# Phonological Awareness Skills and their Relationship to Early Reading Readiness among Kindergarten Learners

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## ABSTRACT

This study determined the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness among Kindergarten learners of Canlumampao Elementary School. Specifically, it examined learners' phonological awareness in terms of rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending, as well as their early reading readiness in terms of letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness. The study also investigated whether a significant relationship exists between the two variables. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. A total of 80 Kindergarten learners and two Kindergarten teachers served as respondents. The teachers provided assessment data based on structured classroom observations and researcher-made evaluation tools. Statistical treatments used included frequency and percentage for the learners' profile, weighted mean and standard deviation for the level of phonological awareness and early reading readiness, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the significant relationship between variables at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that Kindergarten learners demonstrated an overall advanced level of phonological awareness and a very high level of early reading readiness. Results further showed that all components of phonological awareness have significant positive relationships with early reading readiness, with sound blending and beginning sound identification showing strong correlations. Based on the findings, it was concluded that phonological awareness plays a vital role in the development of early reading readiness among Kindergarten learners.

**Keywords**: Education, phonological awareness, early reading readiness, descriptive-correlational research, Canlumampao Elementary School

## I.INTRODUCTION

Early reading readiness is fundamental to learners' long-term literacy development, with phonological awareness identified as a key predictor of beginning reading success. Globally, studies have shown that phonological awareness, particularly skills such as rhyming, syllable segmentation, beginning sound identification, and sound blending, plays a critical role in enabling children to decode words and develop reading fluency. Kiss and Csapó (2025) emphasized that phonological awareness assessed during kindergarten significantly predicts early reading performance. They identified segmentation and synthesis as among the most challenging yet essential skills for young learners.

In the Philippine context, early reading challenges remain a persistent concern. Data from school reading profiles reveal that only about 10% of learners reach independent reading levels, while the majority remain at frustration and instructional levels (Badillo, 2025). Similarly, Galvez and Marquez (2025) found that kindergarten learners often perform below expected benchmarks in emergent literacy, particularly in phonological awareness. These concerns are further supported by findings from the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) (2025), which reported that Toledo City ranked 4th in the lowest reading performance. This indicates that literacy gaps persist even within relatively performing divisions.

At the local level, these literacy concerns were likewise observed in Canlumampao Elementary School. Based on classroom observations and consultations with kindergarten teachers, many learners were able to recognize alphabet letters but experienced difficulty identifying beginning sounds, producing rhyming words, segmenting

syllables, and blending sounds to form simple words during oral language and pre-reading activities. For example, some learners could recite the alphabet but were unable to associate letter names with their corresponding sounds, while others struggled to blend individual phonemes to read simple consonant-vowel-

consonant (CVC) words. These learning difficulties affected the development of essential early reading readiness skills, including letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness. Supporting these observations, Ederio (2023) found variability in the phonological awareness skills of kindergarten learners, with only a moderate relationship between phonological awareness and reading competency.

Although previous studies consistently established the importance of phonological awareness in literacy development, most investigated it as part of broader emergent literacy skills or focused on the effectiveness of intervention programs rather than examining the relationship between specific phonological awareness domains and individual components of early reading readiness. Furthermore, limited empirical studies have been conducted in Cebu Province, particularly in Toledo City, that specifically examined how rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending relate to letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness among kindergarten learners. This lack of localized evidence created a need for further investigation to guide instructional practices in the early grades.

Given these research gaps and the classroom challenges observed in Canlumampao Elementary School, there was a need to investigate the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness among kindergarten learners. Determining this relationship would provide empirical evidence on which specific phonological awareness domains require greater instructional emphasis and would support teachers in designing developmentally appropriate literacy activities that strengthen learners' readiness for formal reading instruction.

Thus, this study determined the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of kindergarten learners in Canlumampao Elementary School, Toledo City, Cebu, during the School Year 2025 to 2026. The findings served as a basis for developing a phonological awareness enhancement guide to strengthen early literacy instruction and improve reading readiness among young learners.

**Theories**

This study is anchored on three major theories that explain the development of early literacy skills and the role of phonological awareness in early reading readiness: Emergent Literacy Theory, the Alphabetic Principle, and Ehri's Four Phases of Word Reading Development. These theories collectively explain how children develop foundational literacy skills, acquire sound-symbol knowledge, and progress toward reading readiness.

Emergent literacy is founded on the idea that children begin developing knowledge and skills related to reading, writing, and language long before they receive formal education (Clay, 1966). Emergent literacy begins at birth as children naturally acquire language through everyday interactions and communication. As they grow, they develop increasingly complex speaking and listening skills that form the foundation for later reading and writing. During the preschool years, children learn to use language to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings while building essential literacy skills that prepare them for formal education (Septiani & Syaodih, 2021). Moreover, this theory refers to the foundational language and literacy skills that children develop before formal reading and writing instruction. It includes oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and early writing, which are acquired through meaningful interactions and everyday experiences in language-rich environments. These early skills provide the basis for later reading achievement and academic success (Lemire & Paul, 2026). This theory directly supports the early reading readiness variables of letter recognition, vocabulary development, and print awareness. Vygotsky (1978) further emphasized that learning occurs through social interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development, where guided instruction supports literacy growth.

Robust empirical support for Emergent Literacy Theory is demonstrated by a series of global and local investigations that link structural environments to early reading readiness. Globally, Lemire and Paul (2026) provided longitudinal evidence showing that baseline phonological awareness and oral language skills in early childhood account for a major percentage of variance in formal reading achievement, acting as a critical cognitive

buffer against future reading difficulties. This environmental dependency is further validated by Hsin and Wu (2021), whose experimental trials proved that interactive, dialogic storybook reading strategies, where

educators deliberately emphasize word sounds and alliteration, sharply accelerate rhyme detection and phoneme isolation. Similarly, Neumann (2020) demonstrated that parent-guided exploration of environmental print coupled with deliberate letter-sounding significantly boosts both early phonetic interest and letter-sound knowledge in young learners.

In terms of instructional delivery mediums, Jiménez et al. (2024) established that phonetically aligned digital applications featuring real-time audio feedback loops function as a highly interactive modern environment that accelerates phonemic segmenting and blending. Conversely, the absence of these supportive settings creates severe developmental bottlenecks. In the Philippine context, Galvez and Marquez (2025) provided empirical evidence showing a high prevalence of emergent literacy delays, particularly in phoneme isolation and blending, among kindergarten learners who lacked print exposure and active language interactions in low-income home environments. Badillo (2025) reinforced these findings by comparing public and private settings, proving that children embedded in speech-saturated and highly interactive environments scored significantly higher on standardized phonological sensitivity diagnostics. Additionally, Septiani and Syaodih (2021) confirmed that a child's capacity to complexly utilize expressive language and distinctively isolate sounds within natural speech strongly dictates their subsequent success in formal decoding, indicating that early speech environments serve as the primary catalyst for early reading readiness.

The Alphabetic Principle explains that written language is based on systematic relationships between letters and sounds, providing the foundation for decoding and early reading acquisition. This principle supports the development of phonological awareness skills, including rhyming, syllable awareness, phoneme identification, segmentation, and blending. Recent evidence continues to identify phonological awareness as a key predictor of reading readiness and early literacy development.

Empirical evidence validating the direct relationship between this principle and early reading readiness is found in a large-scale meta-analysis by Odo (2021), which proved that structured, explicit phonological awareness combined with synthetic phonics instruction yields statistically significant, high-magnitude positive effects on both real word and pseudoword reading, accelerating a learner's transition into systematic decoding. Additionally, Míguez-Álvarez et al. (2022) provided global empirical validation through a cross-linguistic meta-analysis confirming that the strong relationship between early phonological sensitivity and subsequent reading success remains stable, positive, and invariant across various alphabetic languages, establishing it as a universal cognitive prerequisite. When children struggle to grasp this sound-symbol connection, targeted structural interventions are required. Eccles et al. (2021) provided longitudinal evidence showing that intensive, tier-2 small-group interventions focusing strictly on phonological remediation successfully altered the negative reading trajectory of over 80% of at-risk primary learners, bringing their reading readiness competencies up to age-appropriate baselines. Furthermore, Herrera et al. (2021) utilized a mixed-methods framework to demonstrate that explicit decoding and phonological training modules yielded universally positive literacy gains across culturally and linguistically diverse student demographics while significantly increasing instructional efficacy.

Ehri's Four Phases of Word Reading Development describe how children progress from the pre-alphabetic and partial alphabetic phases to the full and consolidated alphabetic phases as they acquire increasingly sophisticated letter-sound knowledge and word recognition skills. This theory supports the present study by explaining how phonological awareness enables children to transition from recognizing purely visual cues to decoding words through systematic letter-sound correspondences, thereby securing early reading readiness. Recent evidence continues to affirm that phonological awareness is a critical predictor of early reading development.

In the Philippine educational context, Abdon and Barrios (2022) provided empirical evidence for this developmental progression by demonstrating that kindergarten learners exposed to targeted phonological awareness instruction achieved significantly higher reading readiness and word-reading scores than those exposed to traditional unaligned reading routines, proving that direct training in sound segmenting and blending moves children efficiently along Ehri's alphabetic continuum. The execution of this framework relies heavily on classroom leadership, as Arceo-Elemento and Capinpin (2024) demonstrated a significant positive correlation

between a teacher's specialized pedagogical content knowledge of phonological awareness and the corresponding word-reading phases achieved by their classes.

Furthermore, this developmental progression encounters unique challenges in marginalized spaces. Santos (2022) exposed severe deficits in syllable deletion and initial sound identification tasks among entering public school kindergarteners in rural communities, attributing these delays to a critical lack of early literacy resources necessary to push learners out of the pre-alphabetic phase. Resolving these localized reading readiness deficits requires leveraging cross-linguistic frameworks. Villanueva (2023) provided empirical support via structural equation modeling showing that phonological awareness developed in a child's mother tongue (L1) directly transfers to and predicts reading readiness in secondary languages (L2/L3), allowing multilingual Filipino learners to navigate advanced alphabetic reading phases with significantly less resistance. Collectively, these recent studies provide strong empirical support for Ehri's theory by demonstrating that strong phonological awareness facilitates children's progression toward accurate, fluent, and multi-lingual word reading.

**Legal Basis**

Anchoring these theories and empirical findings within the Philippine educational system, three major legal bases directly mandate, support, and justify the execution of this study. First, the Republic Act No. 10157 (The Kindergarten Education Act) mandates kindergarten education as a compulsory and integral component of basic education, explicitly emphasizing that the curriculum must be designed to develop foundational literacy skills, including phonological awareness, to guarantee early reading readiness before primary schooling begins. Second, DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016 (The Omnibus Policy Guidelines on Kindergarten Education) provides concrete operational directives for implementing developmentally appropriate instruction, explicitly targeting the systematic cultivation of emergent literacy, language development, and phonetic exploration within child-centered environments. Finally, DepEd Department Memorandum No. 064, s. 2025 strengthens contemporary national reading interventions by mandating a focused focus on foundational sub-skills, explicitly identifying phonological awareness and decoding as the primary target mechanisms for correcting reading difficulties among early grade learners. These legal frameworks collectively ensure that early childhood literacy instruction is legally prioritized in kindergarten education and that reading readiness skills are systematically developed and measured.

In synthesis, Emergent Literacy Theory explains how early social and language environments shape foundational pre-reading behaviors; the Alphabetic Principle explains how children master the systematic sound-symbol relationships necessary for decoding; and Ehri's Four Phases of Word Reading Development explain how phonological awareness allows children to progress sequentially from visual guessers to accurate, fluent decoders. Supported by an international, national, and local empirical matrix of 15 distinct studies, these theories confirm that phonological awareness is a critical, non-negotiable foundation for early reading readiness. Together with the legal mandates of Republic Act No. 10157, DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, and DepEd Memorandum No. 064, s. 2025, these frameworks provide a rigorous theoretical and policy-driven basis for examining the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness among kindergarten learners, directly justifying the development of targeted instructional interventions to optimize early literacy outcomes.

**Significance of the Study**

This study examined the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness among kindergarten learners and aimed to provide a basis for a phonological awareness enhancement guide. The findings are expected to benefit the following stakeholders: Kindergarten learners and teachers, school administrators, parents and guardians, curriculum planners and policymakers, the researcher and the future researchers.

**Objectives of the Study**

This study explores the parental demographic and socioeconomic profiles, knowledge, and barriers on access to

This study aimed to determine the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners in Canlumampao Elementary School during the School Year 2025–2026 as basis for phonological awareness enhancement guide.

Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the Kindergarten learners in terms of:

1.1 age;

1.2 gender; and

1.3 pre-kindergarten attendance?

2. What is the level of phonological awareness skills of Kindergarten learners in terms of:

2.1 Rhyming skills;

2.2 Syllable awareness;

2.3 Beginning sound identification; and

2.4 Sound blending?

3. What is the level of early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners in terms of:

3.1 Letter recognition;

3.2 Letter-sound correspondence;

3.3 Vocabulary development; and

3.4 Print awareness?

4. Is there a significant relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners?

5. Based on the findings, what phonological awareness enhancement guide may be developed to support early reading readiness among Kindergarten learners?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research design, environment, respondents, instruments, procedures, and the statistical methods to be used for data analysis. It aims to provide a clear overview of the approaches and techniques applied throughout the study.

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness among kindergarten learners. The descriptive component was used to determine the levels of phonological awareness and early reading readiness across their respective domains. The correlational component was used to examine whether a significant relationship existed between the two variables.

A descriptive-correlational design was appropriate for this study because it described the characteristics of the variables and examined the degree of relationship between them without manipulating any conditions or variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since no intervention or experimental treatment was implemented, the

study focused on naturally occurring literacy behaviors among kindergarten learners, as observed and assessed by their teachers.

Correlational research determined the strength and direction of the relationship between variables using statistical measures such as the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) (Fraenkel et al., 2019). In this study, descriptive statistics, particularly the mean, were used to determine the levels of phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness, while Pearson's r was used to analyze the relationship between the two variables.

Through this design, the study determined whether higher levels of phonological awareness skills were significantly associated with higher levels of early reading readiness among kindergarten learners.

**Environment**

The study was conducted in Canlumampao Elementary School in Toledo City Division. It is a public elementary institution situated in a rural barangay within Toledo City, Cebu. Established to provide accessible and quality basic education to learners in the community, the school has continuously served as a center for foundational learning and child development for several years. Over time, it has adapted to various educational reforms and initiatives introduced by the Department of Education, ensuring that its programs remain aligned with national standards and responsive to the needs of its learners.

The school offers complete elementary education, from Kindergarten to Grade 6, implementing the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum. In the Kindergarten level, the curriculum focuses on developing early literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional skills, and physical development through play-based and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Emphasis is placed on the development of foundational skills such as phonological awareness, which is essential for early reading readiness.

In terms of facilities and resources, the school is equipped with basic classrooms, learning materials, and instructional tools that support both traditional and interactive teaching strategies. It also participates in various national programs such as the National Reading Program, National Mathematics Program, and Catch-Up Fridays, which aim to enhance learners' academic performance, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

Throughout its years of operation, the school has achieved several milestones that reflect its commitment to quality education. These include active participation in division-level academic competitions, consistent implementation of school-based reading interventions, and engagement in professional development programs for teachers. The school has also strengthened its collaboration with stakeholders, including parents and the local community, to support learners' holistic development.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain, particularly in addressing the diverse learning needs of early learners. Observations in the Kindergarten level reveal that while many learners can recognize letters, a number still experience difficulty in developing phonological awareness skills. This highlights the need for targeted instructional strategies and interventions to improve early literacy outcomes.

Given this context, Canlumampao Elementary School provides a relevant and meaningful setting for the study, as it reflects both the progress and challenges encountered in fostering foundational literacy skills among young learners.

**Instrument**

The instrument used in this study was a researcher-made Kindergarten Literacy Observation Scale designed to measure the phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners. The tool was developed based on established early literacy theories, particularly Emergent Literacy Theory, The Alphabetic Principle, and Ehri's Four Phases of Word Reading, as well as the competencies outlined in the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide. Although it was not adapted from any standardized instrument, it was carefully constructed to ensure alignment with the developmental characteristics and literacy needs of Kindergarten learners.

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The instrument consisted of three parts.

Part I gathered the demographic profile of the learners in terms of age, gender, and pre-kindergarten attendance.

Part II assessed phonological awareness skills in terms of rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending.

Part III measured early reading readiness in terms of letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness.

All items were rated by Kindergarten teachers using a four-point Likert scale: 4 (Always Demonstrated), 3 (Often Demonstrated), 2 (Sometimes Demonstrated), and 1 (Rarely Demonstrated). Higher scores indicated a stronger demonstration of phonological awareness and early reading readiness skills among learners.

Prior to field deployment, the structural integrity and contextual alignment of the tool were subjected to a rigorous face and content validation process. The validation panel consisted of three (3) external subject-matter experts chosen based on strict professional qualifications: one university professor specializing in early childhood education and curriculum development, one master teacher in primary grade reading instruction, and one education program supervisor in language and literacy. These validators systematically evaluated the initial item pool to ensure maximum content relevance, linguistic clarity, structural simplicity, and explicit alignment with the core research objectives. Valuable feedback regarding contextual modifications and item phrasing was incorporated into the final revision of the tool.

Following content validation, a pilot test was administered to a non-participating cohort of kindergarten pupils exhibiting identical characteristics to the actual target population. The gathered pilot data was subjected to statistical reliability testing to measure internal consistency. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.988 for Part II (Phonological Awareness Scale) and 0.987 for Part III (Early Reading Readiness Scale). These statistical outputs fall well above the standard acceptable threshold, indicating excellent internal consistency and verifying that the researcher-made instrument was highly dependable for formal data collection.

**Data Gathering Procedure**

The data for this study were collected in a systematic and ethical manner following three stages: preliminary stage, data gathering stage, and post-data gathering stage. The procedures were designed to ensure accuracy, validity, and ethical compliance in assessing kindergarten learners' phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness as evaluated by their teachers.

Preliminary Stage. Prior to data collection, the researcher secured formal approval from the Department of Education and the school head of the participating school, Canlumampao Elementary School in Toledo City. Since the study involved the evaluation of minors, informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of the kindergarten learners to ensure ethical compliance and data privacy. The consent process emphasized that the learners would not be directly tested by the researcher and that the information to be gathered would be based on teacher assessments.

An orientation was conducted with the kindergarten teacher-respondents to explain the purpose of the study, the nature of the assessment tool, and the procedures for accomplishing the rating forms. This ensured that all teachers had a clear and uniform understanding of how to evaluate learners' phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness based on classroom observations and existing learner performance. The assessment instrument was reviewed and finalized before implementation to ensure clarity, appropriateness, and alignment with kindergarten-level competencies.

Data Gathering Stage. After securing all necessary permissions and finalizing the instrument, the researcher distributed the assessment forms to the teacher-respondents at Canlumampao Elementary School. The kindergarten teachers accomplished the rating tools based on their actual classroom observations of the kindergarten learners under their care. The teachers assessed each learner's phonological awareness in terms of rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending. They also evaluated

early reading readiness in terms of letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness.

Teachers completed the assessment independently based on their professional judgment and classroom records to ensure accuracy and authenticity of data. The researcher monitored the process to ensure consistency in the completion of the instruments and to address any clarification needed regarding the rating procedure. After completion, all assessment forms were collected and checked for completeness before encoding.

Post-Data Gathering Stage. After data collection, the researcher organized and coded all responses for analysis. Each teacher-respondent's assessment data was reviewed to ensure completeness and consistency. Any incomplete entries were documented but retained as part of the dataset to preserve data integrity. The encoded data were then prepared for statistical analysis to determine the level of phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of the kindergarten learners as assessed by their teachers, as well as the relationship between the two variables.

All data were kept confidential and were used solely for research purposes. The findings were then organized and presented in the succeeding chapters in accordance with the objectives of the study.

**Statistical Treatment**

To ensure accurate interpretation of the data collected, the following statistical tools were used in accordance with the objectives of the study:

Frequency Count. Frequency count was used to determine the number of kindergarten learners based on profile variables such as age, gender, and preschool attendance. This statistical tool was used to present the actual number of respondents in each category in a clear and organized manner.

Percentage. The percentage was used to describe the distribution of kindergarten learners according to their profile variables. This helped present the proportion of learners in each category relative to the total number of respondents, making the data easier to interpret and compare.

Weighted Mean. The weighted mean was used to determine the level of phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of kindergarten learners as assessed by their teachers. Using a four-point Likert scale, the weighted mean provided a numerical interpretation of the learners' performance in terms of rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, sound blending, letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness.

Standard Deviation. Standard deviation was used to measure the variability of the learners' phonological awareness and early reading readiness scores. This statistical tool determined whether the learners' performances were closely similar or widely varied in terms of literacy skills as assessed by their teachers.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r). Pearson r was used to determine the significant relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of kindergarten learners. This statistical tool measured the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables. The results served as a basis for developing a phonological awareness enhancement guide to improve early reading readiness.

**Ethical Consideration**

The study observed strict ethical standards to ensure that all procedures were conducted with respect, integrity, and protection of the rights and welfare of all individuals involved. Since the study involved kindergarten learners as the subjects of assessment and kindergarten teachers as respondents, appropriate ethical safeguards were implemented throughout the research process.

Informed Consent. Informed consent was secured from the parents or legal guardians of the kindergarten learners prior to data collection. The consent form clearly explained the purpose of the study, the procedures involved,

and the use of teacher-based assessments to evaluate learners' phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness. Parents were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could refuse or withdraw consent at any time without any negative consequences for their children.

In addition, informed consent was also obtained from the kindergarten teacher-respondents. Teachers were informed about the objectives of the study, their role as evaluators, and the voluntary nature of their participation.

Voluntary Participation. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary for both teachers and learners (through parental consent). Teachers were given the freedom to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Likewise, learners were included in the assessment only upon parental approval. No form of coercion or pressure was applied at any point in the research process.

Confidentiality and Anonymity. Confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the study. No names of learners or teachers were used in the data collection forms, analysis, or final report. Instead, coded identifiers were assigned to ensure anonymity. All collected data were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. Results were presented in aggregated form to ensure that no individual participant could be identified.

Protection of Participants' Rights. The rights of all participants were fully protected throughout the study. Learners were not directly tested by the researcher and were not exposed to any stressful or inappropriate procedures. Instead, their performance was assessed through teacher observations within normal classroom activities. Teachers' professional judgment was respected, and they were not required to provide any information beyond the scope of the study. All procedures were designed to ensure that participants were treated fairly, respectfully, and in accordance with ethical research standards.

Minimization of Risk. The study involved minimal risk since no experimental treatment or intrusive procedures were conducted. Data collection relied solely on teacher-based assessments of existing classroom performance. The process did not disrupt regular instructional activities and ensured that learners remained in a safe and familiar learning environment.

Compliance with Ethical Standards. The study complied with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Education and followed institutional research approval procedures prior to implementation. All stages of the research were conducted with transparency, accountability, and strict adherence to ethical principles to ensure the protection and welfare of learners, teachers, and the school community.

## RESULTS

This chapter presented and interpreted the data on the phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of kindergarten learners in Canlumampao Elementary School. It included the respondents' assessment of learners' phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness across the identified domains, as well as the relationship between these two variables. The findings served as the basis for a proposed phonological awareness enhancement guide aimed at strengthening early literacy instruction and improving reading readiness among kindergarten learners.

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

This section presented the age, gender, and the pre-kindergarten attendance of the learners.

### Age of the Learners

Age is included in this study because it represents the learner's developmental stage, which is closely associated with the acquisition of early literacy skills. In kindergarten, even small differences in age may influence attention span, language development, and readiness for phonological tasks such as sound recognition and blending. Examining age helps determine whether maturity level contributes to variations in phonological awareness and early reading readiness among learners.

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Table 2

Age of the learners

| Age (in years) | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | 1 | 1.25 |
| 6 | 71 | 88.75 |
| 5 | 8 | 10 |
| **Total** | **80** | **100** |

The data show that the majority of the Kindergarten learners are 6 years old, comprising 88.75% of the total respondents. Only 10.00% are 5 years old, while a very small portion, 1.25%, are already 7 years old. This indicates that most learners fall within the expected age range for Kindergarten, with a few who are either slightly younger or older than the typical age group.

This distribution suggests that the learners are generally developmentally appropriate for Kindergarten instruction, particularly in terms of readiness for early literacy skills. Learners who are within the expected age range are more likely to demonstrate skills aligned with phonological awareness and early reading readiness. However, the presence of younger and older learners may require differentiated instruction to address varying levels of cognitive and language development. This implies that teachers need to adjust their strategies to accommodate diverse learning needs within the classroom.

Existing studies support the importance of age in early literacy development. Research has shown that children within the appropriate age range tend to have better readiness for reading-related tasks, including phonological awareness (Duncan et al., 2020). Similarly, a study by Lonigan et al. (2022) emphasized that age-related maturity significantly influences the development of early literacy skills, particularly in sound recognition and language processing. These findings affirm that age plays a crucial role in shaping learners' readiness and performance in early reading.

**Gender of the Learners**

Gender is considered in this study to determine whether there are possible differences between male and female kindergarten learners in developing phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness. Previous literacy development patterns suggest that gender may influence language exposure, participation in oral activities, and learning behaviors. Including gender allows for a more comprehensive understanding of learner differences in early literacy development.

Table 3

Gender of the learners

| Gender | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 32 | 40 |
| Male | 48 | 60 |
| **Total** | **80** | **100** |

The data reveal that 60.00% of the learners are male, while 40.00% are female. This indicates a slightly higher proportion of male learners in the Kindergarten population of the school.

This gender distribution suggests that classroom dynamics may be influenced by differences in learning behaviors commonly associated with gender. While both male and female learners are capable of developing phonological awareness and reading readiness skills, some studies suggest that females may develop language skills earlier than males. This implies that teachers should employ inclusive and varied instructional strategies that cater to different learning styles and engagement levels among learners, regardless of gender.

Supporting literature indicates that gender differences may have a minimal but notable influence on early literacy development. According to a study by McTigue et al. (2020), female learners tend to show slightly higher performance in early reading and language-related tasks compared to male learners. However, the study also emphasized that instructional quality and learning environment play a more significant role than gender alone. This suggests that effective teaching strategies can bridge any gender-related differences in literacy development.

**Pre-kindergarten Attendance**

Pre-kindergarten attendance is included because early exposure to structured learning environments may influence the development of foundational literacy skills. Learners who attended pre-kindergarten may have prior experiences in letter recognition, sound awareness, and print exposure, which can contribute to higher levels of phonological awareness and reading readiness. This variable helps determine whether early childhood education experiences provide an advantage in preparing learners for formal reading instruction in kindergarten.

Table 4

Learners' Pre-Kindergarten attendance

| Attendance | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 60 | 75 |
| No | 20 | 25 |
| **Total** | **80** | **100** |

The results show that 75.00% of the learners attended pre-kindergarten programs, while 25.00% did not. This indicates that a majority of the learners had prior exposure to early childhood education before entering Kindergarten.

This finding implies that most learners already have foundational skills that support phonological awareness and early reading readiness. Exposure to pre-kindergarten education often provides children with early experiences in language development, social interaction, and structured learning. On the other hand, learners without such exposure may require additional support and intervention to catch up with their peers. This highlights the importance of bridging programs and differentiated instruction within the classroom.

Research supports the positive impact of pre-kindergarten attendance on early literacy development. A study by Yoshikawa et al. (2020) found that children who attended early childhood education programs demonstrated stronger language and literacy skills compared to those who did not. Similarly, Weiland and Yoshikawa (2021) emphasized that early educational experiences significantly contribute to the development of phonological awareness and reading readiness. These findings reinforce the importance of early exposure to structured learning environments in enhancing literacy outcomes.

## LEVEL OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS SKILLS

The level of phonological awareness skills is a critical component in understanding kindergarten learners' readiness for early reading instruction. It refers to the learners' ability to recognize and manipulate the sound structures of spoken language, which serves as a foundational skill for decoding and word recognition.

In this study, phonological awareness is assessed through key domains such as rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending. Determining the level of these skills provides important baseline information on how well learners can process and work with sounds in words, which is essential for the development of early reading readiness.

**Rhyming Skills**

This section presents the learners' level of awareness in rhyming skills. It reflects their ability to recognize and produce words with similar ending sounds, which is important for identifying sound patterns in language.

Table 5

Level of phonological awareness skills of Kindergarten learners in terms of rhyming skills

| S/N | Indicators | WM | SD | Verbal Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Identifies rhyming words when heard orally | 2.73 | 1.02 | Advanced |
| 2 | Selects a rhyming word from given choices | 2.54 | 1.05 | Advanced |
| 3 | Produces a rhyming word independently | 2.55 | 1.09 | Advanced |
| 4 | Completes a rhyme in familiar patterns | 2.68 | 1.06 | Advanced |
| 5 | Distinguishes rhyming from non-rhyming words | 2.68 | 0.99 | Advanced |
| 6 | Participates actively in rhyming games | 2.95 | 1.04 | Advanced |
| 7 | Generates more than one rhyming word | 2.63 | 0.93 | Advanced |
| 8 | Responds accurately during rhyming activities | 2.95 | 1.04 | Advanced |
| | **Aggregate Mean** | **2.71** | | |
| | **Aggregate Standard Deviation** | | **1.03** | **Advanced** |

Legend: 3.25-4.00-Expert; 2.50-3.24-Advanced; 1.75-2.49-Intermediate; 1.00-1.74- Beginner

The results indicate that Kindergarten learners demonstrate an overall advanced level of rhyming skills, with an aggregate mean of 2.71. All indicators, such as identifying rhyming words, selecting rhyming pairs, producing rhymes independently, and participating in rhyming activities, consistently fall under the advanced level. The highest weighted means were observed in learners' participation in rhyming games and their responsiveness during rhyming activities, suggesting strong engagement in oral language tasks. However, the relatively higher standard deviation in some indicators implies variability in individual performance among learners.

This finding implies that learners are generally capable of recognizing and engaging with rhyme patterns, which is a foundational skill in phonological awareness and early reading development. Strong rhyming ability supports learners in developing sensitivity to sound patterns in language, which is essential for decoding and word recognition in later reading stages. However, the variation in responses suggests that some learners may still need targeted reinforcement, particularly in producing rhymes independently. This highlights the importance of interactive and repetitive oral language activities in strengthening phonological sensitivity.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of rhyming skills in early literacy development. According to Suggate et al. (2020), rhyming ability is a strong predictor of later reading success because it enhances children's awareness of sound structures in language. Similarly, Schmitt et al. (2021) found that early exposure to rhyme-based activities significantly improves phonological processing skills and supports decoding development. Moreover, Piasta et al. (2022) emphasized that consistent engagement in playful literacy activities, including rhyming games, strengthens emergent reading skills in early childhood learners. These studies collectively affirm that rhyming activities are essential in building foundational literacy skills among Kindergarten learners.

**Syllable Awareness**

This section presents the learners' level of awareness in syllable awareness. It shows their ability to segment words into syllables, helping them understand word structure and improve decoding skills.

Table 6 Level of phonological awareness skills of Kindergarten learners in terms of syllable awareness

| S/N | Indicators | WM | SD | Verbal Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Claps syllables correctly in familiar words | 3.29 | 0.94 | Expert |
| 2 | Identifies syllables in own name | 3.51 | 0.6 | Expert |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Differentiates short and long words by syllables | 2.98 | 1.12 | Advanced |
| 4 | Segments unfamiliar simple words | 2.9 | 1.11 | Advanced |
| | **Aggregate Mean** | **3.17** | | |
| | **Aggregate Standard Deviation** | | **0.94** | **Advanced** |

The data reveal that Kindergarten learners demonstrate an overall advanced level of syllable awareness, with an aggregate mean of 3.17. Two indicators, specifically clapping syllables in familiar words and identifying syllables in their own names, are rated at the expert level, indicating strong mastery in familiar and meaningful contexts.

However, indicators involving unfamiliar words show slightly lower ratings, though still within the advanced level, suggesting some difficulty when tasks become less familiar or more complex.

This implies that learners have already developed strong foundational awareness of syllables, particularly in familiar and personal contexts such as their names. This skill is important in early literacy because syllable segmentation supports word decoding and pronunciation.

However, the decrease in performance for unfamiliar words suggests that learners still require guided practice in transferring this skill to new vocabulary. This highlights the need for structured syllable manipulation activities that gradually increase in difficulty to strengthen generalization of skills.

Studies support the role of syllable awareness in early reading development. Anthony and Francis (2020) emphasized that syllable segmentation is a critical precursor to phonemic awareness and reading fluency. Likewise, Kim and Petscher (2021) found that early mastery of syllable awareness significantly contributes to decoding ability in beginning readers. Additionally, Snow and Matthews (2020) highlighted that instructional activities involving clapping, tapping, and oral segmentation of syllables enhance phonological processing in young learners. These findings reinforce the importance of syllable-based activities in developing early reading readiness.

**Beginning Sound Identification**

This section presents the learners' level of awareness in beginning sound identification. It indicates their ability to recognize the initial sounds of words, a key skill in linking sounds to letters.

Table 7

Level of phonological awareness skills of Kindergarten learners in terms of beginning sound identification

| S/N | Indicators | WM | SD | Verbal Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Names objects that begin with given sound | 3.21 | 0.94 | Advanced |
| 2 | Recognizes beginning sounds in classroom objects | 3.28 | 0.81 | Expert |
| 3 | Demonstrates consistency in identifying initial sounds | 3.11 | 1.09 | Advanced |
| | **Aggregate Mean** | **3.2** | | |
| | **Aggregate Standard Deviation** | | **0.95** | **Advanced** |

The results show that Kindergarten learners exhibit an overall advanced level of beginning sound identification, with an aggregate mean of 3.20. Among the indicators, recognizing beginning sounds in classroom objects reached an expert level, indicating strong performance in familiar, context-based learning. The other indicators, such as naming objects with specific initial sounds and demonstrating consistency, are rated as advanced, showing generally strong but still developing mastery.

This suggests that learners are capable of identifying initial sounds in words, which is a critical component of phonological awareness. Beginning sound identification helps learners connect spoken language to written symbols, supporting early decoding skills. However, the slight variation in consistency indicates that some

learners may still struggle when tasks are less structured or require independent recall. This implies the need for more repetitive, multisensory activities such as sound sorting and picture-word matching to strengthen consistency in performance.

Research highlights the importance of initial sound recognition in early literacy development. Ehri et al. (2020) emphasized that phonemic awareness, particularly initial sound identification, is strongly linked to successful reading acquisition. Similarly, Piasta and Wagner (2021) found that children who demonstrate strong onset sound awareness are more likely to develop efficient word decoding skills.

Furthermore, Lonigan et al. (2022) noted that structured phonological awareness instruction significantly improves learners' ability to identify and manipulate sounds in spoken language. These studies support the finding that beginning sound awareness is a foundational skill for reading readiness.

**Sound Blending**

This section presents the learners' level of awareness in sound blending. It demonstrates their ability to combine individual sounds to form words, which is essential for fluent reading.

Table 8

Level of phonological awareness skills of Kindergarten learners in terms of sound blending

| S/N | Indicators | WM | SD | Verbal Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Blends two phonemes correctly | 2.96 | 1.06 | Advanced |
| 2 | Blends sounds without visual prompts | 3.13 | 0.83 | Advanced |
| 3 | Blends sounds with minimal assistance | 3.16 | 0.86 | Advanced |
| 4 | Shows improvement in blending tasks | 3.13 | 0.66 | Advanced |
| | **Aggregate Mean** | **3.09** | | |
| | **Aggregate Standard Deviation** | | **0.85** | **Advanced** |

The results show that Kindergarten learners demonstrate an overall advanced level of sound blending, with an aggregate mean of 3.09. All indicators, including blending two phonemes correctly, blending sounds without visual prompts, blending with minimal assistance, and showing improvement in blending tasks, consistently fall under the advanced level.

Among these, learners performed slightly better when minimal assistance was provided, suggesting that guided learning still plays an important role in their performance. The relatively low standard deviation also indicates that learners' responses are generally consistent.

This finding implies that learners are already developing the ability to combine individual sounds to form words, which is a critical step in phonological awareness and early reading development. Sound blending is particularly important because it directly supports decoding skills, allowing learners to read unfamiliar words more independently.

However, the presence of moderate variability across indicators suggests that some learners still rely on visual cues or teacher support. This highlights the need for more independent blending activities, such as oral sound manipulation exercises and structured phonics practice.

Recent literature emphasizes the importance of sound blending in early literacy acquisition. According to Hog-

an et al. (2020), phoneme blending is one of the strongest predictors of reading success in early grades because it directly supports word decoding. Similarly, Foorman et al. (2021) found that explicit instruction in blending phonemes significantly improves learners' reading fluency and accuracy.

In addition, Torgesen et al. (2022) emphasized that systematic phonemic awareness instruction, particularly blending tasks, leads to substantial gains in early reading achievement. These studies support the idea that strengthening blending skills is essential in preparing Kindergarten learners for formal reading instruction.

**Summary**

This section summarizes the Kindergarten learners' level of phonological awareness in terms of rhyming, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending. It presents their overall performance and highlights areas for further support in early literacy development.

Table 9

Summary of the level of phonological awareness skills of Kindergarten learners

| **Components** | **WM** | **SD** | **Verbal Description** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rhyming Skills | 2.71 | 1.03 | Advanced |
| Syllable Awareness | 3.17 | 0.94 | Advanced |
| Beginning Sound Identification | 3.2 | 0.95 | Advanced |
| Sound Blending | 3.09 | 0.85 | Advanced |
| **Grand Mean** | **3.04** | | |
| **Grand Standard Deviation** | | **0.94** | **Advanced** |

The summary of phonological awareness skills shows that Kindergarten learners are at an overall advanced level, with a grand mean of 3.04. Among the components, beginning sound identification obtained the highest mean (3.20), followed closely by syllable awareness (3.17) and sound blending (3.09), while rhyming skills obtained the lowest mean (2.71), though still within the advanced level. This indicates that learners demonstrate stronger performance in sound identification and manipulation tasks compared to rhyming activities.

This result implies that learners have developed a solid foundation in phonological awareness, particularly in skills that are more structured and directly linked to sound recognition and manipulation. The slightly lower performance in rhyming suggests that more abstract or language-based auditory discrimination tasks may still require further reinforcement. Overall, the findings indicate that learners are on track for early reading readiness, but continued exposure to varied phonological activities is necessary to ensure balanced skill development across all components.

Supporting literature confirms that phonological awareness is a multi-component skill that develops progressively in early childhood. According to Wagner et al. (2020), different domains of phonological awareness, such as rhyming, syllable awareness, and phoneme manipulation, develop at different rates and contribute collectively to reading readiness.

Likewise, Schmitt and Justice (2021) emphasized that instruction targeting multiple phonological skills leads to stronger literacy outcomes than focusing on a single component. Furthermore, Lonigan et al. (2022) found that children who demonstrate balanced development across phonological awareness domains are more likely to succeed in early reading tasks. These studies support the importance of providing comprehensive phonological awareness instruction in Kindergarten classrooms.

## LEVEL OF EARLY READING READINESS

The level of early reading readiness is a key indicator of how prepared kindergarten learners are to engage in formal reading instruction. It refers to the extent to which learners demonstrate foundational literacy skills that support beginning reading, including letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness. In this study, early reading readiness is assessed through teacher observations of these specific domains to determine how well learners are prepared to transition into more structured reading activities in the early grades. Identifying the level of early reading readiness provides essential information for understanding learners' literacy development and for guiding appropriate instructional support.

**Letter Recognition**

This presents the Kindergarten pupils' level of letter recognition, which reflects their ability to identify and name letters as a foundation for readiness.

Table 10

Level of early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners in terms of letter recognition

| S/N | Indicators | WM | SD | Verbal Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Identifies letters in random order | 3.1 | 0.85 | High |
| 2 | Identifies letters in environmental print | 3.24 | 0.77 | High |
| 3 | Identifies letters in own name | 3.81 | 0.39 | Very High |
| 4 | Participates in letter recognition activities | 3.63 | 0.56 | Very High |
| | **Aggregate Mean** | **3.44** | | **Very High** |
| | **Aggregate Standard Deviation** | | **0.64** | |

Legend: 3.25-4.00-Very High; 2.50-3.24-High; 1.75-2.49-Low; 1.00-1.74- Very Low

The results reveal that Kindergarten learners demonstrate an overall very high level of letter recognition, with an aggregate mean of 3.44. Among the indicators, identifying letters in their own name and participating in letter recognition activities obtained the highest ratings, both interpreted as very high. Identifying letters in environmental print and in random order also yielded high ratings, indicating that learners are generally proficient in recognizing letters across different contexts.

This suggests that learners have developed strong foundational skills in alphabet knowledge, which is a critical component of early reading readiness. The ability to recognize letters, especially in meaningful contexts such as their own names and environmental print, indicates that learners are making important connections between print and spoken language. However, slight variation in performance across indicators suggests that recognition in less structured or random contexts may still require reinforcement. This implies the need for continued exposure to varied print materials and interactive alphabet activities to strengthen automaticity in letter recognition.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of letter recognition in early literacy development. According to Piasta et al. (2020), alphabet knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of later reading achievement because it supports decoding skills. Similarly, Justice et al. (2021) found that children with strong letter recognition skills demonstrate better performance in word reading and phonemic awareness tasks. Furthermore, McGinty and Justice (2022) highlighted that meaningful exposure to print, such as environmental labels and name-based learning, significantly enhances alphabet knowledge in early childhood learners. These findings support the importance of strengthening letter recognition as a foundation for reading readiness.

**Letter-Sound Correspondence**

This section presents the pupils' level of letter-sound correspondence, which indicates their ability to connect letters with their corresponding sounds, an essential skill for decoding words.

Table 11 Level of early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners in terms of letter-sound correspondence

| S/N | Indicators | WM | SD | Verbal Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Differentiates letter names and sounds | 3.08 | 1.04 | High |
| 2 | Uses letter sounds in word formation | 2.85 | 0.96 | High |
| 3 | Identifies vowel sounds accurately | 3.21 | 0.81 | High |
| 4 | Applies letter sounds when blending | 2.88 | 1.11 | High |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Aggregate Mean** | **3** | | |
| | **Aggregate Standard Deviation** | | **0.98** | **High** |

The data show that Kindergarten learners exhibit an overall high level of letter-sound correspondence, with an aggregate mean of 3.00. All indicators, including differentiating letter names and sounds, using letter sounds in word formation, identifying vowel sounds, and applying sounds in blending, fall under the high level. Among these, identifying vowel sounds accurately obtained the highest mean, indicating relatively stronger performance in vowel recognition compared to other skills.

This implies that learners are developing the ability to connect letters with their corresponding sounds, which is essential for phonics development and early decoding skills. However, the overall rating being slightly lower than other literacy components suggests that learners are still in the process of strengthening their phonics foundation. This highlights the need for more explicit and systematic phonics instruction, particularly in blending and applying letter sounds in word construction tasks.

Studies confirm the importance of letter-sound correspondence in early reading development. According to Ehri (2020), mastery of grapheme-phoneme relationships is essential for successful word decoding and reading fluency. Likewise, National Early Literacy Panel findings, as supported by recent research, indicate that letter-sound knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of reading achievement in early grades (Lonigan et al., 2022). Additionally, Cabell et al. (2022) emphasized that explicit phonics instruction significantly improves learners' ability to decode unfamiliar words. These studies reinforce the importance of strengthening phonics instruction in Kindergarten classrooms.

**Vocabulary Development**

This section presents the pupils' level of vocabulary development, which shows their understanding and use of words that support comprehension and communication skills.

Table 12

Level of early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners in terms of vocabulary development

| S/N | Indicators | WM | SD | Verbal Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Names common objects correctly | 3.58 | 0.71 | Very High |
| 2 | Uses age-appropriate vocabulary | 3.54 | 0.73 | Very High |
| 3 | Understands simple story words | 3.54 | 0.69 | Very High |
| 4 | Answers "what" and "who" questions | 3.44 | 0.65 | Very High |
| 5 | Uses newly learned words | 3.56 | 0.74 | Very High |
| 6 | Follows simple verbal instructions | 3.68 | 0.65 | Very High |
| 7 | Identifies objects from descriptions | 3.68 | 0.61 | Very High |
| 8 | Demonstrates vocabulary growth | 3.51 | 0.57 | Very High |
| | **Aggregate Mean** | **3.56** | | |
| | **Aggregate Standard Deviation** | | **0.67** | **Very High** |

The results indicate that Kindergarten learners demonstrate an overall very high level of vocabulary development, with an aggregate mean of 3.56. All indicators, including naming common objects, using age-

appropriate vocabulary, understanding simple story words, answering basic questions, and following verbal instructions, consistently fall under the very high level. The highest ratings were observed in following simple verbal instructions and identifying objects from descriptions, indicating strong receptive language skills.

This suggests that learners have a well-developed vocabulary base that supports their comprehension and communication skills. Strong vocabulary development is essential in early literacy because it enhances learners' ability to understand texts, express ideas, and engage in classroom discussions. The consistently high ratings

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across all indicators imply that learners are exposed to rich oral language experiences both at home and in school. This also suggests that instructional practices are effectively supporting language growth at the Kindergarten level.

Recent literature highlights the importance of vocabulary in early reading readiness. According to Wasik and Hindman (2020), vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of reading comprehension and overall literacy development. Similarly, Rowe and Snow (2021) emphasized that children with strong oral vocabulary skills demonstrate better understanding of texts and improved academic performance. Furthermore, Neuman and Kaefer (2022) found that intentional vocabulary instruction in early childhood classrooms significantly enhances language development and reading readiness. These findings support the importance of continued vocabulary enrichment activities in Kindergarten education.

**Print Awareness**

This section presents the pupils' level of print awareness, which reflects their understanding of how print works, including directionality, spacing, and the function of written language.

Table 13

Level of early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners in terms of print awareness

| S/N | Indicators | WM | SD | Verbal Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Holds book correctly | 3.34 | 0.73 | Very High |
| 2 | Identifies front and back of book | 3.38 | 0.62 | Very High |
| 3 | Tracks print left to right | 3.43 | 0.69 | Very High |
| 4 | Recognizes that print carries meaning | 2.95 | 0.53 | High |
| 5 | Recognizes familiar environmental print | 3.36 | 0.68 | Very High |
| 6 | Understands top-to-bottom reading direction | 3.44 | 0.55 | Very High |
| 7 | Participates in shared reading sessions | 3.58 | 0.5 | Very High |
| | **Aggregate Mean** | **3.35** | | |
| | **Aggregate Standard Deviation** | | **0.61** | **Very High** |

The results show that Kindergarten learners demonstrate an overall very high level of print awareness, with an aggregate mean of 3.35. Most indicators, such as holding a book correctly, identifying the front and back of a book, tracking print from left to right, understanding top-to-bottom direction, recognizing environmental print, and participating in shared reading, are rated very high. Only the indicator on recognizing that print carries meaning obtained a slightly lower rating, interpreted as high, suggesting it is the least developed among the skills assessed.

This implies that learners already possess strong knowledge of how print works, which is an essential component of early reading readiness. Their ability to handle books correctly and follow print conventions indicates that they are developing an understanding of print orientation and directionality.

However, the slightly lower performance in understanding that print carries meaning suggests that some learners may still treat print as visual symbols rather than meaningful communication. This highlights the need for continued emphasis on interactive shared reading, storytelling, and explicit discussions about print meaning to deepen conceptual understanding.

Recent studies affirm the importance of print awareness in early literacy development. According to Justice et al. (2020), print knowledge, including book handling and print orientation, is a strong predictor of later reading achievement. Similarly, Neumann (2021) emphasized that early exposure to print-rich environments significantly enhances children's understanding of print concepts and literacy behaviors.

Furthermore, Hammer et al. (2022) found that interactive shared reading experiences improve children's awareness that print carries meaning and supports communication. These findings reinforce the importance of strengthening print awareness through consistent exposure to meaningful literacy activities.

**Summary**

This section presents the summary of Kindergarten learners' level of phonological awareness skills. It provides an overview of their performance in rhyming, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending, highlighting their overall readiness for early reading development.

Table 14

Summary of the level of phonological awareness skills in Kindergarten learners

| **Components** | **WM** | **SD** | **Verbal Description** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Letter Recognition | 3.44 | 0.64 | Very High |
| Letter-Sound Correspondence | 3 | 0.98 | High |
| Vocabulary Development | 3.56 | 0.67 | Very High |
| Print Awareness | 3.35 | 0.61 | Very High |
| **Grand Mean** | **3.34** | | **Very High** |
| **Grand Standard Deviation** | | **0.73** | |

The summary of early reading readiness skills reveals that Kindergarten learners demonstrate an overall very high level of readiness, with a grand mean of 3.34. Among the components, vocabulary development obtained the highest mean (3.56), followed by letter recognition (3.44) and print awareness (3.35), all interpreted as very high. Letter-sound correspondence obtained the lowest mean (3.00), though still interpreted as high, indicating it is the least developed area among the four domains.

This suggests that learners are generally well-prepared for early reading tasks, particularly in terms of language comprehension, vocabulary use, and familiarity with print.

However, the relatively lower performance in letter-sound correspondence indicates that phonics skills remain the most challenging area. This implies the need for stronger emphasis on systematic phonics instruction to support learners in bridging oral language skills with decoding abilities. Overall, the findings suggest balanced but slightly uneven development across early reading domains, with phonics requiring additional reinforcement.

Recent literature supports the interconnected nature of early reading readiness skills.

According to National Early Literacy Panel findings, as synthesized by Lonigan et al. (2022), vocabulary, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge collectively contribute to successful reading development. Similarly, Cabell et al. (2022) emphasized that children develop reading readiness more effectively when instruction integrates both oral language and print-based skills.

Additionally, Wasik and Hindman (2020) highlighted that vocabulary growth strongly supports comprehension, while phonics instruction strengthens decoding ability, making both essential for balanced literacy development. These studies confirm that early reading readiness is multidimensional and requires integrated instructional approaches.

## TEST OF CORRELATION RESULTS

The test of correlation results presents the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness among kindergarten learners. This analysis determines whether a significant association exists between the two variables and identifies the direction and strength of their relationship.

Using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, the results provide evidence on whether higher levels of phonological awareness are linked to higher levels of early reading readiness. These findings serve as a basis for understanding how the development of sound awareness contributes to early literacy outcomes in kindergarten learners.

Table 15 presents the relationship between the different dimensions of phonological awareness skills and the early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners. The results indicate that all four dimensions of phonological awareness are significantly associated with early reading readiness ($p < 0.05$), resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. However, the strength of the relationships differs across the four phonological awareness skills.

Table 15

Test of the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of Kindergarten learners

| Variables | r-value | Strength of Correlation | p - value | Decision | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rhyming Skills and Early Reading Readiness | 0.548* | Moderate Positive | 0 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| Syllable Awareness and Early Reading Readiness | 0.533* | Moderate Positive | 0 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| Beginning Sound Identification and Early Reading Readiness | 0.711* | Strong Positive | 0 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| Sound Blending and Early Reading Readiness | 0.810* | Strong Positive | 0 | Reject Ho | Significant |

*significant at $p<0.05$ (two-tailed)

The findings reveal that rhyming skills have a moderate positive relationship with early reading readiness ($r = 0.548$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that learners who demonstrate better rhyming abilities also tend to exhibit higher levels of early reading readiness. Although the relationship is statistically significant, it is not as strong as those of the other phonological awareness skills, suggesting that rhyming serves as a foundational rather than a direct predictor of reading readiness.

This finding supports the study of Lonigan, Christopher J. et al. (2022), who reported that rhyming sensitivity contributes to the development of phonological awareness but becomes a weaker predictor of reading performance once children begin acquiring more advanced phonemic skills. Similarly, Gillon, Gail T. (2020) explained that rhyming primarily develops children's sensitivity to sound patterns and prepares them for more complex phonological tasks. The moderate correlation observed in the present study may be attributed to the developmental stage of Kindergarten learners, who are beginning to recognize similarities in word sounds but are still transitioning toward phoneme-level processing that is more directly related to reading acquisition.

Similarly, syllable awareness demonstrates a moderate positive relationship with early reading readiness ($r = 0.533$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that learners who can identify and manipulate syllables generally possess better readiness for reading. The result is consistent with the findings of Anthony, Jason L. and colleagues, who found that syllable awareness supports the development of decoding and word recognition by helping children understand the internal structure of spoken words.

Likewise, National Center on Improving Literacy (2022) emphasized that syllable awareness is an essential component of emergent literacy because it strengthens children's ability to segment spoken language before learning letter-sound relationships. The moderate association found in this study may be explained by the fact that syllable awareness is often mastered earlier than phoneme manipulation. Once learners acquire basic syllable skills, other phonological abilities such as beginning sound identification and blending become more influential in predicting reading readiness.

The results further indicate that beginning sound identification has a strong positive relationship with early reading readiness ($r = 0.711$, $p = 0.000$). This finding implies that learners who accurately recognize the initial

sounds of spoken words are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of readiness for reading. This result supports the findings of Ehri, Linnea C. (2021), who emphasized that recognizing individual phonemes enables children to establish alphabetic connections between letters and sounds, thereby facilitating word recognition and decoding. Likewise, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development reported that phoneme awareness, particularly identifying beginning sounds, is among the strongest predictors of successful early reading acquisition. The strong relationship observed in the present study may reflect the instructional emphasis placed on teaching letter sounds and beginning phonemes in Kindergarten classrooms, enabling learners to connect spoken language with printed symbols more effectively.

Among all the phonological awareness skills, sound blending demonstrates the strongest positive relationship with early reading readiness ($r = 0.810$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that learners who can combine individual sounds to form words exhibit the highest levels of readiness for reading. The finding supports the work of Wagner, Richard K. et al. (2020), who identified phoneme blending as one of the strongest predictors of word decoding and early reading achievement.

Similarly, Cabell, Sonia Q. et al. (2022) found that explicit instruction in blending significantly improves children's ability to transition from oral language to print reading. The very strong relationship found in this study may be explained by the fact that blending requires learners to integrate multiple phonological processes simultaneously, making it closely aligned with the decoding skills necessary for beginning reading. Learners who successfully blend sounds are therefore more prepared to recognize printed words and read independently.

The findings demonstrate that while all components of phonological awareness significantly contribute to early reading readiness, phoneme-level skills, particularly beginning sound identification and sound blending, exhibit stronger relationships than broader skills such as rhyming and syllable awareness. This pattern suggests that although rhyming and syllable awareness provide the necessary foundation for literacy development, more advanced phonological skills become increasingly important as children prepare to acquire formal reading skills. These findings are consistent with the developmental progression of phonological awareness proposed in the literature, wherein children advance from recognizing larger sound units to manipulating individual phonemes before becoming proficient readers.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Kindergarten learners generally possess an advanced level of phonological awareness skills and a very high level of early reading readiness. More importantly, the study established that phonological awareness skills are significantly associated with early reading readiness, confirming that learners who demonstrate stronger abilities in recognizing and manipulating speech sounds are more likely to exhibit greater preparedness for formal reading instruction. Among the dimensions of phonological awareness, beginning sound identification and sound blending emerged as the strongest indicators of early reading readiness, underscoring the importance of phoneme-level skills in the development of foundational literacy.

The findings affirm that phonological awareness is a critical component of emergent literacy and should be regarded as a priority in Kindergarten instruction. Developing learners' abilities in rhyming, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending provides a strong foundation for acquiring letter-sound relationships, decoding words, vocabulary growth, and other early reading competencies. These results reinforce the need for systematic, explicit, and developmentally appropriate phonological awareness instruction as an integral part of the Kindergarten curriculum.

For professional practice, the study emphasizes the importance of equipping Kindergarten teachers with effective instructional strategies and assessment practices that strengthen phonological awareness and monitor learners' literacy development. Teachers may use the findings to identify learners who require additional support and to implement differentiated, play-based, and evidence-based literacy activities that address specific areas of need. Early identification and intervention can help prevent future reading difficulties and promote more successful literacy outcomes.

The findings likewise provide important implications for program development and policy implementation. School administrators and curriculum planners may utilize the results as a basis for strengthening early literacy programs through the integration of structured phonological awareness activities, classroom assessment tools, and instructional resources into Kindergarten learning experiences. The proposed Phonological Awareness Enhancement Guide may serve as a supplementary resource for teachers in improving learners' foundational literacy skills. Moreover, the findings support the implementation of school-based and division-level initiatives that promote professional development in emergent literacy instruction and encourage the regular assessment of phonological awareness as part of early literacy programs.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence demonstrating the vital role of phonological awareness in literacy development among Kindergarten learners. By establishing the significant relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness, the study provides empirical support for strengthening early literacy instruction and reinforces the importance of investing in evidence-based interventions that prepare young learners for successful reading and lifelong learning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Phonological Awareness Enhancement Guide developed in this study be adopted and implemented by Kindergarten teachers as a supplementary instructional resource to strengthen learners' phonological awareness and early reading readiness through structured, play-based, and developmentally appropriate literacy activities. School administrators may support its implementation by providing the necessary instructional resources, teacher capacity-building activities, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure its effective utilization and continuous improvement based on learners' literacy needs.

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