DepEd Region VIII has likewise implemented workshops on effective reading assessment and the development of lesson scripts for reading and literacy instruction under the National Reading Program.

These findings have practical implications for district-level professional development. Literacy training should extend beyond isolated seminars and be reinforced through coaching, demonstration teaching, collaborative lesson planning, classroom observation, and regular analysis of learner data. Recent Philippine research has identified inequitable access, inconsistent funding, logistical constraints, and insufficient alignment with teachers' pedagogical needs as barriers to effective professional development, further supporting the need for sustained and context-responsive programs (Rivera et al., 2025). Plata et al. (2024) likewise highlighted teacher preparation as an important component in strengthening foundational reading instruction and the effective use of learning resources in Philippine K–3 settings.

Nevertheless, the significant relationship between specialized literacy training and learner proficiency should be interpreted cautiously. Correlation establishes association, not causation. The analysis does not demonstrate that increased participation in literacy training directly caused higher learner proficiency. Other factors, including instructional time, class size, availability of reading resources, school support, home literacy conditions, teachers' application of acquired strategies, and learners' initial abilities, may also have contributed to reading outcomes. Moreover, the relatively small teacher sample (n = 20) limits the generalizability of the findings and warrants confirmation using larger samples.

Overall, Table 12 demonstrated that specialized literacy training was the only teacher profile variable significantly associated with learners' emerging reading proficiency, whereas teaching experience and highest educational attainment were not significantly related to proficiency. The finding supports sustained literacy-specific professional development that is responsive to identified teacher and learner needs. Current Philippine professional development initiatives similarly emphasize literacy assessment, research-based instructional strategies, targeted intervention, mentoring, and continuous professional learning (Department of Education, 2024; Rivera et al., 2025). Accordingly, district-level professional development should prioritize not only teachers' participation in training but also the application of acquired competencies to classroom practice and the systematic monitoring of learner progress.

Relationship Between Socio-Environmental Factors and Emerging Reading Proficiency

Table 13 presented the associations between selected socio-environmental variables and reading proficiency. Maternal educational attainment (coefficient = .326, p = .014), household income (coefficient = .291, p = .031), and availability of reading materials (coefficient = .548, p = .001) were reported as significant. However, the source manuscript did not identify the exact complete-case sample used for each coefficient, and the reported coefficients and p values do not all align mathematically with a uniform sample of 100 under a standard Pearson test. The analytic n, correlation method, coding scheme, and p value for each row must therefore be verified directly against the statistical output before publication. Until verification is completed, these results should be described as reported associations rather than definitive estimates.

The significant relationship between maternal educational attainment and reading proficiency indicated that learners' reading performance tended to vary with mothers' educational backgrounds. Maternal education may be associated with differences in familiarity with school expectations, confidence in assisting with reading activities, and opportunities for literacy interaction at home. However, educational attainment should not be regarded as a direct determinant of children's reading ability. Recent Philippine research has emphasized that parental involvement, shared reading, access to materials, and a supportive home literacy environment are relevant to children's reading development (Tan & Macaraeg, 2024; Hernandez & Decena, 2024).

Household monthly income also showed a significant positive relationship with reading proficiency. This finding suggested that differences in economic circumstances were associated with differences in learners' reading performance. Family income may be related to opportunities to obtain books and other educational materials, although income alone does not determine children's learning potential. A Philippine study

involving Grade 1 pupils identified family income and access to reading materials as relevant aspects of parental involvement and children's home reading experiences (Tan & Macaraeg, 2024). Similarly, research on parental involvement in elementary reading programs identified socioeconomic disparities and varying parental educational backgrounds as contextual factors that may shape families' participation in children's literacy development (Hernandez & Decena, 2024).

Among the three socio-environmental variables, availability of reading materials at home demonstrated the strongest association with emerging reading proficiency ($r = .548$, $p = .001$). This moderate positive relationship indicated that greater access to reading materials tended to correspond with higher learner proficiency in the present sample. Recent Philippine evidence similarly found that home access to reading materials was strongly associated with the reading performance of Grade 1 learners and emphasized the importance of providing children with print-rich literacy environments (Tan & Macaraeg, 2024). Evidence on parental participation in elementary reading programs likewise identified access to print materials and literacy-rich home environments as important components associated with children's reading achievement (Hernandez & Decena, 2024).

The relative strength of the coefficients further demonstrated that the three home variables were not equally associated with reading proficiency. Maternal educational attainment ($r = .326$) and household income ($r = .291$) showed weaker positive relationships than the availability of reading materials ($r = .548$). This pattern suggests that direct access to literacy resources may represent a particularly relevant and actionable component of the home learning environment. The Department of Education provides Key Stage 1 reading instruction and intervention resources, including grade-specific learner materials and assessment resources, which can support schools in extending access to appropriate texts beyond classroom instruction.

Socio-environmental variable	Coefficient	p	Decision	Interpretation	Analytic n
Maternal educational attainment	.326	.014	Reject H_0	Significant	100
Household monthly income	.291	.031	Reject H_0	Significant	100
Availability of reading materials	.548	.001	Reject H_0	Significant	100

Table 13. Relationships Between Socio-Environmental Factors and Emerging Reading Proficiency

The size of the coefficients showed that the relationships differed in strength. Maternal education and household income had small to moderate associations, while the availability of reading materials had a moderate association and explained the largest share of common variation among the three factors. This pattern made access to print a particularly relevant target for intervention. UNESCO (2023) linked family and early learning conditions with language development, while Plata et al. (2024) stressed that insufficient access to appropriate learning resources can restrict foundational literacy opportunities.

The results also demonstrated that home factors were interconnected. Household income could affect the ability to obtain books, while parents' educational experiences could influence how materials were used. Nevertheless, the strongest association with reading materials suggested that schools could address at least part of the opportunity gap through lending programs and guided family literacy activities.

Overall, Table 13 reinforced the value of a partnership among schools, families, and communities. Improving access to appropriate texts, showing families how to support reading, and monitoring learners' use of take-home materials were realistic actions arising from the findings. Such support should be offered without blaming families for conditions beyond their control.

Proposed Research-Derived Early Literacy Framework

Table 14 presented a proposed research-derived early literacy framework developed from the study findings. It is not yet an established or externally validated framework. The framework organizes seven components into

an implementation cycle: screening and diagnosis, targeted instruction, home support, teacher development, and progress monitoring. Each component specifies the identified need, proposed response, and a measurable implementation indicator. Before district-wide adoption, the framework should undergo expert content validation by specialists in early literacy, educational assessment, school leadership, and research methodology, followed by pilot implementation and revision based on feasibility and learner-outcome data.

The component on early identification was supported by the emerging proficiency demonstrated across all four literacy domains in the study. Early and systematic assessment is necessary to determine learners' existing competencies and identify areas requiring intervention. This principle is reflected in the Department of Education's Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), which is administered across Grades 1 to 3 and provides grade-specific assessment tools for monitoring early literacy development (Department of Education, 2024, 2025). In Region VIII, the continued administration of CRLA for Key Stage 1 learners further demonstrates the importance placed on systematic assessment across the early grades (Department of Education Regional Office VIII, 2025).

The components on foundational skills, word recognition, fluency, language, and comprehension responded directly to the learners' emerging performance reported in Table 10. The comparatively lower proficiency in paragraph comprehension indicated the need to move beyond isolated sound and letter activities toward integrated instruction in vocabulary, oral language, fluent word reading, and comprehension. Rather than teaching these skills independently, intervention should progressively connect foundational decoding skills with meaningful reading. This direction supports the broader national reform agenda of strengthening early childhood and primary education and ensuring that learners develop adequate foundational competencies by Grade 3 (Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2025).

The home literacy component was likewise grounded in the empirical results, particularly the significant relationships of maternal educational attainment, household income, and availability of reading materials with learners' proficiency. Among these variables, access to reading materials had the strongest association ($r = .548$, $p = .001$). This finding justified practical interventions such as book-lending programs, take-home reading packs, rotating reading materials, and guided family literacy activities. Such measures may help reduce differences in access to literacy opportunities while avoiding additional financial demands on families. Consistent with this direction, recent Philippine education reforms have emphasized equitable access, community partnerships, and stronger foundational learning support (Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2025).

The teacher-development component was directly supported by the significant positive relationship between specialized literacy training and learners' reading proficiency ($\rho = .512$, $p = .021$). This result reinforced the need for professional development that is specifically connected to early reading assessment, instructional planning, intervention, and progress monitoring rather than professional development based solely on general teaching experience or academic qualifications. The Department of Education's Teacher Development Program in Transforming Access to Classroom Reading Practices similarly focuses on analyzing literacy data, identifying learners' reading gaps, selecting research-based reading and comprehension strategies, conducting assessment and remediation, and designing interventions responsive to learners' specific needs (Department of Education, 2024).

Professional development within the framework should therefore extend beyond participation in isolated training activities. Coaching, demonstration teaching, collaborative lesson planning, classroom observation, and regular analysis of learner assessment results could provide opportunities for teachers to translate professional learning into actual instructional practice. This approach is consistent with current Department of Education literacy-focused professional development, which emphasizes not only knowledge of reading strategies but also the teachers' ability to use literacy data and design targeted school reading interventions (Department of Education, 2024).

The seven components were designed to operate as a continuous and interconnected cycle rather than as separate activities. Assessment identifies learners' strengths and difficulties; differentiated instruction addresses identified needs; home literacy support extends opportunities for practice; teacher development

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strengthens implementation; and progress monitoring determines whether learners are responding to intervention. Monitoring results can subsequently inform the next cycle of assessment and instructional adjustment. The continued administration of CRLA at the beginning and end of the school year illustrates the value of repeated literacy assessment for examining learners' progress across Grades 1 to 3 (Department of Education Regional Office VIII, 2025; Department of Education, 2025).

Implementation would also require clearly defined responsibilities across district, school, classroom, and family levels. District leaders could provide common assessment procedures, instructional resources, and professional development; school heads could coordinate intervention schedules, resources, and monitoring; teachers could implement differentiated instruction and document learner progress; and families could provide manageable opportunities for reading practice at home. This coordinated approach is consistent with the broader direction of EDCOM II, which emphasizes early childhood and primary education, learning outcomes by Grade 3, equitable access, data-informed decision-making, and community partnerships as important areas for Philippine education reform (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2025).

Component	**Identified need**	**Proposed response**	**Success indicator**
Early identification	Varied literacy profiles	CRLA/EGRA and classroom assessment	100% of participating learners screened at baseline; literacy need and intervention tier recorded
Foundational skills	Emerging sound and letter-sound skills	Explicit phonological awareness and phonics instruction	Mean domain score improves from baseline to quarterly assessment; target set by district after validation
Word recognition and fluency	Difficulty recognizing familiar words	Decodable texts, guided reading, and repeated reading	Accuracy and oral-reading fluency improve across two consecutive monitoring periods
Language and comprehension	Lowest performance in paragraph comprehension	Vocabulary, oral language, questioning, retelling, and sequencing	Paragraph-comprehension score improves from baseline; at least 80% of planned lessons include vocabulary and comprehension routines
Home literacy	Unequal access to reading materials	Take-home books, parent orientation, and storytelling guides	At least one documented home-reading activity weekly; lending records monitored monthly
Teacher development	Need for specialized literacy competence	ELLN, coaching, demonstration teaching, and LAC/SLAC	100% of Key Stage 1 teachers complete literacy-focused development and demonstrate assessment-informed lesson planning
Progress monitoring	Need to judge intervention effectiveness	Quarterly assessment and intervention review	Progress reviewed every quarter; intervention intensified, modified, or discontinued using documented decision rules

Table 14. Proposed Research-Derived Early Literacy Framework

Validation and testing plan. A panel of at least three qualified experts should evaluate relevance, clarity, feasibility, alignment, and measurability using a structured validation form. Item- and scale-level content-validity indices should be reported. The revised framework should then be pilot-tested in selected schools for one implementation cycle, with fidelity, usability, and learner-progress data used to refine the framework before wider adoption.

Overall, Table 14 translated the study's descriptive and inferential findings into a coherent, evidence-based, and context-responsive framework for emerging readers. The framework recognized that reading difficulties cannot be adequately addressed through isolated remediation. Instead, effective support requires the integration of early identification, systematic foundational literacy instruction, differentiated intervention, access to appropriate reading resources, family participation, literacy-focused teacher development, and continuous progress monitoring. These components are consistent with current Philippine priorities for strengthening foundational literacy, monitoring Key Stage 1 reading development, and improving teachers' capacity to provide targeted reading intervention (Department of Education, 2024, 2025; Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2025). When implemented consistently and evaluated through learner data, the proposed framework may provide a practical basis for strengthening early literacy instruction and intervention across Borongan 1 District.

DISCUSSION

The study described the reading profiles of 100 Key Stage 1 learners and examined learner-, home-, and teacher-related factors associated with reading proficiency. Across the four assessed domains, all mean scores remained at the emerging level. Letter-sound identification was comparatively strongest (M = 72.15, SD = 13.21), whereas basic paragraph comprehension was weakest (M = 58.73, SD = 17.18). This pattern indicated that learners had begun developing code-related skills but continued to require support in applying these skills to efficient word recognition and meaning construction.

The findings supported instruction that connected phonological awareness and phonics with word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension. The low paragraph-comprehension mean was especially important because improvement in isolated sound or letter tasks does not by itself demonstrate successful reading of connected text. Intervention should therefore combine explicit foundational-skills instruction with guided reading, vocabulary work, questioning, sequencing, and retelling, while using assessment results to determine the intensity of support required by each learner.

The omnibus analyses showed differences in proficiency according to age, grade level, maternal educational attainment, household income, and availability of reading materials, but not sex. The accompanying eta-squared estimates indicated meaningful variation across several groups. Nevertheless, the absence of verified post-hoc output prevented identification of the specific group pairs that differed. The findings should therefore be interpreted at the omnibus level until appropriate pairwise comparisons are added from the verified statistical output.

Teacher-related findings were analyzed at the teacher level (n = 20) by associating each teacher's professional profile with the mean proficiency of learners linked to that teacher. Specialized literacy training showed a moderate positive association with learner proficiency, whereas teaching experience and educational attainment were not significant. The result suggested the practical relevance of literacy-specific professional learning, but the small teacher sample and cross-sectional design did not support causal claims. Sustained coaching, collaborative planning, lesson observation, and analysis of learner data may be more useful than isolated training attendance alone.

The reported socio-environmental coefficients suggested that maternal education, household income, and especially access to reading materials were associated with proficiency. Access to appropriate texts is particularly actionable because schools can expand it through lending systems, take-home reading packs, classroom libraries, and locally developed materials. These supports should be accompanied by simple

guidance for shared reading, vocabulary discussion, questioning, and retelling so that family participation does not depend on advanced formal education or additional expenditure.

Because the study used a cross-sectional descriptive-correlational design, the reported relationships were interpreted as associations rather than causal effects. The analyses were bivariate and did not establish independent predictors. Accordingly, the findings were used to identify factors associated with emerging reading proficiency and to inform the proposed early literacy framework.

The proposed framework translated the observed literacy needs into seven connected components: early identification, foundational-skills instruction, word recognition and fluency, language and comprehension, home literacy support, teacher development, and progress monitoring. The framework was operationalized through measurable indicators, but it remained research-derived rather than validated. Expert review, content-validity evidence, pilot implementation, fidelity monitoring, and learner-outcome evaluation are required before it can be presented as an established district framework.

Overall, the findings indicated that emerging reading proficiency reflected interconnected instructional and contextual conditions. The most defensible response was a coordinated system in which learners were assessed regularly, instruction was differentiated, teachers received literacy-specific support, families gained access to usable reading resources, and intervention decisions were revised through progress data.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Emerging reading difficulties were present across Key Stage 1. Learners from Kindergarten to Grade 3 demonstrated differing levels of foundational reading development, indicating that reading difficulties were not limited to beginning readers but could persist as learners progressed through the early grades.
2. The learners' home environments differed considerably in the literacy opportunities available to them. Differences in maternal educational attainment, household income, and access to reading materials reflected unequal conditions for supporting reading outside school. In particular, the availability of reading materials emerged as an important factor associated with reading proficiency.
3. The learners remained at the emerging level across all assessed foundational literacy domains. Letter-sound identification obtained the highest performance, while basic paragraph comprehension was the weakest area. This showed that learners had begun developing basic decoding-related skills but continued to need support in moving from word-level reading toward understanding connected text.
4. Reading proficiency differed according to selected learner and socio-environmental characteristics. Significant differences were found according to age, grade level, maternal educational attainment, household income, and availability of reading materials at home. No significant difference was found according to sex. These findings indicated that reading performance varied across developmental and home contexts, although these differences should not be interpreted as causal relationships.
5. Specialized literacy training was the teacher-related variable significantly associated with reading proficiency. Teaching experience and highest educational attainment were not significantly related to learners' reading performance, whereas specialized literacy training showed a moderate positive relationship. This finding highlighted the importance of focused professional preparation in early literacy rather than relying on years of service or general academic qualifications alone.
6. Socio-environmental conditions were significantly associated with emerging reading proficiency. Maternal educational attainment, household income, and availability of reading materials were all positively related to reading performance, with access to reading materials showing the strongest relationship. Thus, learners' literacy development was associated not only with what occurred in the classroom but also with the opportunities available for reading and literacy engagement at home.
7. Emerging reading proficiency was associated with several interconnected learner, home, and teacher factors rather than a single condition. Because no complete regression model was available, the study did not establish independent predictors. The findings supported an integrated approach combining assessment, explicit foundational-skills instruction, differentiated intervention, teacher development, family participation, equitable access to reading materials, and regular monitoring.

8. Overall, the findings provided a basis for a proposed research-derived early literacy framework for Borongan 1 District. The framework requires formal expert validation, pilot implementation, and outcome evaluation before it can be described as established or adopted district-wide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Schools in Borongan 1 District should strengthen early identification and progress monitoring. Key Stage 1 learners should be regularly assessed to determine specific difficulties in phonological awareness, letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Assessment results should directly guide the type and intensity of intervention provided.
2. Greater instructional attention should be given to reading comprehension. Since basic paragraph comprehension obtained the lowest performance among the assessed literacy domains, teachers should provide more opportunities for vocabulary development, oral-language activities, guided reading, questioning, sequencing, retelling, and discussion of short texts. These activities should be integrated with continued instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, and word recognition.
3. Reading intervention should be differentiated according to learners' assessed needs. Learners experiencing difficulty with phonological awareness should receive explicit sound-based activities, while those with difficulties in letter-sound correspondence and word recognition should receive systematic decoding and repeated-reading practice. Learners experiencing comprehension difficulties should receive additional vocabulary, oral-language, fluency, and meaning-making activities.
4. The district should provide sustained specialized literacy training for Key Stage 1 teachers. Professional development should focus on administering and interpreting reading assessments, identifying specific literacy difficulties, delivering explicit foundational reading instruction, differentiating intervention, and monitoring learner progress. Training should be reinforced through coaching, demonstration teaching, collaborative lesson planning, classroom observation, and LAC or SLAC sessions.
5. Schools should expand learners' access to appropriate reading materials. Classroom libraries, book-lending systems, rotating reading kits, take-home reading packs, and locally developed texts should be strengthened, particularly for learners with limited materials at home. Materials should be age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and matched to learners' reading levels.
6. Home-school partnerships should be strengthened. Parents and guardians should be provided with simple and practical strategies for supporting reading at home, such as shared reading, storytelling, vocabulary activities, picture discussion, questioning, and retelling. Home literacy activities should be designed so that families can participate regardless of educational attainment or household income.
7. Additional support should be directed toward learners with fewer literacy opportunities without labeling or stigmatizing them. Socioeconomic characteristics should be used to identify possible resource and support gaps rather than to make assumptions about learners' abilities. Schools should maintain equally high expectations while providing additional resources where they are most needed.
8. The proposed research-derived early literacy framework should first undergo formal expert validation and pilot testing. Expert reviewers should evaluate its relevance, clarity, feasibility, alignment, and measurability. Pilot implementation should document fidelity, usability, learner progress, teacher participation, resource availability, and family engagement before district-wide adoption.
9. The effectiveness of literacy interventions should be regularly evaluated. Schools should use periodic reading assessment results to determine whether learners are progressing and whether particular interventions need to be continued, intensified, modified, or replaced.
10. Future researchers may extend the study to a larger population and other districts or schools. Future studies may also examine additional factors such as attendance, instructional time, class size, language exposure, learner motivation, parental involvement, and frequency of home reading. Longitudinal or intervention-based studies may provide stronger evidence on how these factors influence reading development over time.

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Compliance to Ethical Standards

The author declares that the study was conducted in strict compliance with applicable ethical standards.

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