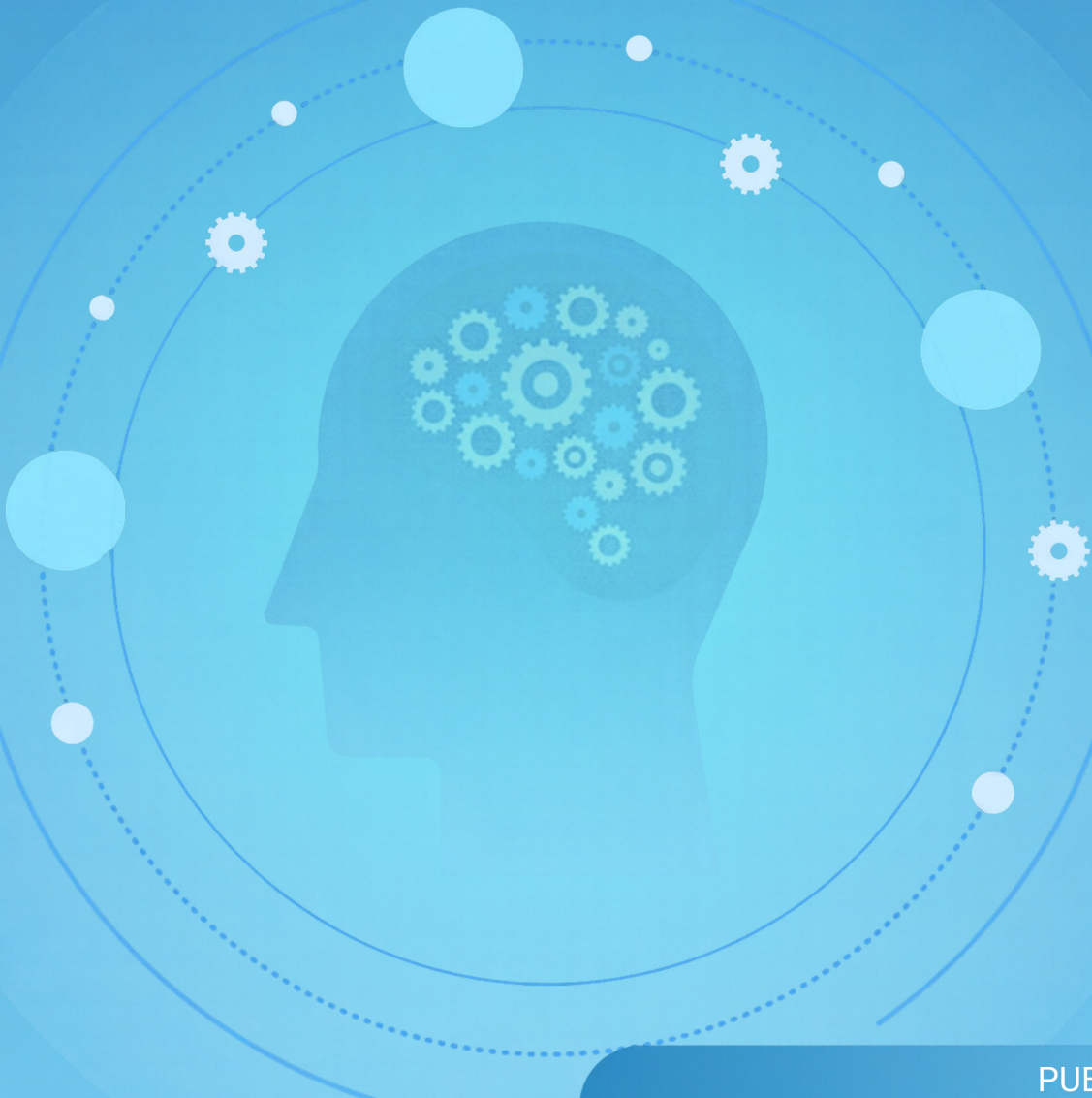




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Pedagogical Approaches and Reading Performance among Kindergarten Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between teachers' pedagogical approaches and the Kindergarten learners' reading performance in selected schools in the Division of Cagayan de Oro. It assessed five approaches: context support, ICT integration, language experience, phonemic awareness, and the whole-word approach. It also evaluated learners' performance in comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 115 Kindergarten teachers and 230 learners. Data were gathered through a modified questionnaire and standardized test, then analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a very high level of pedagogical approaches, with the whole-word approach rated highest and language experience lowest. Meanwhile, learners achieved satisfactory reading performance, with comprehension as their strongest area and vocabulary as their weakest. However, no significant relationship was found between teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' reading performance. The study concluded that teachers were well-equipped to facilitate reading instruction through various strategies. It recommended providing more opportunities for learners to connect reading and writing activities with their personal experiences, interests, and real-life situations. Teachers were also encouraged to explore alternative instructional practices that address learners' specific reading needs and improve their overall reading performance.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Reading is a fundamental literacy skill that serves as a foundation for children's lifelong learning and academic success. In Kindergarten, learners begin to develop essential pre-reading and early reading competencies such as letter recognition, phonological awareness, vocabulary, oral language, word recognition, and comprehension. At this stage, the quality of teachers' pedagogical approaches plays a significant role in determining how effectively young learners acquire these foundational skills. Developmentally appropriate, engaging, interactive, and learner-centered approaches can provide children with meaningful opportunities to listen, speak, recognize letters and sounds, build vocabulary, and construct meaning from print.

Conversely, when instructional strategies are not sufficiently responsive to learners' developmental levels and individual needs, children may experience difficulty acquiring foundational reading skills. Thus, examining the relationship between teachers' pedagogical approaches and kindergarten learners' reading performance is important in identifying effective classroom practices that can strengthen early literacy. Letter recognition, in particular, is a critical component of beginning reading because it enables learners to connect printed symbols with their corresponding names and sounds, which subsequently supports decoding, word recognition, spelling, and reading comprehension. Damsgaard *et al.* (2020) described the development of single-word reading

as a process that progresses through overlapping phases, while Hjetland *et al.* (2020), through a systematic meta-analysis of longitudinal studies, identified letter knowledge and phonological awareness as strong predictors of later reading achievement. These findings underscore the importance of providing kindergarten learners with appropriate and consistent pedagogical experiences that develop foundational literacy skills.

The importance of strengthening early literacy is supported by Philippine education policies and legal mandates. Republic Act No. 10157, or the Kindergarten Education Act, recognizes Kindergarten as the first stage of compulsory and mandatory formal education and emphasizes the provision of developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young children. Similarly, Republic Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, provides for a learner-centered curriculum that responds to the diverse needs, circumstances, and contexts of learners and promotes the development of competencies necessary for lifelong learning. DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, which provides the policy guidelines on the National Assessment of Student Learning for the K to 12 Basic Education Program, reinforces the role of assessment in determining learners' strengths, needs, and areas requiring instructional intervention. These policies emphasize the responsibility of schools and teachers to provide developmentally appropriate, responsive, and evidence-based instruction and to use assessment results as a basis for improving teaching and supporting learners who experience

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difficulties. Hence, strengthening Kindergarten literacy through appropriate pedagogical approaches is consistent with the Department of Education's commitment to foundational learning, learner-centered instruction, and responsive educational practices.

The need to strengthen early literacy is further highlighted by assessment results at both the division and school levels. Based on the 2024 Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) regional results, the Division of Cagayan de Oro ranked 14th among the 14 divisions, placing it at the lowest rank, with a mean percentage score of 50.43 in English, substantially below the 75% benchmark. This result indicates a considerable gap in the foundational language and literacy competencies of learners within the division. At the school level, the three-year comparative results of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) among kindergarten learners of Baikington Elementary School also reveal persistent difficulties in foundational literacy, particularly in letter recognition. The results showed that learners classified at the Beginner Level comprised 90% in SY 2023–2024, 81% in SY 2022–2023, and 45% in SY 2021–2022, while those who reached the Letter Level accounted for only 10%, 19%, and 55%, respectively. The consistently high proportion of learners at the Beginner Level suggests that many kindergarten learners continue to experience difficulty in recognizing alphabet letters and acquiring essential early literacy skills. These findings point to a significant school-level learning gap and emphasize the need to examine whether existing pedagogical approaches are sufficiently responsive to learners' literacy needs. More importantly, the assessment results provide a strong basis for exploring instructional practices that can improve letter recognition and other foundational reading competencies among kindergarten learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This presents reviewed literature, concepts, and studies related to the teachers' pedagogical approaches in teaching reading and the learners' reading performance. This literature and studies provided the researcher with vital background, knowledge, and insights into the development of this study. Furthermore, it served as the basis for organizing the conceptual focus of the study.

Pedagogical Approaches

The teaching approaches used by teachers play a significant role in helping Kindergarten learners develop essential early reading skills. The manner in which teachers deliver instruction influences how children recognize letters, understand letter-sound relationships, develop phonemic awareness, decode words, build vocabulary, and comprehend written texts. Since Kindergarten is a critical stage in which foundational literacy skills are established, teachers need to employ instructional strategies that are engaging, meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and responsive to learners' varying needs. Providing diverse learning experiences encourages active

participation, strengthens learners' confidence, and creates opportunities for children to develop positive attitudes toward reading.

According to Ehri (2020), systematic phonics instruction is one of the most effective approaches for teaching beginning readers. Explicit and systematic instruction helps children understand the relationships between letters and their corresponding sounds, enabling them to decode words more accurately. As learners become increasingly familiar with letter-sound correspondences, they gradually develop the ability to recognize familiar words automatically. These foundational skills contribute to improved reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Thus, effective phonics instruction provides kindergarten learners with an important foundation for developing early reading competence.

Supporting this perspective, Faunillan (2023) emphasized the value of a multisensory learning approach in teaching phonological awareness among kindergarten learners. The study highlighted the use of multiple sensory experiences, such as seeing, hearing, touching, and moving, to help children understand and retain speech sounds. Through activities that engage different senses, learners are provided with meaningful and interactive opportunities to identify, distinguish, and manipulate sounds in spoken language. This approach is particularly appropriate for kindergarten learners because it promotes active participation and accommodates their developmental characteristics and varied learning needs. The findings suggest that phonological awareness instruction becomes more engaging and accessible when teachers integrate hands-on and multisensory learning experiences.

Context Support

Providing context support is an important component of early reading instruction because it helps Kindergarten learners understand unfamiliar words, ideas, and texts by connecting new information with their prior knowledge, experiences, and familiar surroundings. At the Kindergarten level, learners may experience difficulty understanding written texts when words and concepts are presented without meaningful connections. Teachers can address this challenge by using instructional strategies that provide visual cues, guided discussions, familiar examples, culturally relevant materials, and opportunities for learners to relate texts to their own experiences. Through these forms of support, reading becomes more meaningful, accessible, and engaging, allowing learners to develop foundational skills in vocabulary, phonics, fluency, and comprehension.

According to Managbanag (2022), the Shared Reading Strategy is an effective instructional approach for improving the reading fluency of Kindergarten learners. In this approach, teachers and learners read a text together while the teacher provides guidance through questioning, explaining unfamiliar words, modeling appropriate reading behaviors, and encouraging learners to share their ideas. These interactions help learners understand

the text more easily because they are given opportunities to connect the story with their own experiences and prior knowledge. Although the study primarily focused on shared reading, its findings also demonstrate the importance of providing context support during reading instruction. Through meaningful discussions, visual cues, repeated exposure to texts, and teacher guidance, learners are assisted in making sense of unfamiliar words and ideas. Consequently, shared reading creates a supportive learning environment in which learners can actively construct meaning and develop greater confidence in reading.

Similarly, Calaycay (2021) explored the impact of contextualized reading puzzles on the reading performance of kindergarten pupils. The study revealed that the use of interactive, manipulative, and culturally relevant learning materials contributed to the improvement of learners' literacy skills. By incorporating familiar situations, community-related content, and meaningful learning experiences, contextualized reading activities helped learners connect new reading concepts with what they already knew. The use of puzzles also promoted active participation by allowing children to explore and manipulate learning materials while developing their reading skills. These findings suggest that context support becomes more effective when learning materials reflect learners' immediate environment and experiences, as familiarity may strengthen comprehension, increase engagement, and make literacy activities more relevant to young learners.

ICT Integration

English language learning presents various challenges for young learners, particularly because English is commonly learned as a second or foreign language in many educational contexts. Acquiring English requires learners to develop several interconnected literacy skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. The complexity of English spelling and pronunciation may make it difficult for beginning readers to understand the relationships between letters and sounds and to recognize and comprehend unfamiliar words. These challenges highlight the need for teachers to use engaging, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate instructional approaches that can support learners' literacy development. One approach that has gained increasing attention is the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which can provide interactive, visual, audio-based, and learner-centered experiences that make reading instruction more accessible and engaging.

According to Noordan and Yunus (2022), the integration of Information and Communication Technology in teaching reading comprehension can improve pupils' reading performance, increase their engagement, and promote more positive attitudes toward learning English. Their systematic review showed that ICT-supported

instruction provides opportunities for learners to interact with reading materials through multimedia resources, digital activities, educational games, videos, animations, and other technology-based learning tools. These resources may help learners understand reading content by presenting information through multiple formats and by providing engaging opportunities to practice reading skills. The findings suggest that ICT can serve as an effective instructional support when it is purposefully integrated into reading lessons and aligned with learners' needs and learning objectives.

Supporting this perspective, Valverde-Berrocoso *et al.* (2022) conducted a systematic review of the relationship between educational technology and student performance. Their findings emphasized that the educational value of technology depends not merely on the availability or use of digital tools but on how these tools are integrated into teaching and learning. Technology is more likely to contribute positively to academic performance when it supports clear learning objectives, meaningful interaction, active participation, and appropriate instructional strategies. This suggests that ICT should not be used only as a tool for presenting information but as a medium through which learners can actively engage with learning content, receive instructional support, and develop essential skills. In early reading instruction, teachers may use ICT to provide interactive phonics activities, multimedia stories, vocabulary exercises, and guided comprehension tasks that strengthen learners' understanding and participation.

Language Experience

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is a learner-centered approach to reading instruction that uses learners' personal experiences and orally expressed ideas as the foundation for developing literacy skills. Through this approach, learners dictate stories, experiences, or ideas, which are recorded and transformed into reading materials. Because the texts are based on learners' own language and experiences, the content becomes familiar, meaningful, and relevant. This may help beginning readers understand the relationship between spoken and written language while developing important literacy skills, such as vocabulary, word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. The Language Experience Approach is particularly appropriate for young learners because it encourages active participation and allows them to engage with reading materials that reflect their interests, experiences, and existing knowledge.

The study on technology-supported LEA explored the use of learner-dictated passages combined with assistive technologies, such as voice typing, word prediction, and screen-reading aids, to support the oral reading development of English learners with special needs. Using a multiple-baseline design, the study examined three developing bilingual Arabic-English learners with developmental delays, speech-language impairments, or risks related to language development. During the

implementation of technology-supported LEA, all participants demonstrated slight improvements in the number of words read correctly per minute based on reading curriculum-based assessments. The number of words correctly read from learner-dictated passages also increased, while the percentage of meaning-changing miscues during oral reading decreased. These findings suggest that combining learner-generated texts with appropriate technological support may help improve reading accuracy and fluency while reducing errors that affect meaning. Furthermore, the participants' high level of satisfaction indicates that technology-supported LEA may provide an engaging, accessible, and acceptable approach to reading instruction.

The findings of the technology-supported LEA study are consistent with the work of Igarashi *et al.* (2024), who examined mother tongue-based education and the acquisition of foundational skills in the Philippine context. Their study emphasized the importance of using a language that learners understand and are familiar with during the development of foundational learning skills. When instruction is connected to learners' home language and linguistic experiences, learners may find it easier to understand concepts, communicate their ideas, and participate actively in classroom activities. This principle is closely related to the Language Experience Approach because LEA uses learners' own spoken language and experiences as the basis for reading materials. By beginning with familiar language, teachers can help learners establish meaningful connections between oral expression and written text, thereby supporting the development of foundational literacy skills.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to identify, distinguish, and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes, in spoken words. It is an essential foundation for early reading because learners need to understand that spoken words are composed of smaller sound units before they can effectively connect these sounds to written letters and decode printed words. The development of phonemic awareness should begin before or alongside formal reading instruction because it prepares learners to recognize sound patterns, identify beginning and ending sounds, blend phonemes, segment words, and manipulate sounds. These skills support the development of phonics, word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. Since Kindergarten learners differ in their language exposure, readiness, and learning experiences, teachers need to use varied, engaging, and developmentally appropriate approaches to strengthen their understanding of the sound structure of language.

Arceo-Elemento and Capinpin (2024) examined the phonological awareness of Kindergarten learners and assessed their early literacy development using the ten components of the Early Grades Reading Assessment (EGRA), namely Orientation to Print, Letter Name Knowledge, Letter Sound Knowledge, Initial Sound

Identification, Familiar Word Reading, Invented Word Reading, Oral Passage Reading, Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension, and Dictation. The findings revealed that the learners' level of phonological awareness and early reading skills was developing. This indicates that Kindergarten learners were beginning to acquire important literacy competencies but still required consistent instructional guidance and appropriate learning support to strengthen these foundational skills. The study emphasized the significant role of teachers in providing systematic and effective instruction that supports the development of phonological awareness and early reading abilities.

The study also identified several challenges encountered by teachers in teaching phonological awareness, including parental indifference, limited professional experience, learner unreadiness, student absenteeism, and lack of learner interest. These factors may affect the continuity and effectiveness of early literacy instruction because learners require regular practice, consistent support, and meaningful learning experiences to develop phonemic awareness. The findings suggest that the development of early reading skills is influenced not only by classroom instruction but also by teacher competence, learner readiness, attendance, motivation, and support from parents or caregivers. In response to these challenges, Arceo-Elemento and Capinpin (2024) proposed an instructional plan intended to strengthen the phonological awareness of kindergarten learners. This highlights the importance of structured and responsive interventions that address learners' needs and improve the quality of early reading instruction.

Whole - Word

Whole-word recognition is an important approach in early reading instruction that helps learners identify familiar words as meaningful and complete units rather than relying solely on the sequential decoding of individual letters and sounds. This approach may support beginning readers in developing a growing bank of familiar or sight words that can be recognized quickly and automatically. As learners become increasingly familiar with frequently occurring words, they may read more fluently, expand their vocabulary, and devote greater attention to understanding the meaning of texts. Whole-word instruction is particularly relevant during the early stages of literacy development because young learners may initially recognize words through noticeable visual features, familiar patterns, and meaningful associations before they develop consistent and advanced decoding skills.

The whole-word phonology model suggests that beginning word production may be based on holistic representations. According to this perspective, children may represent adult target words as complete units rather than as exact sequences of individual speech sounds. Their early productions may reflect the most perceptually noticeable features of words or sound patterns that are

consistent with their existing vocal abilities. Vihman *et al.* (2023) examined whether the expectations of the whole-word model were supported by evidence from children learning Japanese and Mandarin, languages with phonotactic structures that differ from those previously examined. Their findings showed that some Japanese children produced word forms with characteristics consistent with whole-word representations. However, there was little or no evidence supporting the same pattern among children learning Mandarin. Instead, some learners demonstrated an individualized use of complete syllables, substituting syllables for target syllables even when the initial sounds or rimes did not correspond.

The findings of Vihman *et al.* (2023) suggest that children's early word representations may vary across languages and may not always be explained by a single holistic model. The study challenged the assumption that early word production is consistently based on word-sized representations and proposed that the syllable may serve as a more important representational unit in some languages. This indicates that early language and literacy development may be influenced by the phonological characteristics of the language being learned. Therefore, teachers should consider learners' linguistic backgrounds and the structure of the language when selecting and implementing whole-word instructional strategies. Although whole-word recognition may support the learning of familiar words, instruction should remain flexible and responsive to how learners process sounds, syllables, and meaningful word patterns.

Reading Performance

The reading performance of Kindergarten learners may be assessed through a variety of foundational literacy measures, including letter recognition, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, word recognition, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. According to Sadoski and Paivio (2024), early reading development involves the interaction of several cognitive and linguistic skills that help learners recognize written symbols, understand the sounds represented by letters, develop word knowledge, and construct meaning from texts. Letter recognition and phonemic awareness are particularly important because they provide the foundation for later reading success. Learners who can identify letters and understand the individual sounds within spoken words are better prepared to connect sounds with written symbols, recognize words, and develop reading fluency. As learners gain proficiency in these foundational skills, they may become more capable of understanding and responding to written texts.

Supporting the importance of foundational literacy skills, Yang *et al.* (2021) examined how phonological awareness, rapid automatized naming, and vocabulary contribute to the early numeracy and print knowledge of Filipino children. Their findings emphasized the important contribution of phonological awareness and vocabulary to children's early learning and knowledge of print.

Phonological awareness enables learners to recognize and work with the sound structures of spoken language, while vocabulary provides the word knowledge necessary for understanding oral and written information. Rapid automatized naming also reflects learners' ability to quickly retrieve and identify familiar information, which may support the development of automaticity in early literacy tasks. These skills are interconnected and contribute to learners' readiness to recognize letters, process words, and engage with printed materials. The findings suggest that the assessment of Kindergarten reading performance should consider multiple foundational skills rather than relying on a single measure.

Similarly, Corpuz *et al.* (2026) examined the use of Tunog Tuklas, a multisensory Filipino alphabet picture book designed to enhance Kindergarten literacy. The study highlighted the potential of combining visual, auditory, and interactive learning experiences to support the development of early literacy skills. Alphabet picture books may help learners associate letters with corresponding sounds and meaningful images, making abstract symbols more concrete and understandable. The use of multisensory materials may also increase learners' attention, participation, and motivation during literacy activities. These findings suggest that letter recognition and phonemic awareness may be strengthened when teachers use engaging and developmentally appropriate instructional resources that allow learners to see, hear, and interact with letters and sounds.

Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a central component of reading development because it involves learners' ability to understand, interpret, connect, and construct meaning from written texts. Although reading comprehension is often associated with the ability to read printed words, the skills necessary for understanding texts begin to develop before children receive formal reading instruction. Young learners build comprehension through oral language, vocabulary, listening, conversations, storytelling, play, and meaningful interactions with people and their environment. These early experiences help children develop the knowledge and language skills they need to understand ideas, make connections, answer questions, and interpret the meaning of stories. Therefore, the development of reading comprehension should be supported through meaningful and engaging learning experiences during early childhood.

According to Thomas *et al.* (2023), young children's meaning-focused skills are foundational to reading comprehension and begin to develop before formal reading instruction. The researchers emphasized the importance of supporting these skills in early childhood classrooms through authentic and meaningful learning experiences. Meaning-focused skills enable children to understand ideas, connect information with their experiences, make inferences, explain events, and communicate their understanding. Through activities

such as interactive storytelling, shared reading, meaningful conversations, dramatic play, and discussions about real-life experiences, children are provided with opportunities to develop language and comprehension skills in contexts that are relevant to them. These activities may strengthen children's ability to understand and construct meaning, which serves as an important foundation for later reading comprehension.

Supporting this perspective, Manguilimotan *et al.* (2024) examined the factors affecting the reading comprehension skills of Grade 3 learners. Their study emphasized that reading comprehension is influenced by several learner-related and instructional factors. These may include vocabulary knowledge, reading fluency, prior knowledge, motivation, interest in reading, access to appropriate reading materials, and the quality of instructional support. Learners may experience difficulty understanding texts when they have limited vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, weak decoding skills, or limited opportunities to engage in meaningful reading activities. The findings suggest that reading comprehension is not developed through word recognition alone but requires the interaction of multiple linguistic, cognitive, motivational, and environmental factors. Although the study focused on Grade 3 learners, its findings provide important implications for kindergarten education because the foundations of vocabulary, oral language, background knowledge, and reading engagement are established during the early years.

Phonics

To explain how children learn to read, various theories and instructional frameworks have been developed to describe the processes through which early literacy skills emerge. Among these foundational skills, phonics plays an important role because it enables learners to understand the relationship between letters and the sounds they represent. This knowledge allows beginning readers to connect written symbols with spoken language and use these relationships to decode words. As learners become more proficient in recognizing and applying letter-sound correspondences, they may gradually develop greater accuracy, automaticity, and fluency in reading. These skills can subsequently support reading comprehension because learners who can recognize and decode words more efficiently are able to devote greater attention to understanding the meaning of the text.

According to Main (2023), phonics instruction is an essential component of early reading development because it provides learners with the knowledge and skills needed to associate sounds with letters. Theoretical perspectives on reading development emphasize that children need to understand how spoken sounds are represented in written language to become effective readers. Through systematic phonics instruction, learners are taught to identify letter-sound relationships and apply this knowledge when reading unfamiliar words. This process supports the development of decoding

skills, which may contribute to improved reading fluency and comprehension over time. Thus, phonics serves as an important bridge between oral language and written text and provides a foundation for the development of independent reading skills.

Furthermore, a phonics-based approach to reading instruction can significantly influence children's literacy development by providing them with strategies for analyzing and decoding written words. The Phonics Approach emphasizes the relationship between speech sounds and the symbols used to represent them. Each letter-sound correspondence may be viewed as a cognitive tool that learners can apply when reading words and sentences. As learners acquire a wider range of sound-symbol relationships, they develop greater ability to identify, blend, and manipulate sounds to decode unfamiliar words. This is particularly important when learners encounter new or complex words because phonics knowledge allows them to apply learned patterns rather than rely only on memorization. The development of phonological awareness is also closely connected to phonics instruction because learners need to recognize and distinguish the sounds in spoken words before they can consistently connect these sounds with written letters.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary development is an essential component of early literacy because it provides learners with the word knowledge needed to understand oral and written language. A wide vocabulary gives readers access to richer semantic resources that enable them to activate relevant background knowledge, connect new information with what they already know, and construct meaning from texts. When learners understand the meanings of the words they encounter, they are better able to follow ideas, interpret information, make connections, and comprehend stories or other reading materials. In contrast, limited vocabulary knowledge may make it difficult for learners to understand the meaning of individual words and may reduce their ability to comprehend the overall message of a text. Therefore, vocabulary development should be supported through meaningful, repeated, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences, particularly during the early years of literacy instruction. Vocabulary knowledge is also associated with the development of important metalinguistic skills. Young children with larger vocabularies may demonstrate stronger phonological awareness because their knowledge of a greater number of words can help them recognize, compare, and analyze the sound structures of language. Phonological awareness supports the development of decoding skills by enabling learners to identify and manipulate smaller sound units and connect these sounds with the graphemes that represent them in written language. Vocabulary size is also associated with morphological awareness, or the understanding of how meaningful word parts, such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes, are combined to form words. As learners develop

greater morphological awareness, they may understand the meanings of unfamiliar words and continue expanding their vocabulary. The relationship between vocabulary and morphological awareness is reciprocal because vocabulary growth supports the understanding of word structures, while knowledge of word structures provides learners with strategies for learning new words. In the Philippine context, Idulog *et al.* (2023) examined Filipino students' reading abilities and identified challenges and potential areas for improving reading performance. The study emphasized that reading development is influenced by several interconnected skills, including vocabulary knowledge, word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. Difficulties in vocabulary may affect learners' ability to understand written texts because comprehension requires readers to recognize words and understand their meanings within a given context. The findings suggest that improving reading performance requires instructional approaches that address foundational literacy skills and provide learners with meaningful opportunities to develop and apply vocabulary. Teachers may support vocabulary development by using contextualized reading materials, visual aids, storytelling, guided discussions, and repeated exposure to meaningful words.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Jeanne Chall's (1983) Stage Theory of Reading Development, which explains how children develop reading skills through a series of developmental stages. According to Chall, reading development progresses from early exposure to print and language to more advanced levels of reading comprehension and critical thinking. The theory consists of six stages: Stage 0 – Prereading (Birth to Age 6); Stage 1 – Initial Reading or Decoding (Grades 1–2, Ages 6–7); Stage 2 – Confirmation, Fluency, and Ungluing from Print (Grades 2–3, Ages 7–8); Stage 3 – Reading for Learning the New (Grades 4–8); Stage 4 – Multiple Viewpoints (High School, Ages 14–18); and Stage 5 – Construction and Reconstruction: A World View (College and Adulthood, Age 18 and above). Each stage reflects the gradual development of reading abilities, from learning letter-sound relationships to using reading as a tool for acquiring knowledge and evaluating information from different perspectives.

According to Chall's 1983 Theory of Reading Development, Kindergarten learners belong to Stage 0, also known as the Prereading stage. In this stage, from birth until the beginning of formal education, children living in a literate culture with an alphabetic writing system accumulate a fund of knowledge about letters, words, and books. The children grow in their control over various aspects of language such as syntax and words. And they gain some insights into the nature of words: that some sound the same at their ends or beginnings (rhyme and alliteration), that they can be broken into parts, and that the parts can be put together (synthesized, blended) to

form whole words. Moreover, children in Stage 0 (pre-reading, ages 0–6) learn to recognize letters, act out reading, and become phonemically aware. Furthermore, in this stage, children “play” read. By being able to read, they have begun to understand that books contain words that provide meaning. They may “read” books from memory, start demonstrating book-handling skills, and begin “writing” the alphabet. Since Kindergarten students are in the pre-reading stage, letter recognition and phonemic awareness are essential.

This study contributed to a better understanding of teachers' pedagogical approaches towards reading performance among the Kindergarten learners. This necessitated broadening the understanding of reading fluency to include phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension. Reading has been a social experience, but each language has a prescribed syntax, which is built up through cognitive interaction from birth and constantly enhanced within the foundation of the learners' learning.

Conceptual Framework

The goal of this study was to determine the significant relationship between the level of teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' reading performance. This conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of this study. As presented in the schema, the researcher conducted the process of the study. The process for identifying the level of teachers towards the implementation of teachers' pedagogical approaches in reading and the learners' reading performance. The independent variables on teachers' pedagogical approaches in teaching reading dealt with context support, ICT integration, language experience, phonemic awareness, and whole-word. The influence of context support is the process in which students' experiences, surroundings, and prior knowledge aid in their understanding, processing, and retention of new information. The influence of integrating Information Communication Technology on how technology and digital tools, including computers, tablets, educational apps, the internet, and multimedia resources, can improve teaching and learning in classrooms. The influence of language experience on how children are exposed to language and communication in their early years, which impacts their ability to learn to read and understand written texts.

Teachers' pedagogical approaches play a crucial role in shaping learners' reading performance. Phonemic awareness, as a teaching strategy, helps children recognize and manipulate sounds in words, which directly enhances their phonics skills. Similarly, the whole-word approach encourages sight word recognition, allowing learners to expand their vocabulary. Through language experience, children engage with meaningful contexts, which strengthens their comprehension abilities. Additionally, the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching provides interactive

and multimodal learning experiences that improve phonics, vocabulary acquisition, and overall reading comprehension.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the teachers' pedagogical approaches and reading performance among Kindergarten learners in the Division of Cagayan de Oro for the School Year 2024-2025.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of teachers' pedagogical approaches in terms of context support, ICT Integration, language experience, phonemic awareness, and whole-word?
2. What is the learners' level of reading performance as to comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' reading performance?

Scope and Limitations

This study focused on examining the pedagogical approaches employed by Kindergarten teachers and the reading performance of Kindergarten learners in selected public schools across five (5) districts of the Division of Cagayan de Oro City during the School Year 2024-2025. The independent variables were limited to five dimensions of teachers' pedagogical approaches, namely context support, ICT integration, language experience, phonemic awareness, and whole-word approach. Meanwhile, the dependent variable, learners' reading performance, was limited to three key areas: comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary. These variables were selected to provide a focused assessment of the instructional practices used by Kindergarten teachers and the foundational reading competencies demonstrated by young learners.

The study respondents consisted of one hundred fifteen (115) Kindergarten teachers from public elementary schools in five identified districts of the Division of Cagayan de Oro City, namely Central, East I, North I, North II, and West II, during School Year 2024-2025. In addition, two hundred thirty (230) Kindergarten learners were randomly selected as learner-respondents. The teacher-respondents provided information on the pedagogical approaches they used to facilitate Kindergarten literacy instruction, while the learner-respondents served as the basis for determining the level of reading performance in terms of comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary. This study modified a scoring system for Kindergarten learners' reading performance since the research instrument is researcher-made, following a scoring of 5 with a rating of 90% - 100% described as outstanding, 4 with a rating of 85% - 89% described as very satisfactory, 3 with a rating of 80% - 84% described as satisfactory, 2 with a rating of 75% - 79% described as fairly satisfactory, and 1 with a rating of below 75% described as need improvement.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section clearly defines the research methods used to conduct the study. The researcher explained how the necessary data and information to address the research objectives and questions were collected, presented, and analyzed. Reasons and justifications for the research design, study setting, research respondents, system scoring, data gathering procedure, statistical treatment of data, and ethical considerations were shown in the discussion.

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive correlational research design. According to Dumanon and Tantiado (2026), a descriptive correlational design is a research design that explains the relationship between two or more variables, without studying the effects of extraneous variables on the variables under study. In this study, the researcher sought to describe a relationship among variables such as teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' reading performance.

This study made use of a descriptive correlational method of research to obtain information in exploring pedagogical approaches in improving the reading performance of Kindergarten learners. This method is selected for its ability to provide a comprehensive review of the relationships between the teachers' different approaches and the learners' reading comprehension. The researcher used existing literature in order to verify responses and come up with ideas regarding the research. For the descriptive part, the study determined the level of pedagogical approaches of Kindergarten teachers in terms of context support, ICT integration, language experiences, phonemic awareness, and whole-word, as well as examining the learners' reading performance in terms of comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary and relating these to factors impacting reading performance. For correlational design, the study explored the significant relationship of teachers' pedagogical approaches in teaching reading and the learners' reading performance.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in the Division of Cagayan de Oro City. Known as the City of Golden Friendship, Cagayan de Oro City is a heavily urbanized metropolis in the Philippines' Northern Mindanao. It is a significant center of the region's economy, education, and culture, which makes it a perfect place for a variety of studies. The city offers a vibrant setting for study in domains like business, education, tourism, and social sciences because of its diversified population, advanced infrastructure, and blend of urban and rural environments. Its importance as a study place is further enhanced by its advantageous location, ease of access, and thriving local economy.

The Department of Education's Division of Cagayan de Oro City oversees the city's numerous school districts. These districts are in charge of the city's public primary and secondary schools. Usually, the school districts are

divided into urban and rural areas according to their geographic location.

There are ten school districts in the division. Among the ten districts, only five of these districts will be chosen as the study setting, namely Central District, East I District, North I District, North II District, and West II District. The schools under these identified districts aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the teaching practices and strategies employed by Kindergarten teachers in the district. Each school represents a diverse demographic of learners, reflecting the variety of educational settings within the identified district. By including multiple schools, the study seeks to identify common and effective practices that can be generalized across the district, while also considering unique strategies that may arise due to specific school contexts.

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study were the one hundred fifteen (115) public schools' Kindergarten teachers assigned from the five identified districts (Central, East I, North I, North II, and West II) in the Division of Cagayan de Oro City for the School Year 2024–2025. Additionally, two hundred thirty (230) Kindergarten learners were randomly selected as learner-respondents. The study employed a 1:2 ratio in terms of selecting respondents: 1 teacher to 2 learners.

These chosen teachers, who were randomly selected as respondents, helped in the study's primary aim, which was to explore the pedagogical approaches used by the Kindergarten teachers in improving the reading performance among Kindergarten learners. Moreover, the learner-respondents were the two hundred thirty (230) Kindergarten learners who were enrolled in the School Year 2024-2025.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in this study was universal sampling, in which all Kindergarten teachers in the population were involved. This method ensures that all identified Kindergarten teachers from the selected districts were included as respondents. By using universal sampling, it ensures comprehensive representation and high validity by including all identified Kindergarten teachers from the five districts. This approach eliminates bias and aligns with the study's goal of assessing teaching approaches and their impact on learners' reading performance.

In this study, random sampling was used to identify the number of learner respondents. There were one hundred fifteen (115) teacher respondents and two hundred thirty (230) learner respondents. The researcher included the total number of Kindergarten teachers from the identified districts in the Division of Cagayan de Oro City. In addition, for every teacher-respondent, there were two learner-respondents; thus, 230 learners were obtained. This was in a ratio of one (1) teacher to two (2) learners, meaning there are two (2) learners in one

(1) teacher. In this way, the researcher herself randomly chose the learner-respondents. By doing so, this approach guarantees that the sample is in line with the goals of the study, which is determining the level of pedagogical approaches employed by the teacher respondents in teaching reading to Kindergarten learners in relation to the reading performance of the learners, which makes it especially helpful for exploratory, case, and qualitative research.

Research Instrument

This study used two research instruments to provide data on the variables being studied. The first type of research instrument was a patterned and modified questionnaire that determined the level of teachers' pedagogical approaches in teaching reading, while the other instrument was a researcher-made test questionnaire designed to identify the learners' level of reading performance.

For Part I, the research instrument used in this study was a survey questionnaire patterned and modified from the study of Diaz (2024) entitled Teaching Approaches to Improve Kindergarten Reading Literacy. This instrument consists of five variables, each addressing a specific pedagogical approach in terms of context support, ICT integration, language experience, phonemic awareness, and whole-word. For each indicator, there are five items for a total of twenty-five items for this part. This survey questionnaire uses a Likert scale, which is designed to gather data on the methods and strategies teachers use to teach letter recognition to Kindergarten learners. There are five (5) indicators for each variable, with a total of twenty-five (25) indicators.

For Part II, the instrument used in this study is a researcher-made test. This was developed based on the learning competencies set for Kindergarten learners. This is a test to determine the learners' reading performance in terms of comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary. For each category, there are five (5) items, comprising twenty (20) points in total for this part.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Prior to the pilot testing, the research instruments underwent content validation by a panel of four (4) experts in the field of education, composed of three (3) master teachers and one (1) language expert/English teacher. The validators carefully examined the items in terms of their relevance, clarity, appropriateness, and alignment with the objectives and intended learning competencies of the study. Particular attention was given to the reading performance instrument to ensure that the items accurately measured the intended competencies in comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary and were developmentally appropriate for kindergarten learners. The validators also reviewed the pedagogical approaches instrument to ensure that the items adequately represented the identified approaches, namely context support, integration of ICT, language experience, phonemic awareness, and whole-word approaches. Comments and

recommendations from the experts were considered in revising and refining the instruments before their administration during the pilot test.

For the Pedagogical Approaches Scale, the subscales obtained the following Cronbach's Alpha coefficients: Context Support Approaches (0.781), Integration of ICT (0.890), Language Experience Approach (0.881), Phonemic Awareness Approach (0.873), and Whole-Word Approach (0.863). The Context Support Approaches subscale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, while the other four subscales demonstrated good internal consistency. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.858 indicated satisfactory internal consistency for the Pedagogical Approaches Scale, confirming that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for use in the main study. For the Reading Performance Scale, all three subscales yielded Cronbach's Alpha coefficients within the excellent reliability range: Comprehension (0.964), Phonics (0.967), and Vocabulary (0.952). The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the Reading Performance Scale was 0.961, indicating excellent internal consistency among the items. This result further confirmed that the instrument was reliable and appropriate for measuring the reading performance of the target learners.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The statistical analysis of the data in the study "Pedagogical Approaches and Reading Performance Among Kindergarten Learners" is essential to understanding and confirming the results. The study examines the connection between different teaching methods and how they affect young students' reading abilities, necessitating a methodical approach to data analysis.

Problem 1: Mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of teachers' pedagogical approaches in terms of context support, ICT integration, language experience, phonemic awareness, and whole-word.

Problem 2: Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to identify the reading performance of the learners in terms of comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary.

Problem 3: Pearson Correlation was used to determine the significant relationship between the teachers' pedagogical approaches in teaching reading and the reading performance of the learners.

Ethical Considerations

For this study, the researcher adhered to the necessary ethical protocols throughout the conduct of the research. First and foremost, the researcher secured a Permit to Study indicating her enrollment in the graduate school program and obtained a permit to conduct the research duly approved by the Schools Division Superintendent. Formal letters requesting permission to conduct the study were submitted to the Schools Division Office and the administrators of the participating schools. Since the participants included Kindergarten learners who are minors, informed consent was obtained from their

parents or legal guardians before they participated in the study. These procedures ensured that all necessary authorizations were secured and that institutional and ethical research protocols were observed.

Furthermore, confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the study to protect the privacy and personal information of the participants. The identities of the teachers, learners, and their families were kept confidential, and all data collected were used solely for academic and research purposes. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty. These measures fostered an environment in which participants felt safe and comfortable to provide honest and genuine responses, thereby enhancing the credibility and integrity of the research.

In the preparation of this manuscript, the researcher utilized ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot solely as writing support tools to assist in improving grammar, sentence structure, organization, clarity, and overall readability of selected sections of the manuscript. These artificial intelligence (AI) tools were also used to facilitate paraphrasing, proofreading, and language refinement while preserving the researcher's original ideas, interpretations, and scholarly judgment. The researcher carefully reviewed, verified, and edited all AI-generated suggestions to ensure their accuracy, appropriateness, and consistency with the objectives and findings of the study. AI tools were not used to generate, fabricate, manipulate, or analyze the research data, nor were they used to formulate the study's findings, discussions, or conclusions. In accordance with the institutional policy on the responsible use of artificial intelligence, the utilization of ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot has been transparently disclosed through the AI Declaration Form included in the appendix and cited in this chapter under Ethical Considerations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion on pedagogical approaches and reading performance among Kindergarten Learners in the district of Cagayan de Oro City for the School Year 2024 – 2025. The data are presented in tabular form following the problems stated earlier.

Results

Problem 1: What is the level of teachers' pedagogical approaches in terms of context support, ICT Integration, language experience, phonemic awareness, and whole-word?

Table 1 presents a summary of the distribution of teachers' pedagogical approaches, with an overall mean of 3.41 (SD = 0.65), described as At all Times and interpreted as Very High. This means that teachers consistently and frequently employ various pedagogical approaches, including context support, ICT integration, language experience, phonemic awareness, and whole-word recognition, to deliver

Table 1: Summary Distribution of the Level of Teachers' Pedagogical Approaches

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Context Support	3.44	0.84	Very High
ICT Integration	3.42	0.68	Very High
Language Experience	3.32	0.78	Very High
Phonemic Awareness	3.42	0.71	Very High
Whole-word	3.47	0.51	Very High
Overall	3.41	0.65	Very High

Legend : 3.26-4.00 *At all Times/Very High* 1.76-2.50 *Sometimes/Low*
2.51-3.25 *Most of the Time/High* 1.00-1.75 *Never/Very Low*

instruction and support learners' reading development. It implies that the consistent implementation of these approaches contributes to engaging, meaningful, and supportive learning experiences that strengthen learners' foundational literacy skills.

Teachers' consistent use of diverse pedagogical approaches reflects their strong commitment to providing responsive, inclusive, and learner-centered reading instruction. By integrating context support, ICT, language experiences, phonemic awareness, and whole-word recognition, teachers create varied learning opportunities that address the different needs, abilities, and learning styles of kindergarten learners. The combined use of these approaches may enhance learners' engagement and motivation while strengthening essential literacy skills such as sound recognition, vocabulary development, word identification, reading fluency, and comprehension. According to Torres *et al.* (2026), integrating digital game-based activities with the Marungko Approach can enhance kindergarten learners' alphabet knowledge and phonemic awareness by making early literacy instruction more interactive and engaging. Similarly, Faunillan (2023) emphasized the value of multisensory learning approaches in developing phonological awareness, as these strategies provide learners with varied and meaningful opportunities to recognize and manipulate sounds. Furthermore, the findings align with Graves and Faggella-Luby (2021), who emphasized that integrating multiple instructional approaches enables teachers to respond more effectively to diverse learning needs and establish a balanced foundation for literacy development. Among the five approaches, the whole-word approach obtained the highest mean of 3.47 (SD = 0.51), interpreted as Very High. This means that the emphasis on sight word recognition, picture-word associations, and contextual exposure demonstrates that teachers used strategies and methods that help learners quickly identify and understand words as complete units. This implies that teachers strongly emphasize the whole-word approach in developing learners' early reading skills.

The teachers frequently use sight word recognition, picture-word associations, and contextual activities to help learners recognize and understand words as complete units. They consider these strategies effective in supporting learners' word recognition and building their confidence in reading.

In the study by Chamba and Ramirez-Avila (2021), it was emphasized that word recognition through meaning-based methods enhances fluency and comprehension, especially in early readers. Similarly, Vihman *et al.* (2023) explained that learners develop whole-word representations through repeated exposure to familiar word patterns. Moreover, Burger (2021) highlighted that the whole-word approach helps learners recognize familiar words through meaningful reading experiences. Together, these studies suggest that teachers should provide meaningful reading activities and repeated exposure to familiar words to help kindergarten learners recognize words more quickly, develop reading fluency, and improve comprehension.

In contrast, the language experience approach got the lowest mean score of 3.32 (SD = 0.78), interpreted as Very High. This means that methods like shared storytelling and connecting reading with learners' experiences are slightly less prioritized teaching methods among the respondents. This implies that this is due to different classroom conditions, available resources, or teacher preferences.

The teachers still use shared storytelling, discussions, and activities that connect reading lessons to learners' personal experiences, but these strategies may be used less consistently than other approaches. The lower mean may be associated with differences in classroom conditions, available instructional resources, time constraints, or teachers' preferred teaching strategies. These pedagogical approaches are implemented at a very high level based on the data presented. The results reflect that Kindergarten teachers have a strong commitment to delivering varied and research-informed reading instruction to the learners. A collective application of these strategies creates a comprehensive learning environment that effectively

addresses the diverse literacy needs of young learners. Nevertheless, Yaodum *et al.* (2023) underscored the importance of incorporating learners' personal experiences into instruction, citing improvements in reading engagement and comprehension. As Boltron and Ramos (2021) asserted, a balanced integration of methods ensures that early readers are equipped with the tools they need to become proficient, confident readers. These findings suggest that teachers should connect reading lessons to the daily experiences of learners to make learning easier and more meaningful. Using different reading strategies can help learners understand texts, develop their reading skills, and build confidence.

Teachers should also consider the needs and abilities of each learner to provide better support in reading development.

Problem 2: What is the learners' level of reading performance as to comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary?

Table 2 shows the summary of learners' reading performance with an overall mean of 3.12 (SD = 0.85), which is interpreted as Satisfactory. This means that the Kindergarten learners have developed a generally adequate level of reading skills necessary for their grade level. It implies that most learners are able to demonstrate basic competencies in understanding texts, recognizing letter-

Table 2: Summary of Learners' Level of Reading Performance

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Comprehension	3.25	1.43	Satisfactory
Phonics	3.18	1.46	Satisfactory
Vocabulary	2.93	1.38	Satisfactory
Overall	3.12	0.85	Satisfactory

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 = Outstanding 1.81 – 2.60 = Fairly Satisfactory

3.41 – 4.20 = Very Satisfactory 1.00 – 1.80 = Needs Improvement

2.61 – 3.40 = Satisfactory

sound relationships, and acquiring essential vocabulary. Their performance reflects a positive foundation in early literacy development.

The Kindergarten learners have developed a generally adequate level of reading skills appropriate to their grade level. This indicates that most learners are able to demonstrate basic competencies in understanding simple texts, recognizing letter-sound relationships, and acquiring essential vocabulary, reflecting a positive foundation for early literacy development.

According to Corpuz *et al.* (2026), multisensory and visually engaging learning materials, such as alphabet picture books, can strengthen kindergarten learners' literacy skills by making letter recognition and sound learning more meaningful and interactive. Similarly, Yang *et al.* (2021) highlighted the important contributions of phonological awareness and vocabulary to Filipino children's early print knowledge, emphasizing the interconnected roles of these foundational skills in literacy development. Furthermore, Sadoski and Paivio (2024) emphasized that learners' reading performance should be supported through strong foundational practices at both home and school, particularly in developing letter recognition and phonemic awareness as essential prerequisites for comprehension and literacy.

Moreover, among the components, comprehension got the highest mean score at 3.25 (SD = 1.43), which is interpreted as Satisfactory. This means that the kindergarten learners are generally able to understand

simple reading texts better than decode words or use vocabulary. This implies that their comprehension skills still need improvement to reach the expected level.

The difference in their scores also shows that learners have varying levels of comprehension, with some learners needing additional support in developing their reading skills. The learners were generally good at understanding simple reading materials, although their skills still need further improvement.

As Hamilton (2023) emphasized, continued professional development and collaborative learning among teachers are crucial for enhancing instructional quality and supporting learners in developing deeper comprehension skills. Thus, teachers are encouraged to equip themselves with practical tools and strategies for comprehension instruction. Similarly, Thomas *et al.* (2023) highlighted the importance of meaningful learning experiences, interactive activities, and discussions connected to real-life situations in developing early reading comprehension. Moreover, Manguilimotan *et al.* (2024) explained that reading comprehension involves more than word recognition because it also depends on learners' language skills, thinking abilities, motivation, and learning environment. Together, these studies suggest that teachers should continue improving their teaching strategies and provide meaningful, interactive, and learner-centered activities to strengthen learners' reading comprehension skills.

On the other hand, vocabulary obtained the lowest mean score of 2.93 (SD = 1.38), interpreted as Satisfactory.

This means that many learners have difficulty recognizing and using different words effectively. This implies that this could be attributed to poor vocabulary skills and low learners' comprehension, which have been shown to have a significant effect on their ability to express their thoughts. Given this concern, vocabulary should be a priority area for intervention.

Learners need more activities that build their vocabulary and help them understand new words. The learners are developing important reading skills in comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary, but they still need regular and focused instruction. They have basic reading abilities but have not yet reached the expected level of performance. Therefore, teachers should provide clear and guided activities that address learners' specific needs and help improve their existing skills.

As noted by Montante (2025), educators should focus on the learners' vocabulary building and comprehension, as these activities positively impact vocabulary size, which is

a strong predictor of reading development, and deficits in this domain can affect the academic performance and language acquisition of the learners as well. In addition, according to Griffin (2023), combining vocabulary, word decoding, and comprehension in reading instruction can help beginning readers develop better reading skills and support their future academic learning.

Problem 3: Is there a significant relationship between the level of teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' reading performance?

Table 3 presents the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation test examining the relationship between teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' reading performance in terms of comprehension, phonics, vocabulary, and overall reading performance. The results revealed that there is no significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' reading performance. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical approaches

Table 3: Results of the Test on the Relationship between the Teachers' Pedagogical Approaches and Learners' Reading Performance

Teachers' Pedagogical Approaches	Learners' Reading Performance							
	Comprehension		Phonics		Vocabulary		Overall	
	r	P	R	p	R	P	r	p
Context Support	0.20	0.04	0.29	0.00	0.02	0.74	0.25	0.01
	S		S		NS		S	
ICT Integration	0.10	0.27	0.25	0.01	0.09	0.33	0.14	0.13
	NS		S		NS		NS	
Language Experience	0.13	0.16	0.21	0.03	0.03	0.76	0.17	0.07
	NS		S		NS		NS	
Phonemic Awareness	0.16	0.08	0.23	0.01	0.04	0.69	0.19	0.04
	NS		S		NS		S	
Whole-word	0.10	0.27	0.15	0.12	0.02	0.83	0.12	0.19
	NS		NS		NS		NS	

Legend : S= Significant NS= Not significant $\alpha=0.05$

**0.80-1.00 (Very Strong); 0.60-0.79 (Strong); 0.40-0.59 (Moderate);

0.20-0.39 (Weak); 0.00-0.19 (Very Weak)

Legend : S= Significant NS= Not significant $\alpha=0.05$

**0.80-1.00 (Very Strong); 0.60-0.79 (Strong); 0.40-0.59 (Moderate);

0.20-0.39 (Weak); 0.00-0.19 (Very Weak)

and learners' reading performance is accepted, except for contextual support and phonemic awareness. It indicates that contextual support and phonemic awareness had a significant relationship with learners.

Parker (2021) emphasized that different pedagogical approaches have distinct contributions to literacy development. Phonics-based instruction strengthens learners' decoding and word recognition skills through

systematic teaching of letter-sound relationships. At the same time, the whole-language approach enhances reading fluency and comprehension by encouraging learners to construct meaning from texts in authentic contexts. Meanwhile, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that teachers' pedagogical approaches in terms of ICT integration, language experience, and the whole-word approach had no significant relationship

with learners' performance. This finding suggests that the use of these pedagogical approaches alone may not necessarily translate into differences in learners' reading performance, as learner outcomes may also depend on other foundational cognitive and linguistic skills. This supports this interpretation.

Sadoski and Paivio (2024) explained that early reading development involves the interaction of multiple cognitive and linguistic processes, including the recognition of written symbols, understanding of sounds, development of word knowledge, and construction of meaning. Thus, while ICT integration, language experience, and whole-word instruction may provide opportunities for learning, their influence on learners' performance may depend on how they interact with other essential reading skills and learning conditions.

When analyzed according to the dimensions of pedagogical approaches, Context Support exhibited the strongest relationship with learners' overall reading performance ($r = 0.25, p = 0.01$), although the correlation remained weak. It also showed significant positive relationships with reading comprehension ($r = 0.20, p = 0.04$) and phonics ($r = 0.29, p = 0.00$). These findings suggest that providing contextual cues, real-life examples, visual supports, and meaningful learning experiences enhances learners' ability to understand texts and decode words.

Young learners comprehend and retain reading concepts more effectively when instruction is connected to familiar experiences and authentic contexts. However, Context Support was not significantly related to vocabulary development ($r = 0.02, p = 0.74$), indicating that vocabulary acquisition may require more explicit instructional strategies rather than contextual learning alone. In addition, the results imply that grounding instruction in meaningful situations enhances learner engagement and allows them to connect new concepts with prior knowledge, which results in enhanced reading comprehension and phonological skills among beginning readers (Sharma *et al.*, 2023). The findings suggest that context support has a significant relationship with learners' reading performance because familiar examples, visual aids, and real-life situations help learners connect new reading concepts with their prior knowledge. These learning supports make reading activities easier to understand and help learners recognize and decode words more effectively. This may explain why context support was significantly related to comprehension and phonics, as learners are better able to understand texts and identify words when lessons are presented in familiar and meaningful contexts.

In the case of Phonemic Awareness, statistically significant but weak positive relationships were found with phonics ($r = 0.23, p = 0.01$) and overall reading performance ($r = 0.19, p = 0.04$). These findings indicate that activities that develop learners' ability to recognize, identify, and manipulate sounds in spoken words may contribute to improved decoding skills and

overall reading development. The significant relationship with phonics is consistent with the role of phonemic awareness as a foundational skill for understanding letter-sound relationships and reading unfamiliar words.

However, Phonemic Awareness did not demonstrate statistically significant relationships with comprehension ($r = 0.16, p = 0.08$) and vocabulary ($r = 0.04, p = 0.69$). This suggests that phonemic awareness may primarily support the technical and decoding aspects of reading and may need to be combined with comprehension instruction and vocabulary development activities to produce broader literacy gains.

According to Osei (2026), effective phonemic awareness instruction serves as an essential foundation for early literacy by strengthening learners' ability to connect sounds with letters and decode words accurately. Phonemic awareness was found to be significant because it develops learners' ability to recognize, identify, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. This skill provides a foundation for connecting sounds to letters and decoding unfamiliar words, thereby supporting the development of phonics skills. Moreover, learners with stronger phonemic awareness are more likely to distinguish and blend sounds accurately, which may contribute to improved word reading and overall reading performance.

ICT Integration demonstrated a significant but weak positive relationship with phonics ($r = 0.25, p = 0.01$), while its relationships with comprehension, vocabulary, and overall reading performance were not statistically significant. This finding suggests that digital learning tools, educational applications, multimedia presentations, and interactive phonics activities can effectively reinforce letter recognition, sound discrimination, and decoding skills among learners. Nevertheless, technology alone may not be sufficient to improve broader reading competencies unless it is purposefully integrated with effective instructional strategies that promote comprehension and language development. It suggests that while ICT integration may have a positive impact or enrich the instruction process, it may not lead to broader literacy gains unless paired with deliberate pedagogical planning (William *et al.*, 2025).

Similarly, Language Experience showed a weak but significant positive relationship with phonics ($r = 0.21, p = 0.03$). However, its relationships with comprehension, vocabulary, and overall reading performance were not significant. This indicates that learners benefit from reading materials and activities that are connected to their personal experiences, particularly in strengthening phonemic decoding skills. Yet, improving overall reading achievement requires more comprehensive instructional practices beyond experience-based learning. The results above support the insights from the International Literacy Association (2020), which emphasizes the phonics-focused strategies that teachers are encouraged to integrate with comprehension-building and vocabulary-enriching practices to fully support literacy development.

In contrast, the Whole-word Approach did not demonstrate any statistically significant relationship with any of the reading performance indicators. Specifically, it showed weak correlations with comprehension ($r = 0.10$, $p = 0.27$), phonics ($r = 0.15$, $p = 0.12$), vocabulary ($r = 0.02$, $p = 0.83$), and overall reading performance ($r = 0.12$, $p = 0.19$). This means that relying primarily on whole-word recognition may not sufficiently improve learners' reading skills, particularly among beginning readers who still need explicit instruction in decoding and phonological awareness.

Overall, the findings indicate that although teachers' pedagogical approaches have a statistically significant relationship with learners' reading performance, the correlations are consistently weak. This suggests that effective pedagogy alone cannot fully explain learners' reading achievement. Instead, literacy development is a multifaceted process shaped by instructional quality, learner characteristics, family support, school resources, and the learning environment. Nevertheless, the significant findings in Context Support and Phonemic Awareness, together with the consistent influence on phonics, underscore the importance of employing evidence-based, learner-centered instructional approaches that provide meaningful contexts, systematic phonics instruction, and explicit phonemic awareness activities to enhance early reading development.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the whole-word approach supports early literacy development by helping learners recognize familiar words through visual features, patterns, storytelling, and contextual learning before mastering phonics and spelling. Reading comprehension is essential because it enables learners to understand, interpret, and construct meaning from texts, with foundational skills developing even before formal instruction. Overall, learners demonstrated satisfactory reading performance, indicating that they had acquired reading skills appropriate for their grade level. Significant relationships were found between context support and phonemic awareness, as well as between ICT integration, language experience, and phonics. However, some relationships involving the whole-word approach and other reading components were not significant. Among the three components of reading performance, comprehension emerged as the strongest area, suggesting that learners were more capable of understanding and interpreting texts. Ultimately, appropriate pedagogical approaches may contribute to reading development, but they do not independently determine learners' reading performance, highlighting the need for comprehensive literacy instruction and additional learning support.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are hereby proposed:

Teachers should strengthen reading instruction by

implementing the Language Experience Approach, providing learners with opportunities to connect reading and writing activities to their personal experiences, interests, and real-life situations. Activities such as storytelling, shared writing, journal writing, oral discussions, and language exercises should encourage learners to express their ideas and develop literacy skills. Teachers should also prioritize vocabulary development through regular, contextualized activities, including interactive discussions, picture clues, word maps, semantic organizers, storytelling, and educational games that promote meaningful word learning and retention. Furthermore, teachers should enhance context support and phonemic awareness by connecting lessons to learners' prior knowledge, authentic texts, and everyday experiences. The use of visual aids, storytelling, and interactive activities can improve comprehension and strengthen learners' awareness of sounds in words. Meanwhile, school administrators should support these initiatives by providing continuous professional development, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, instructional coaching, and adequate learning resources. These efforts can equip teachers with effective, evidence-based strategies to improve literacy instruction and enhance learners' overall reading performance.

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