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Teachers' preparation and kindergarten learners' readiness and performance

Mary Loryne B. Ladigohon*[1], Alma S. Hordista, PhD[2]
[1, 2] Notre Dame of Dadiangas University
*Corresponding Author email: *maryloryne.ladigohon@deped.gov.ph*

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Abstract

Aim: This study examined the relationship between teachers' preparation and kindergarten learners' readiness and performance, and identified the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing the kindergarten curriculum in the South Tacurong Cluster.

Methodology: The study employed a descriptive-correlational mixed-method design. Participants included all nine kindergarten teachers and 133 randomly selected kindergarten learners from a population of 200. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire measuring teachers' preparation, document analysis using the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist and the Kindergarten Progress Report Card, and semi-structured interviews to explore teachers' experiences. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency count, weighted mean, and Pearson r correlation, while qualitative responses were examined through thematic analysis.

Results: Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a very high level of preparation, particularly in training, while learners exhibited a high level of readiness across developmental domains. Despite this, learners' overall performance was generally at the developing level. Correlation analysis showed weak relationships between readiness and performance across domains, indicating that readiness alone does not strongly predict learners' classroom performance. Qualitative findings further revealed that teachers encounter challenges related to diverse learner needs, limited instructional resources, and classroom behavior management, which they address through differentiated instruction, play-based strategies, and collaboration with stakeholders.

Conclusion: The study concludes that although kindergarten teachers are highly prepared and learners demonstrate high readiness, learners' performance remains at a developing level. This suggests the need for sustained instructional support, targeted interventions, and strengthened collaboration among teachers, parents, and stakeholders to enhance early childhood learning outcomes.

Keywords: *early childhood education, teacher preparation, kindergarten readiness, learner performance, kindergarten curriculum implementation*

INTRODUCTION

The early years of a child's life are a critical period of rapid growth, forming the foundation for academic success, social competence, and emotional well-being. Globally, early childhood education (ECE) is recognized as a vital investment in human development and equity, with organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF emphasizing that quality programs enhance children's school readiness and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2022; UNICEF, 2021). Research shows that participation in developmentally appropriate early learning programs strengthens literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills (Bjorklund & Causey, 2022; OECD, 2021). This commitment aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, particularly Target 4.2, which seeks universal access to quality early childhood development and pre-primary education (United Nations, 2023).

Kindergarten, as the first formal learning environment, bridges home and school, emphasizing teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and supportive learning environments that foster holistic development. Early childhood is marked by rapid brain development, during which foundational competencies such as language, self-regulation, moral understanding, self-help skills, and early cognition are established. Teachers, parents, and

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caregivers play a crucial role in providing inclusive, child-centered learning experiences that address diverse needs (Al-Saud, 2020; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2021). Yet challenges persist globally, including disparities in teacher preparation, limited instructional resources, and inconsistent stakeholder support, particularly in developing and rural areas (Santos et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2022).

In the Philippines, early childhood education is supported by national policies such as the Kindergarten Education Act (RA 10157) and the Enhanced Basic Education Act (RA 10533), which recognize kindergarten as vital for developing physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and moral competencies. The Revised K to 12 Kindergarten Curriculum promotes holistic development across Health, Motor, Socio-Emotional, Language, Literacy, Mathematics, and Science domains (DepEd, 2022). Nevertheless, teachers face constraints in professional development, access to appropriate materials, and stakeholder support, which may affect their preparedness and, in turn, learners' readiness and performance (Cruz, 2021; Garcia & Flores, 2022).

While prior studies have examined teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and performance separately, limited research has explored these factors simultaneously within localized school clusters. In the South Tacurong Cluster, learners enter kindergarten with varying levels of motor, language, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills, while teachers face challenges addressing these differences due to limited resources and support. This study investigated teacher preparedness, learner readiness, learner performance, and implementation challenges of the Revised K to 12 Kindergarten Curriculum in this context. The findings provide empirical evidence to inform instructional practices, strengthen teacher professional development, and guide school leaders and policymakers, supporting inclusive and quality early childhood education aligned with SDG 4.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Early childhood education (ECE) is a critical stage in human development that lays the foundation for lifelong learning, supporting cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth (Bartolome & bin Mamat, 2020; UNICEF, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). The early years are marked by rapid brain development, during which children acquire fundamental skills such as language, problem-solving, and self-regulation, strengthened through play-based and interactive learning (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2021; Davis & Elliott, 2023).

In the Philippines, ECE is institutionalized through policies like Republic Act No. 10157 (Kindergarten Education Act) and the National Early Learning Framework, ensuring access to developmentally appropriate programs for all five-year-olds (Bartolome & bin Mamat, 2020). DepEd guidelines, including the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2018), further promote quality curriculum delivery. Yet disparities in instructional resources, teacher training, and community support remain challenges in many schools (Santos et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2022).

Overall, existing literature highlights the significant role of early childhood education in fostering foundational competencies necessary for academic success and lifelong learning. However, the effectiveness of these programs largely depends on factors such as teacher preparedness, learning resources, and supportive learning environments.

Teachers' Preparation in Teaching the Kindergarten Curriculum

Teacher preparedness is vital for effective early childhood instruction. Well-trained teachers demonstrate stronger pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and the ability to implement developmentally appropriate practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Valle Flórez et al., 2024). Continuous professional development, mentoring, and access to instructional materials enhance teachers' confidence and effectiveness (Al Saud, 2020). Stakeholder support, including parental involvement and administrative guidance, further strengthens teacher capacity (Shekalepo, 2020). Challenges such as limited training, inadequate materials, and inconsistent institutional support may hinder effective teaching (UNESCO, 2022).

Recent research emphasizes that continuous professional development significantly enhances teachers' instructional effectiveness. Valle Flórez et al. (2024) found that teachers who participate in regular training programs demonstrate improved instructional strategies and greater confidence in facilitating child-centered learning activities. Similarly, Al Saud (2020) reported that teachers with access to mentoring and coaching programs are more capable of implementing play-based and differentiated instructional approaches that support holistic child development.

The availability of instructional resources also contributes to teacher preparedness. Access to curriculum guides, teaching exemplars, and developmentally appropriate learning materials supports teachers in delivering

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meaningful learning experiences. However, several studies argue that the impact of these resources depends largely on teachers' ability to effectively integrate them into classroom instruction.

Stakeholder support further strengthens teacher preparedness. Collaboration with school administrators, parents, and community members provides teachers with guidance and resources that enhance instructional quality (Shekalepo, 2020). Studies indicate that supportive leadership and active parental involvement improve teacher morale and facilitate more effective curriculum implementation (Al Saud, 2020).

Despite these positive contributions, research also identifies persistent challenges affecting teacher preparedness. Limited access to professional development opportunities, inadequate instructional materials, and insufficient institutional support remain common issues in early childhood education settings (UNESCO, 2022). These challenges may hinder teachers' ability to address diverse learner needs and effectively implement the kindergarten curriculum.

Implementation of the Revised K to 12 Curriculum

The Revised K to 12 Curriculum in the Philippines was designed to strengthen the quality of basic education by equipping learners with competencies necessary for lifelong learning and global competitiveness (Kilag et al., 2024). Within the early childhood level, the curriculum emphasizes holistic development through integrated learning domains, including language, literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional development, motor development, and understanding of the natural environment.

Scholars agree that effective curriculum implementation requires collaboration among teachers, school leaders, and the community. Domingo and Masabpi (2024) noted that successful curriculum delivery depends on teachers' ability to apply developmentally appropriate teaching strategies that engage young learners in meaningful learning experiences. Similarly, Kilag et al. (2024) emphasized that the integration of play-based and experiential learning approaches supports the development of foundational competencies necessary for school readiness.

However, several studies highlight challenges in implementing the K to 12 curriculum, particularly in early childhood classrooms. Teachers often experience difficulties related to insufficient training, limited access to instructional resources, and the need to adapt teaching strategies for learners with diverse developmental needs (Domingo & Masabpi, 2024). These challenges may affect teachers' ability to fully implement the intended curriculum outcomes.

Research therefore emphasizes the importance of strengthening teacher training programs, providing adequate learning materials, and ensuring continuous monitoring and support to enhance curriculum implementation.

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist

Assessment in early childhood education plays a critical role in monitoring children's development and identifying areas that require support. In the Philippines, the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist serves as a standardized tool used to evaluate children's developmental progress across multiple domains (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016).

The ECCD Checklist consists of two developmental records: one for children from birth to 36 months and another for children aged three years and one month to five years and eleven months. The checklist assesses seven key developmental domains, including gross motor, fine motor, self-help, receptive language, expressive language, cognitive, and socio-emotional development.

Researchers emphasize that developmental assessments in early childhood should focus on monitoring growth rather than measuring intelligence or diagnosing medical conditions (Pouessel et al., 2020; Deserno et al., 2021). The ECCD Checklist helps teachers and caregivers identify children who may require early intervention and allows educators to design appropriate learning experiences that support developmental growth.

Through systematic observation and documentation, the ECCD Checklist provides valuable information that guides instructional planning and supports children's readiness for formal schooling.

Kindergarten Readiness Skills

Kindergarten readiness refers to a child's ability to successfully engage in formal schooling and includes competencies across multiple developmental domains. Scholars widely agree that readiness encompasses motor development, language abilities, cognitive skills, socio-emotional competence, and self-help skills (Naidu & Ismail, 2021; Hall, 2021).

Motor development, including both gross and fine motor skills, supports children's ability to participate in classroom activities such as writing, drawing, and physical movement (Adolph & Hoch, 2019). At the same time,

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language development—particularly receptive and expressive communication skills—plays a crucial role in literacy development and classroom interaction (Hartono et al., 2021).

Cognitive skills such as problem-solving, memory, and attention are also essential components of school readiness. Research indicates that children who demonstrate stronger cognitive abilities tend to adapt more easily to structured learning environments (Bjorklund & Causey, 2022).

Socio-emotional competencies further support school readiness by enabling children to manage emotions, interact positively with peers, and follow classroom routines (Denham et al., 2015). Studies emphasize that readiness levels may vary significantly among children due to differences in home environment, parental involvement, and early learning experiences (UNICEF, 2021).

Challenges Experienced by Kindergarten Teachers

Kindergarten teaching is widely recognized as both rewarding and challenging. Early childhood educators are responsible for supporting children's developmental growth while addressing diverse learner needs and managing classroom dynamics (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2019).

Research identifies several challenges commonly faced by kindergarten teachers, including limited instructional resources, diverse learner readiness levels, language barriers, and classroom behavior management (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020; UNICEF, 2021). These challenges may affect teachers' ability to effectively deliver developmentally appropriate instruction.

Studies suggest that evidence-based strategies such as differentiated instruction, play-based learning, visual aids, and positive reinforcement can help teachers address these challenges (Clements & Sarama, 2016; Snow, 2016). Furthermore, collaboration with parents and school leaders enhances instructional support and contributes to improved learner outcomes.

Continuous professional development and access to adequate resources remain essential in helping teachers overcome these challenges and effectively support kindergarten learners' holistic development.

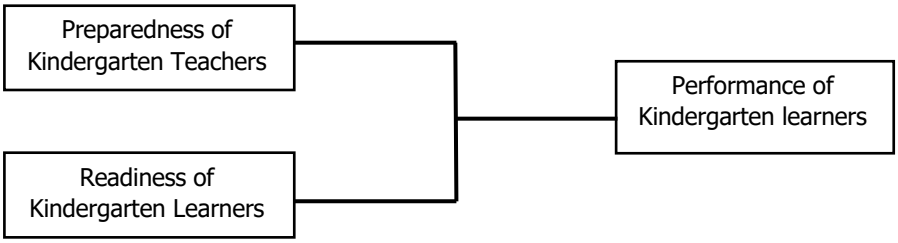
Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory, Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which explain how children learn and develop within instructional and environmental contexts. Constructivist theory emphasizes that children actively construct knowledge through exploration and meaningful experiences, guided by well-prepared teachers (Piaget, 1972; Bruner, 1996). Vygotsky highlights the role of social interaction and scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development in acquiring new skills (Vygotsky, 1978), while Bronfenbrenner underscores the influence of multiple environmental systems, including family, school, and community, on development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Together, these theories provide a framework for understanding how teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and supportive learning environments foster holistic development and school readiness in kindergarten learners.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the relationship between teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and kindergarten learner performance, emphasizing how these factors collectively influence holistic development.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Teacher preparedness, which includes professional training, access to instructional materials, and stakeholder support, serves as the independent variable that equips educators to implement developmentally appropriate instructional strategies. These strategies directly shape learner readiness, encompassing gross and fine motor skills, self-help/adaptive skills, language, cognitive, and socio-emotional competencies, as assessed through

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the ECCD Checklist and Kindergarten Progress Report Card. In turn, learner readiness affects learner performance, the dependent variable, which reflects the child's ability to demonstrate foundational skills and engage successfully in structured learning activities. The framework also considers moderating factors, such as class size, socio-economic conditions, and school resources, which may influence the effectiveness of teacher preparation and learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of supportive learning environments and collaborative engagement in promoting school readiness and holistic development.

Although numerous studies have examined early childhood education, many investigations have focused separately on either teacher preparedness or children's school readiness. Previous research highlights the importance of teacher professional development in improving instructional practices and learner outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Valle Flórez et al., 2024), while other studies emphasize the role of readiness skills in predicting later academic success (Duncan et al., 2007; Welchons & McIntyre, 2015). However, limited studies have simultaneously examined the interaction between teachers' preparation, kindergarten learners' readiness, and their actual classroom performance within specific local educational contexts. In the Philippine setting, particularly in cluster-level school environments such as the South Tacurong Cluster, empirical evidence on how these variables interact remains limited. This gap highlights the need to investigate how teachers' preparation, learners' readiness, and contextual challenges collectively influence kindergarten learners' performance. Addressing this gap provides valuable insights for improving early childhood instructional practices, strengthening curriculum implementation, and supporting evidence-based interventions for kindergarten education.

Statement of the Problem

Early childhood education is vital for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. In the Philippines, the Revised K to 12 Kindergarten Curriculum aims to foster holistic development and school readiness. However, variations in teacher preparedness, instructional resources, and stakeholder support may affect the quality of instruction and learners' outcomes.

Kindergarten learners enter school with diverse abilities across motor, cognitive, language, self-help, and socio-emotional domains. Teachers face challenges such as limited materials, varied professional training, and classroom management demands, which can influence learner performance. Understanding how teacher preparedness interacts with learner readiness and performance is essential for improving early childhood education practices.

Although previous studies have examined school readiness and teacher preparation separately, limited research has explored their interaction in specific contexts. In the South Tacurong Cluster, teachers encounter diverse classroom situations that affect learners' developmental progress. This study therefore investigated the relationship between teacher preparation, learner readiness, and performance, as well as the challenges in implementing the kindergarten curriculum in this cluster.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To examine the relationship between teachers' preparation and kindergarten learners' readiness and performance, and to identify the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing the kindergarten curriculum in the South Tacurong Cluster.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study aimed:

1. To determine the extent of teachers' preparation in terms of training, utilization of instructional materials, and stakeholder support.
2. To assess the level of readiness of kindergarten learners across gross motor, fine motor, self-help, receptive language, expressive language, cognitive, and socio-emotional domains.
3. To determine the level of kindergarten learners' performance in health and well-being, motor development, socio-emotional development, language and literacy, mathematics, and understanding of the physical and natural environment.
4. To examine the relationship between learners' readiness and their academic performance.
5. To identify the challenges experienced by teachers in implementing the kindergarten curriculum.
6. To propose an intervention plan based on the findings of the study.

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Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between kindergarten learners' level of readiness and their performance across developmental domains.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design with a mixed-methods approach to examine the relationships between teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and kindergarten learner performance in implementing the Kindergarten Curriculum. The descriptive-correlational design was appropriate as it allows for systematic description of participant characteristics and determination of the strength and direction of naturally occurring relationships without manipulation (Creswell, 2015; Bhandari, 2021). Teacher preparedness—including professional training, access to instructional materials, and stakeholder support—served as the independent variable, while learner readiness and performance across literacy, numeracy, motor, and socio-emotional domains were the dependent variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2019; Ary et al., 2018).

Quantitative data were collected through structured survey questionnaires, the ECCD Checklist, and Kindergarten Progress Report Cards to measure teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and learner performance. Qualitative data were gathered from interviews with teachers and administrators to explore challenges, instructional strategies, and contextual factors affecting curriculum implementation. This mixed-methods approach allowed for data triangulation, enhancing validity by combining measurable outcomes with descriptive insights from key stakeholders.

Overall, this design enabled the study to describe teacher and learner characteristics while analyzing how variations in teacher preparedness and learner readiness relate to learner outcomes. It is well-suited for real classroom settings where experimental manipulation is impractical and provides evidence to inform instructional practices, curriculum implementation, and policy decisions in early childhood education in the Philippines.

Population and Sampling

The respondents of this study included Kindergarten learners and teachers from the South Tacurong Cluster during School Year 2024–2025. The total population consisted of 200 learners and 10 teachers across the cluster.

A sample of 133 learners was determined using Slovin's formula at a 95% confidence level to ensure representation while accounting for sampling error (Bhandari, 2022). Learners were selected through the fishbowl method, a form of simple random sampling, where names or assigned numbers were drawn at random until the sample size was reached. This method ensured fairness, minimized selection bias, and allowed generalization of findings to the larger learner population.

For teachers, all nine remaining kindergarten teachers were included, as the researcher was one of the ten. Including the entire teacher population provided comprehensive insights into teacher preparedness for implementing the Kindergarten Curriculum. By combining random sampling for learners with a total population approach for teachers, the study ensured representative, reliable, and valid data to inform curriculum implementation and early childhood education practices.

Instruments

To gather data for this study, four instruments were used, aligned with the research objectives and mixed-methods design.

Survey Questionnaire – This researcher-made instrument was designed to determine the extent of teacher preparedness in implementing the Kindergarten Curriculum. It focused on three key areas: professional training, availability of instructional materials, and stakeholder support. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items to quantify the level of teacher preparation and open-ended questions to allow respondents to elaborate on their experiences, challenges, and suggestions. This instrument was validated by experts, including one faculty member from Notre Dame of Dadiangas University and two officials from the Schools Division Office of Tacurong City, all holding a Master's degree with expertise in Early Childhood Education. Pilot testing was conducted with kindergarten teachers from a non-participant cluster school to ensure clarity, appropriateness, and effectiveness. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a value of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency.

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist – This standardized tool from the Philippine Department of Education was used to assess learners' developmental readiness across seven domains: Gross Motor,

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Fine Motor, Self-Help, Receptive Language, Expressive Language, Cognitive, and Social-Emotional. Only the first assessment of the school year was used for this study. Responses were recorded by teachers as "Present (√)" or "Not Present (–)", with a scoring scheme of 5 and 1, respectively, developed solely for research data analysis. The checklist is not intended for medical diagnosis, IQ assessment, or official academic evaluation (DepEd, 2016; ECCD Council, 2001).

Philippine Kindergarten Progress Report Card – This official DepEd tool documents learners' development across five domains: Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development; Socio-Emotional Development; Language, Literacy, and Communication; Mathematics; and Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment. Teachers recorded indicators as Beginning (B), Developing (D), or Consistent (C). For this study, data from the first, second, and third quarters were used, and a scoring scheme of B=1, D=2, and C=3 was applied to facilitate quantitative analysis. The tool is standardized; the scoring used in this study does not replace official DepEd procedures and was solely for research purposes.

Interview Guide – A researcher-made Key Informant Interview (KII) guide was used to gather qualitative data on teachers' challenges, best practices, and experiences in implementing the Kindergarten Curriculum. Questions were developed using a Summary Data Collection Scheme (SDCS) and an Objectives-Data Sets-Questions Matrix (ODSQM) to ensure alignment with research objectives. The guide was validated by the same experts who reviewed the Survey Questionnaire and was pilot tested with kindergarten teachers from a non-participant cluster school to ensure clarity and relevance.

Together, these instruments enabled triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and kindergarten performance. The combination of standardized and researcher-made instruments, along with expert validation, pilot testing, and established reliability, ensured the credibility, accuracy, and appropriateness of the data collected for the study.

Data Collection

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher sought approval from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon approval, the researcher presented the study to the cluster head of South Tacurong Cluster, who subsequently informed the eight (8) school heads about the study and facilitated coordination with the kindergarten teachers.

Data collection was conducted in two phases: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative Phase

The researchers administered the Survey Questionnaire to the kindergarten teachers to determine their level of preparedness in teaching the Kindergarten Curriculum. Teachers completed the questionnaire by indicating the extent of their preparation across training, instructional materials, and stakeholder support. The responses were collected, counted, and summarized using weighted mean to determine the overall teacher preparedness.

The researchers then gathered completed Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklists from the kindergarten teachers. The number of checks in each indicator across the seven developmental domains was recorded. Weighted mean calculations and Likert-scale interpretation were applied to determine learners' readiness levels.

Similarly, Kindergarten Progress Report Cards for the first, second, and third quarters were collected. The researcher recorded the number of B (Beginning), D (Developing), and C (Consistent) indicators per domain and calculated the average mean to assess learners' overall performance.

Qualitative Phase

After completing the quantitative data collection, key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with the kindergarten teachers to identify the challenges experienced in implementing the curriculum.

Interviews were scheduled at mutually agreed-upon times during the school break to ensure convenience and minimize disruption to school activities.

Responses were electronically recorded and supplemented by manual notes capturing key points, nonverbal cues, and observations. All interviews were later transcribed verbatim for qualitative analysis.

All data were collected within the schools of the South Tacurong Cluster during the 2024–2025 school year. This systematic procedure ensured comprehensive, accurate, and reliable data on teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and performance for subsequent analysis.

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Treatment of Data

This study employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the relationships between teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and learner performance, as well as to explore the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Kindergarten Curriculum.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Teacher Preparedness: Survey questionnaires were analyzed using frequency counts and weighted mean to determine the extent of teachers' preparation across training, availability of instructional materials, and stakeholder support.

Learner Readiness and Performance: Data from the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECD) Checklist and Kindergarten Progress Report Cards were analyzed using the document-analysis method. Weighted means were computed to determine learners' readiness and overall performance across the assessed developmental domains.

Relationships Among Variables: The Pearson r correlation coefficient was used to examine the strength and significance of the relationship between learner readiness and learner performance. This allowed the researcher to determine whether higher levels of readiness were associated with improved performance.

The researchers assigned equivalent numerical weights to the responses gathered, with corresponding verbal interpretations, as shown below:

Extent of Teachers' Preparedness:

Rating Scale	Mean Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.50 - 5.00	Very High Extent	The teacher is very much prepared to teach the Kindergarten Curriculum and can help others in implementing the curriculum without supervision.
4	3.50 - 4.49	High Extent	The teacher is prepared to teach the Kindergarten Curriculum but still needs guidance and partial supervision.
3	2.50 - 3.49	Moderate Extent	The teacher is somewhat prepared to teach the Kindergarten Curriculum and needs further coaching, mentoring and more supervision.
2	1.50 - 2.49	Lesser Extent	The teacher is not prepared to teach the Kindergarten Curriculum, needs further training and full supervision.
1	1.00 - 1.49	Least Extent	The teacher is completely unprepared to teach the Kindergarten Curriculum, lacks proper training, has limited or no access to materials, and receives minimal or no support from stakeholders. Extensive training, resources, and constant supervision/Immediate Superior are required.

Level of Readiness of Kindergarten Learners:

Rating Scale	Mean Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.50 - 5.00	Very High Level of Readiness	The child consistently demonstrates skills and behaviors that indicate strong readiness for Kindergarten level.
4	3.50 - 4.49	High Level of Readiness	The child frequently demonstrates readiness skills, though occasional support may be needed.
3	2.50 - 3.49	Moderate Level of Readiness	The child shows emerging skills but requires guidance in the key areas.
2	1.50 - 2.49	Low Level of Readiness	The child has difficulty demonstrating readiness skills and requires significant support.
1	1.00 - 1.49	Very Low Level of Readiness	The child rarely demonstrates readiness skills and needs intensive support and intervention.

Performance Level of Kindergarten Learners;

Rating Scale	Mean Range	Description	Interpretation
3	2.50-3.00	C (Consistent)	The learners always show and do task on time without teacher supervision.
2	1.50-2.49	D (Developing)	The learners sometimes work continuously on a given task.
1	1.00-1.49	B (Beginning)	The learners show willingness to the assigned task but needed teacher intervention.

Significant Relationship between Level of Readiness and Performance of Kindergarten Learner

Range of r Value	Strength of Relationship	Interpretation
±0.71 - ±1.00	Very Strong	A very significant and strong linear relationship between the two variables.
±0.51 - ±0.70	Strong	A significant relationship; variable are strongly related.
±0.31 - ±0.50	Moderate	A moderate relationship; variables are somewhat related.
±0.11 - ±0.30	Weak	A small but possibly significant relationship.
±0.00 - ±0.10	Negligible	No significant relationship between the two variables.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Interviews with the kindergarten teachers were analyzed using Inductive Thematic Analysis. In the first phase, all interviews were transcribed verbatim and, where necessary, translated into English. The researcher then coded the data to identify recurring ideas and preliminary concepts. During the second phase, these concepts were organized into typologies and broader themes aligned with the study objectives, and concept maps were created to visualize relationships among the identified themes and ensure comprehensive coverage of all insights. In the final phase, the researcher reviewed the themes and concepts against the original interview data to verify their accuracy and reliability, ensuring that the analysis faithfully represented the teachers' experiences and perspectives.

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Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study objectives. While survey and document data quantified teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and performance, qualitative interview data offered contextual insights into the challenges, best practices, and experiences of teachers implementing the curriculum.

This integration allowed the study to corroborate findings, provide deeper explanations for observed patterns, and support evidence-based recommendations for improving early childhood education practices in the South Tacurong Cluster.

All analyses were conducted systematically to ensure reliability, validity, and rigor in the study, providing a solid foundation for interpreting findings and drawing meaningful conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed strict ethical considerations to ensure the protection and rights of all participants, particularly the minor kindergarten learners. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained parental consent, as well as permission from the learners and their class advisers, and complied with proper office protocols. Participants' identities including learners, parents, and class advisers were kept confidential, and pseudonyms or codes were used to maintain anonymity. Voluntary participation was emphasized, ensuring respondents were fully informed of the study's objectives and could choose whether or not to participate, in line with UNESCO's (2005) ethical guidelines. Data security was maintained through restricted access, confidentiality agreements for research assistants and translators, and the use of secure technological devices for recording interviews. For the qualitative phase, credibility and trustworthiness were reinforced by direct engagement with informants in their natural contexts, external checks by language experts and data encoders, and careful mitigation of researcher bias through the assistance of research aides. Finally, the researcher ensured that the results were accurately analyzed, interpreted, and communicated to the intended stakeholders. Approval from school authorities and adherence to institutional protocols further supported the ethical integrity of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion aligned with the research objectives. Data from survey questionnaires, the ECD Checklist, Kindergarten Progress Report Cards, and interviews were organized in tables and thematic summaries, highlighting key findings on teacher preparedness, learner readiness and performance, and challenges in implementing the Kindergarten Curriculum.

Extent of Teachers' Preparation in Teaching Kindergarten Curriculum

Table 1

Indicators	Mean	Description
Training	4.53	Very High Extent
Availability of Materials	4.31	High Extent
Stakeholders Support	4.29	High Extent
Overall	**4.38**	**Very High Extent**

Scale: *4.50-5.00 – Very High Extent 3.50-4.49 – High Extent 2.50-3.49 – Moderate Extent 1.50-2.49 – Lesser Extent 1.00-1.49 – Least Extent*

Teachers demonstrated a very high level of preparedness in implementing the Kindergarten Curriculum, particularly in training (mean = 4.53). This finding suggests that professional development opportunities and instructional training significantly enhance teachers' pedagogical competence, enabling them to employ developmentally appropriate strategies for young learners. This aligns with Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who found that continuous professional learning improves teacher effectiveness, and Valle Flórez et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of sustained training in supporting early childhood curriculum implementation.

Although availability of materials and stakeholder support were also rated highly, their slightly lower scores indicate areas where additional institutional and community support could further strengthen curriculum implementation. Research indicates that even with sufficient materials, teacher ability to utilize resources effectively is critical for instructional impact.

Continued professional development, coupled with enhanced stakeholder engagement and resource provision, may reinforce teacher preparedness and improve instructional quality in kindergarten settings.

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Level of Readiness of Kindergarten Learners

Table 2

Domains	Mean	Description
Gross Motor Skills	3.66	High Level of Readiness
Fine Motor Skills	4.30	High Level of Readiness
Self-Help Adaptive Skills	4.45	High Level of Readiness
Receptive Language Skills	4.30	High Level of Readiness
Expressive Language Skills	3.96	High Level of Readiness
Cognitive Skills	4.25	High Level of Readiness
Social Emotional Skills	4.25	High Level of Readiness
Overall	**4.18**	**High Level of Readiness**

Scale: *4.50-5.00 – Very High Level of Readiness 3.50-4.49 - High Level of Readiness 2.50-3.49 - Moderate Level of Readiness 1.50-2.49 Low Level of Readiness 1.00-1.49- Very Low Level of Readiness*

Kindergarten learners showed a high level of readiness across all domains (overall mean = 4.18), particularly in self-help/adaptive skills (4.45), fine motor skills (4.30), and receptive language skills (4.30). These findings suggest that learners possess foundational competencies essential for engaging in formal classroom activities.

According to Welchons & McIntyre (2015), early development of motor, language, and socio-emotional skills supports successful school adjustment. Duncan et al. (2007) also emphasized that cognitive and behavioral readiness strongly predict future academic performance. However, lower scores in expressive language (3.96) and gross motor skills (3.66) indicate areas requiring additional instructional support and scaffolded learning activities.

Teachers may employ targeted interventions, such as play-based activities, hands-on learning, and scaffolding, to support emerging competencies while reinforcing strengths.

Performance Level of Kindergarten Learners

Table 3

Domain	Mean	Description
Health, Well-Being and Motor Development	2.21	Developing
Socio-Emotional Development	2.44	Developing
Language, Literacy and Communication	2.26	Developing
Mathematics	2.40	Developing
Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment	2.59	Consistent
Overall	**2.38**	**Developing**

Scale: 2.50-3.00 – Consistent 1.50-2.49– Developing 1.00-1.49 – Beginning

Despite high readiness levels, learners' overall performance remained at a developing level (mean = 2.38). This indicates that readiness does not automatically translate into consistent academic performance.

Prior studies suggest that performance outcomes are influenced by instructional quality, learning environment, and socio-economic factors (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020; Robson et al., 2020). Therefore, while readiness is necessary, structured instruction, continuous monitoring, and differentiated support are essential to improve performance.

The Relationship between the Level of Readiness and Performance of Kindergarten Learners

Table 4

Correlation Matrix		Gross Motor Skills	Fine Motor Skills	Self-Help adaptive skills	Receptive language skills	Expressive language skills	Cognitive skills	Social-Emotional Skills
Health, Well-Being and Motor Development	Pearson's r	0.050	-0.008	0.088	-0.161	0.028	-0.202	-0.014
	df	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
	p-value	0.570	0.931	0.319	0.068	0.748	0.021	0.872
Socio-Emotional Development	Pearson's r	-0.016	0.134	-0.104	-0.076	-0.011	-0.189	0.012
	df	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
	p-value	0.858	0.129	0.238	0.393	0.903	0.031	0.888
Language, Literacy and Communication	Pearson's r	0.077	-0.147	-0.022	-0.111	0.068	-0.132	0.014
	df	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
	p-value	0.381	0.095	0.808	0.208	0.442	0.135	0.877
Mathematics	Pearson's r	-0.085	-0.049	-0.031	-0.237	0.025	-0.164	0.010
	df	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
	p-value	0.337	0.579	0.729	0.007	0.779	0.062	0.906
Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment	Pearson's r	0.054	-0.136	0.024	-0.058	0.067	-0.058	0.101
	df	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
	p-value	0.540	0.122	0.788	0.515	0.451	0.513	0.251
Range of -r	**±0.11 to ±0.30**							
Strength of Relationship	**Weak**							
Interpretation	**A small but possibly significant relationship.**							

*Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*

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Correlation analysis revealed weak relationships between learners' readiness and their performance ($r = \pm 0.11$ to ± 0.30), with few domain-specific significant associations (e.g., cognitive readiness vs. health & motor skills, receptive language vs. mathematics).

This aligns with UNICEF (2021) and other studies emphasizing that children's outcomes are shaped by multiple factors, including home environment, teaching practices, and socio-emotional support. Hence, readiness alone is insufficient to predict academic achievement.

Early childhood education programs may benefit from holistic, multi-domain interventions that integrate cognitive, motor, language, and socio-emotional skill development alongside active parental involvement and play-based learning.

Teachers' Challenges

Teachers face challenges including limited resources, diverse learner readiness, language differences, socio-economic disparities, and behavioral management. Strategies employed include differentiated instruction, play-based learning, visual aids, modeling, hands-on activities, positive reinforcement, and stakeholder collaboration.

Conclusion

1. Teachers in the South Tacurong Cluster demonstrated very high preparedness in implementing the Kindergarten Curriculum, with training as the strongest dimension. Material availability and stakeholder support were high but could be further strengthened.
2. Kindergarten learners exhibited a high level of readiness across all developmental domains, particularly in self-help, fine motor, and receptive language skills, although some domains (expressive language, gross motor skills) still required additional support.
3. Despite readiness, learners' overall performance was at a developing level, indicating that readiness alone is insufficient for consistent achievement across developmental domains.
4. Correlation analysis showed weak relationships between readiness and performance, suggesting that learner outcomes are influenced by multiple interacting factors, including home environment, instructional quality, and socio-emotional support.
5. Teachers faced challenges related to resource limitations, diverse learner readiness, behavioral management, and socio-economic barriers, which affected instructional effectiveness and learner performance.

This study highlights the importance of integrating teacher preparedness, learner readiness, and contextual supports to enhance early childhood education outcomes. It provides evidence-based insights for designing interventions that address both teacher professional growth and learner skill development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations may be considered:

1. School administrators may strengthen professional development programs to further enhance teachers' preparedness in implementing the kindergarten curriculum.
2. Schools may provide additional instructional resources and contextualized learning materials to support effective classroom instruction.
3. Teachers may continue to implement play-based and differentiated instructional strategies to address diverse learner needs.
4. Parents and community stakeholders may be encouraged to participate actively in supporting children's early learning and development.
5. Future researchers may explore additional factors influencing kindergarten learners' performance, such as home environment, parental involvement, and classroom learning conditions.

These recommendations directly address gaps identified in the study while promoting continuous improvement in teacher practices, learner readiness, and performance outcomes.

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