



PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS AS A CORRELATE OF EARLY READING READINESS IN KINDERGARTEN LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study determined the relationship between phonological awareness and early reading readiness among kindergarten learners at Old Bucao Elementary School, Toledo City during School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it assessed the learners' level of phonological awareness and early reading readiness and determined whether a significant relationship existed between the two variables. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed. Data were collected using a researcher-made assessment tool and analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. The findings revealed that the kindergarten learners demonstrated an advanced level of phonological awareness and a high level of early reading readiness. Statistical analysis further revealed a significant weak positive relationship between phonological awareness and early reading readiness. Although the relationship was weak, the result indicates that learners with higher phonological awareness generally tended to exhibit better reading readiness. This suggests that phonological awareness contributes to early reading development but is only one of several factors that influence children's readiness to read. Based on the findings, the study concluded that phonological awareness is an important foundational skill that supports early reading readiness. It is therefore recommended that kindergarten teachers continue to provide systematic and developmentally appropriate phonological awareness activities while integrating other literacy experiences that foster children's overall reading readiness.

Keywords: Education, phonological awareness, early reading readiness, descriptive-correlational research, Old Bucao Elementary School, Toledo City

Introduction

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

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



At the local level, similar issues are observed in Old Bucao Elementary School in Toledo City. Based on classroom observations and teacher reports, many kindergarten learners can recognize letters but struggle with essential phonological awareness skills such as identifying beginning sounds, producing rhymes, segmenting syllables, and blending sounds to form words. For example, some learners can recite the alphabet but are unable to match sounds to letters. Others find difficulty blending phonemes to read simple words. These challenges directly affect early reading readiness components such as letter recognition, letter sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness. Supporting this, Ederio (2023) found variability in phonological awareness skills among kindergarten learners, with only moderate relationships observed between phonological awareness and reading competency.

Despite existing international and Philippine studies affirming the importance of phonological awareness in early reading development, several gaps remain. Many studies examine phonological awareness as part of broader emergent literacy constructs or focus on intervention outcomes rather than directly analyzing its relationship with early reading readiness. Furthermore, most local studies focus on general reading performance in early grades without isolating phonological awareness as a distinct predictor variable. More importantly, there is limited empirical evidence in Cebu Province, particularly in Toledo City, that examines the relationship between specific domains of phonological awareness such as rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending and key indicators of early reading readiness such as letter recognition, letter sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness.

Given these gaps and the observed classroom challenges, there is a need to investigate the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness among kindergarten learners in the identified school. Understanding this relationship would provide empirical evidence on which specific phonological awareness domains significantly influence reading readiness and would support the development of targeted instructional interventions. Thus, this study aimed to determine the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness of kindergarten learners in Old Bucao Elementary School, Toledo City, Cebu, during the School Year 2025 to 2026. The findings would serve as a basis for developing a phonological awareness enhancement guide to strengthen early literacy instruction and improve reading readiness among young learners.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

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

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

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



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

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

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

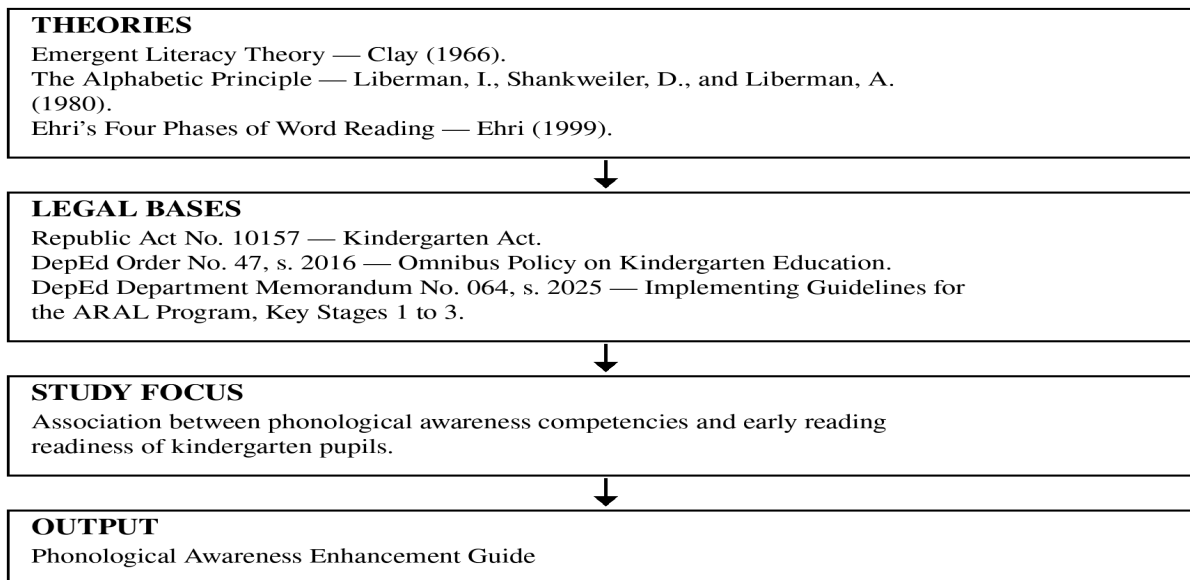


Figure 1
Theoretical Framework of the Study



Related Studies

Robust empirical support for Emergent Literacy Theory is demonstrated by a series of global and local investigations that link structural environments to early reading readiness. Globally, Lemire and Paul (2026) provided longitudinal evidence showing that baseline phonological awareness and oral language skills in early childhood account for a major percentage of variance in formal reading achievement, acting as a critical cognitive buffer against future reading difficulties. This environmental dependency is further validated by Hsin and Wu (2021), whose experimental trials proved that interactive, dialogic storybook reading strategies, where educators deliberately emphasize word sounds and alliteration, sharply accelerate rhyme detection and phoneme isolation. Similarly, Neumann (2020) demonstrated that parent-guided exploration of environmental print coupled with deliberate letter-sounding significantly boosts both early phonetic interest and letter-sound knowledge in young learners.

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

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

In the Philippine educational context, Abdon and Barrios (2022) provided empirical evidence for this developmental progression by demonstrating that kindergarten learners exposed to targeted phonological awareness instruction achieved significantly higher reading readiness and word-reading scores than those exposed to traditional unaligned reading routines, proving that direct training in sound segmenting and blending moves children efficiently along Ehri's alphabetic continuum. The execution of this framework relies heavily on classroom leadership, as Arceo-Elemento and Capinpin (2024) demonstrated a significant positive correlation between a teacher's specialized pedagogical content knowledge of phonological awareness and the corresponding word-reading phases achieved by their classes. Furthermore, this developmental progression encounters unique challenges in marginalized spaces. Santos (2022) exposed severe deficits in syllable deletion and initial sound identification tasks among entering public school kindergarteners in rural communities, attributing these delays to a critical lack of early literacy resources necessary to push learners out of the pre-alphabetic phase. Resolving these localized reading readiness deficits requires leveraging cross-linguistic frameworks. Villanueva (2023) provided empirical support via structural equation modeling showing that phonological awareness developed in a child's mother tongue (L1) directly transfers to and predicts reading readiness in secondary languages (L2/L3), allowing multilingual Filipino learners to navigate advanced alphabetic



reading phases with significantly less resistance. Collectively, these recent studies provide strong empirical support for Ehri's theory by demonstrating that strong phonological awareness facilitates children's progression toward accurate, fluent, and multi-lingual word reading.

Methodology

Research Design

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

A descriptive-correlational design was appropriate for this study because it described the characteristics of variables and examined the degree of relationship between them without manipulating any conditions or variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Since no intervention or experimental treatment was implemented, the study focused on naturally occurring literacy behaviors among kindergarten learners as observed and assessed by their teachers.

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

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

Input–Process–Output Model

This study followed the Input–Process–Output (IPO) Model as a systematic guide for examining the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness among kindergarten learners. The model ensured that the variables were clearly defined, the research procedures were systematically organized, and the expected output was aligned with the study's purpose of developing a phonological awareness enhancement guide. The actual respondents who completed the research instrument were the kindergarten teachers, who served as evaluators of the learners' performance.

Input. The Input phase consisted of three major elements: the phonological awareness skills of kindergarten learners, their early reading readiness, and the learners' demographic and contextual information, such as age and previous literacy exposure. These inputs represented the learners' existing literacy abilities and provided baseline data reflecting their readiness for reading instruction and their capacity to perform phonological awareness tasks.

Process. The Process phase involved the systematic collection of data using the research instruments, including phonological awareness assessments and early reading readiness tests. Appropriate statistical treatments, such as descriptive analysis and correlational testing, were applied to determine the relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness. This process enabled the researcher to identify patterns and relationships among the variables, providing insights into which phonological skills were critical in supporting early literacy development.

Output. The Output of this study was the development of a Phonological Awareness Enhancement Guide for kindergarten learners. The guide was informed by the actual data gathered and analyzed, ensuring that the recommendations were context-based, relevant, and applicable to classroom practices. It was intended to serve as a practical tool for teachers, school administrators, and other educational stakeholders in designing interventions that strengthened phonological awareness and supported early reading readiness.

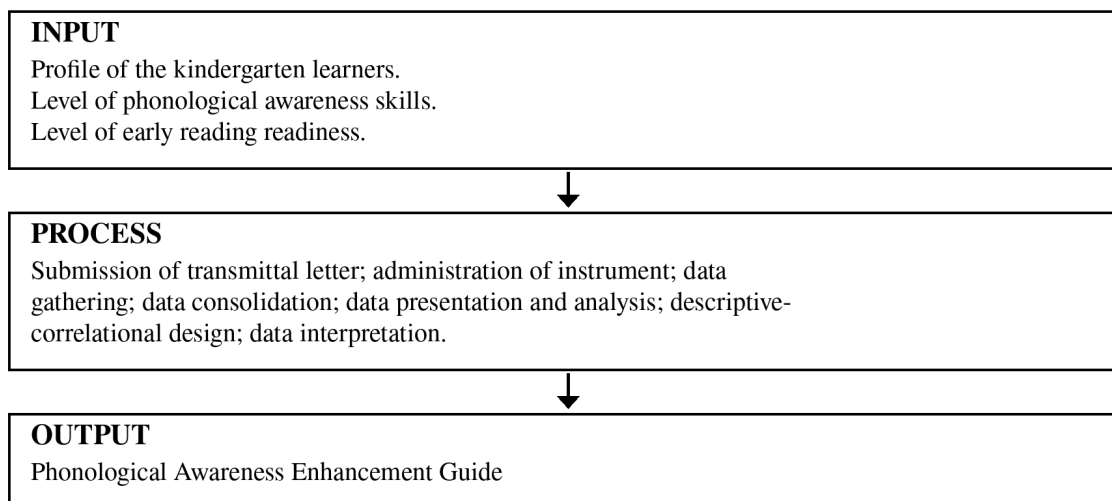


Figure 2
Flow of the Study

Research Environment

The study was conducted in Old Bucao Elementary School in Toledo City Division. It is a public elementary school located in Toledo City, Cebu. It serves as one of the primary institutions providing basic education to learners in the community, particularly those residing in nearby barangays. The school operates under the Department of Education and implements the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, offering classes from Kindergarten to Grade 6. As a community-based school, it caters to learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, many of whom rely on the school as their main avenue for foundational learning and development.

The school was established to address the increasing demand for accessible basic education in the locality. Over the years, it has gradually expanded its facilities, instructional resources, and enrollment capacity to accommodate the growing number of learners. The school has continuously adapted to educational reforms, including the implementation of the Kindergarten Education Act and the K to 12 Program, ensuring that learners receive developmentally appropriate and standards-based instruction. It offers core learning areas such as Language, Mathematics, Science, Araling Panlipunan, and Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao, with a strong emphasis on early literacy development at the Kindergarten level.

Old Bucao Elementary School has actively participated in various division and district programs aimed at improving literacy and numeracy among learners. The school has implemented reading interventions, school-based learning camps, and remedial programs aligned with national initiatives such as the National Reading Program. It has also shown commitment to improving learners' academic performance through continuous monitoring, teacher collaboration, and community involvement. Despite challenges such as limited resources and varying learner readiness levels, the school remains dedicated to enhancing the quality of education and supporting learners' holistic development.

The school environment is characterized by collaborative teaching practices and strong community support. Teachers work together to design instructional strategies suited to the needs of their learners, particularly in early literacy. Parents and guardians are also encouraged to participate in school activities and support their children's learning at home. However, classroom observations reveal that while learners are exposed to literacy-rich activities, there are still gaps in phonological awareness and early reading readiness, particularly in skills such as rhyming, syllable awareness, vocabulary development, and print awareness. These observed challenges provide the context and justification for conducting the present study and for proposing targeted literacy interventions in the school.



Figure 3

Location Map and Building Photograph Supplied in the Source Manuscript

Respondents and Learners Evaluated

The respondents of this study were the two kindergarten teachers from Old Bucao Elementary School. These teachers were selected as the primary respondents because they are directly responsible for handling kindergarten classes and are in the best position to assess learners' phonological awareness and early reading readiness.

The teachers served as evaluators of the 83 kindergarten learners under their respective classes. They provided data based on systematic classroom observations and structured assessment tools designed for the study. The teachers assessed learners' phonological awareness skills in terms of rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending, as well as early reading readiness in terms of letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness.

Using teachers as respondents was appropriate since they have direct daily interaction with learners and are trained to observe and evaluate literacy-related behaviors in natural classroom settings. This ensured that the data collected reflected authentic classroom performance and developmental progress of the learners.

There were two kindergarten teachers who participated in the study. Since the respondents were professionals, ethical considerations such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. The distribution of learners is presented in the table below.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents

Section	Learners Evaluated	Number of Teacher-Respondents
Section A	42	1
Section B	41	1
Total	83	2



Research Instrument

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

The instrument consisted of three parts. Part I gathered the demographic profile of the learners in terms of age, gender, and pre-kindergarten attendance. Part II assessed phonological awareness skills in terms of rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending. Part III measured early reading readiness in terms of letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness.

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

Prior to its full administration, the instrument underwent expert validation to ensure content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives. A pilot testing was also conducted to establish reliability. The results of the reliability test showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.988 for the phonological awareness scale and 0.987 for the early reading readiness scale, indicating excellent internal consistency and confirming that the instrument was highly reliable for data collection.

Data Gathering Procedure

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Ethical Considerations

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

Informed Consent. Informed consent was secured from the parents or legal guardians of the kindergarten learners prior to data collection. The consent form clearly explained the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the use of teacher-based assessments to evaluate learners' phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness. Parents were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could refuse or withdraw consent at any time without any negative consequences for their children.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Statistical Treatment

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Procedure

The instrument for this study employed a four-point Likert-type scale to assess the frequency of observable phonological awareness behaviors and early reading readiness skills among kindergarten learners. The scale ranged from 1 (Rarely Demonstrated) to 4 (Always Demonstrated), with higher scores indicating stronger manifestation of the targeted skills. Each indicator under phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness was rated by the kindergarten teachers based on classroom observation.

Table 2

Scoring of Phonological Awareness Skills

Scale	Numerical Rating	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.25–4.00	Expert	The learner consistently demonstrates phonological awareness skills, including rhyming, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending, with a very high level of proficiency and independence.
3	2.50–3.24	Advanced	The learner frequently demonstrates phonological awareness skills with only minimal assistance or prompting.
2	1.75–2.49	Intermediate	The learner inconsistently demonstrates phonological awareness skills and requires regular guidance and practice.
1	1.00–1.74	Beginner	The learner rarely demonstrates phonological awareness skills and requires intensive support to develop foundational abilities.

Table 3

Scoring of Early Reading Readiness

Scale	Numerical Rating	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.25–4.00	Very High	The learner consistently demonstrates a very high level of early reading readiness, including letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary development, and print awareness.



Scale	Numerical Rating	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
3	2.50–3.24	High	The learner demonstrates a high level of early reading readiness with occasional need for prompts or assistance.
2	1.75–2.49	Low	The learner demonstrates emerging early reading readiness skills but requires regular guidance and practice to strengthen literacy foundations.
1	1.00–1.74	Very Low	The learner demonstrates very limited early reading readiness skills and requires intensive intervention to develop basic literacy competencies.

Results and Discussion

Learner Profile

Age of the Learners

Table 4

Age of the Learners

Age (in years)	f	%
6	74	89.16
5	9	10.84
Total	83	100.00

The findings revealed that most kindergarten learners (89.16%) were six years old, while only a small proportion (10.84%) were five years old. This distribution indicates that the majority of the respondents were within the recommended age for kindergarten enrollment under the Department of Education, suggesting that they had reached an appropriate stage of cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development for formal literacy instruction.

From an educational perspective, age is an important consideration because children's developmental readiness influences how they acquire foundational literacy skills. Learners who enter kindergarten at the appropriate age generally possess greater attention span, language proficiency, memory capacity, and auditory processing abilities, enabling them to participate more effectively in phonological awareness activities such as rhyming, syllable segmentation, and sound manipulation. Their developmental maturity also facilitates the acquisition of early reading skills, including letter recognition, vocabulary development, and print awareness.

The findings are consistent with international research emphasizing the importance of developmentally appropriate school entry. UNESCO (2021) reported that children who begin formal schooling at the recommended age generally demonstrate stronger foundational literacy and numeracy competencies because they are developmentally prepared to engage in structured classroom learning. Similarly, Duncan et al. (2020) found that school-entry age is positively associated with children's acquisition of early literacy skills, particularly phonological processing and emergent reading abilities. These studies reinforce the present findings by suggesting that age-appropriate enrollment provides learners with developmental advantages that support successful literacy acquisition during the kindergarten years.

Gender of the Learners

Table 5

Gender of the Learners

Gender	f	%
Female	37	44.58
Male	46	55.42
Total	83	100.00



The results showed a relatively balanced distribution of kindergarten learners, with males comprising 55.42 percent of the respondents and females accounting for 44.58 percent. Although male learners slightly outnumbered female learners, the difference was not substantial, indicating that both sexes were adequately represented in the study.

This balanced composition strengthens the educational value of the findings because the results reflect the literacy characteristics of both male and female kindergarten learners rather than being heavily influenced by one group. In classroom practice, teachers are expected to provide equitable literacy opportunities regardless of gender, recognizing that all learners can develop phonological awareness and early reading readiness when exposed to appropriate instructional experiences.

Pre-Kindergarten Attendance

Table 6

Pre-Kindergarten Attendance

Attendance	f	%
Yes	79	95.18
No	4	4.82
Total	83	100.00

The findings indicated that 95.18 percent of the kindergarten learners attended pre-kindergarten prior to entering formal kindergarten, whereas only 4.82 percent had no preschool experience. This demonstrates that nearly all learners had prior exposure to organized early childhood education before participating in the present study.

The high rate of pre-kindergarten attendance has important educational implications because early childhood education provides children with opportunities to develop essential pre-literacy competencies before formal reading instruction begins. Preschool experiences commonly include storytelling, alphabet recognition, nursery rhymes, songs, vocabulary-building activities, and interactive play, all of which strengthen oral language and phonological awareness. These early learning experiences establish a foundation that facilitates later reading readiness upon entry into kindergarten.

These findings are supported by previous research highlighting the long-term benefits of early childhood education. UNICEF (2021) emphasized that participation in quality early childhood education programs significantly enhances children's school readiness, language development, and early literacy skills. Similarly, Magnuson and Duncan (2020) reported that children who attend preschool consistently demonstrate stronger vocabulary, phonological awareness, and beginning reading abilities than children without preschool experience. Yoshikawa et al. (2021) likewise concluded that high-quality early childhood education positively influences children's readiness for formal schooling by strengthening both cognitive and language development. The consistency of these findings with the present study underscores the value of sustained early childhood educational experiences in preparing learners for successful literacy acquisition during kindergarten.

Phonological Awareness Skills

Rhyming Skills

Table 7

Rhyming Skills

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Identifies rhyming words when heard orally	2.88	1.00	Advanced
2	Selects a rhyming word from given choices	2.89	0.98	Advanced
3	Produces a rhyming word independently	2.89	0.98	Advanced
4	Completes a rhyme in familiar patterns	2.89	0.98	Advanced
5	Distinguishes rhyming from non-rhyming words	2.89	0.98	Advanced
6	Participates actively in rhyming games	2.89	0.98	Advanced



S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
7	Generates more than one rhyming word	2.89	0.98	Advanced
8	Responds accurately during rhyming activities	2.89	0.98	Advanced
	Aggregate Mean	2.89		Advanced
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.98	Advanced

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

The findings revealed that kindergarten learners demonstrated an advanced level of rhyming skills, indicating that they were generally capable of recognizing, identifying, and producing rhyming words during literacy activities. This suggests that the learners had already developed sensitivity to similarities in word endings, which is one of the earliest manifestations of phonological awareness and serves as a foundation for later phonemic development.

From an educational standpoint, the development of rhyming skills is essential because it strengthens children's awareness of sound patterns in spoken language before formal decoding begins. Learners who can recognize rhymes become more attentive to the sound structure of words, making it easier to distinguish phonemes and establish sound-letter relationships. These abilities support the transition from oral language to print and facilitate beginning reading instruction. Although the learners attained an advanced level, further enrichment remains necessary to help them progress toward more complex phonological tasks such as phoneme manipulation, substitution, and deletion, which are critical for fluent reading.

The findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the role of rhyming in early literacy development. Lonigan et al. (2022) reported that children with well-developed rhyming abilities demonstrate stronger emergent literacy skills because they become more proficient in identifying sound patterns that support word recognition. However, these authors also noted that rhyming alone is insufficient for successful reading acquisition and should be systematically integrated with other phonological awareness skills. This observation supports the present findings, wherein learners demonstrated strong rhyming abilities but still require continued instruction to achieve balanced phonological development.

Syllable Awareness

Table 8

Syllable Awareness

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Claps syllables correctly in familiar words	2.90	0.98	Advanced
2	Identifies syllables in own name	2.90	0.98	Advanced
3	Differentiates short and long words by syllables	2.90	0.98	Advanced
4	Segments unfamiliar simple words	2.90	0.98	Advanced
	Aggregate Mean	2.90		Advanced
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.98	Advanced

The findings indicated that the kindergarten learners exhibited an advanced level of syllable awareness, demonstrating that they were able to identify and segment words into syllables with considerable proficiency. This reflects their growing understanding that spoken words are composed of smaller sound units, an important milestone in the progression of phonological awareness.

The educational significance of this finding lies in the role of syllable awareness as a bridge between oral language and beginning reading. Children who can divide words into syllables are better prepared to decode unfamiliar words, recognize word patterns, and develop spelling strategies during the early stages of literacy instruction. Consequently, syllable awareness contributes not only to decoding accuracy but also to reading fluency as learners encounter increasingly complex vocabulary.



The present findings agree with Ehri (2021), who emphasized that syllable awareness serves as an important developmental stage that facilitates children's understanding of how spoken language is represented in print. Similarly, the International Literacy Association (2020) reported that explicit instruction in syllable segmentation significantly enhances children's decoding and word recognition abilities. Nevertheless, some researchers argue that syllable awareness becomes most effective when accompanied by systematic phonemic awareness instruction. This perspective may explain why the learners in the present study achieved an advanced rather than expert level, indicating that further opportunities to manipulate smaller sound units could strengthen their overall phonological competence.

Beginning Sound Identification

Table 9

Beginning Sound Identification

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Names objects that begin with given sound	3.27	0.78	Expert
2	Recognizes beginning sounds in classroom objects	3.27	0.78	Expert
3	Demonstrates consistency in identifying initial sounds	3.27	0.78	Expert
	Aggregate Mean	3.27		Expert
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.78	Expert

The results revealed that kindergarten learners attained an expert level of beginning sound identification, indicating a highly developed ability to recognize the initial sounds of spoken words. This demonstrates that the learners had already established strong connections between spoken sounds and their corresponding letters, a critical component of phonemic awareness and early decoding.

This finding has substantial educational significance because beginning sound identification represents one of the strongest predictors of successful early reading acquisition. Learners who can accurately identify initial phonemes are more capable of applying phonics knowledge when decoding unfamiliar words, thereby promoting reading accuracy and confidence. Strong performance in this area also indicates readiness for more advanced literacy instruction involving word building, spelling, and independent reading.

The findings support the work of Ehri (2021), who identified beginning sound recognition as a fundamental component of alphabetic knowledge that enables children to decode printed words efficiently. Likewise, the National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that systematic phonemic awareness instruction significantly improves beginning reading achievement by strengthening learners' ability to connect speech sounds with written symbols. While some studies report variability in children's acquisition of phonemic awareness depending on instructional quality and language background, the consistently high performance observed in this study suggests that learners at Old Bucao Elementary School benefited from meaningful and sustained exposure to phonics-rich learning experiences.

Sound Blending

Table 10

Sound Blending

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Blends two phonemes correctly	3.27	0.78	Expert
2	Blends sounds without visual prompts	3.27	0.78	Expert
3	Blends sounds with minimal assistance	3.27	0.78	Expert
4	Shows improvement in blending tasks	3.27	0.78	Expert
	Aggregate Mean	3.27		Expert
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.78	Expert



The findings showed that kindergarten learners demonstrated an expert level of sound blending, indicating that they were highly capable of combining individual phonemes to form recognizable words. This reflects a sophisticated level of phonological processing that supports successful word decoding and beginning reading.

Educationally, sound blending is considered one of the most essential skills for reading acquisition because it enables learners to translate isolated speech sounds into meaningful words. Children who master blending develop greater confidence in decoding unfamiliar vocabulary, allowing them to read independently with increasing fluency. Therefore, the learners' expert performance suggests strong preparedness for formal reading instruction in the succeeding grade levels.

The findings corroborate those of Snow and Matthews (2021) who reported that learners with well-developed blending skills generally acquire reading fluency more rapidly because they process phonological information more efficiently. However, these researchers also cautioned that blending skills alone do not ensure reading success, as vocabulary knowledge, language comprehension, and print awareness likewise influence literacy development. This broader perspective reinforces the present findings by recognizing sound blending as a critical, yet complementary, component of early reading readiness.

Summary of Phonological Awareness

Table 11

Summary of Phonological Awareness

Components	WM	SD	Verbal Description
Rhyming Skills	2.89	0.98	Advanced
Syllable Awareness	2.90	0.98	Advanced
Beginning Sound Identification	3.27	0.78	Expert
Sound Blending	3.27	0.78	Expert
Grand Mean	3.08		Advanced
Grand Standard Deviation		0.88	Advanced

The overall findings demonstrated that kindergarten learners possessed an advanced level of phonological awareness, with particularly strong performance in beginning sound identification and sound blending, while rhyming skills and syllable awareness remained at the advanced level. These results indicate that the learners had developed substantial competence across the major components of phonological awareness and were generally prepared to engage in beginning reading instruction.

The present findings are consistent with Cabell et al. (2023) who reaffirmed that systematic phonological awareness instruction significantly improves early literacy outcomes when integrated with vocabulary development, oral language experiences, and explicit phonics instruction. The consistency of these studies with the present findings highlights the importance of sustaining comprehensive literacy instruction that develops all dimensions of phonological awareness rather than emphasizing only one component.

Early Reading Readiness

Letter Recognition

Table 12

Letter Recognition

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Identifies letters in random order	3.07	0.71	High
2	Identifies letters in environmental print	3.05	0.71	High
3	Identifies letters in own name	3.05	0.71	High
4	Participates in letter recognition activities	3.05	0.71	High
	Aggregate Mean	3.05		High



S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.71	High

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

The findings revealed that kindergarten learners demonstrated a high level of letter recognition, indicating that they were generally able to identify letters in various contexts, including random sequences, environmental print, and their own names. This suggests that the learners had already acquired one of the most fundamental skills required for beginning reading, as familiarity with alphabet letters serves as the basis for understanding the relationship between spoken and written language.

From an educational perspective, letter recognition is a critical component of reading readiness because it enables children to establish the alphabetic principle, which underlies decoding and word identification. Learners who recognize letters accurately are better prepared to associate graphemes with their corresponding sounds, thereby facilitating word recognition and fluent reading. Although the learners attained a high level of proficiency, the findings indicate that continued exposure to meaningful print experiences remains essential to strengthen automatic letter recognition and prepare learners for more advanced literacy tasks.

The findings support the National Early Literacy Panel (2020), which identified alphabet knowledge as one of the strongest predictors of later reading achievement. Likewise, Ehri (2021) explained that accurate and automatic letter recognition allows children to establish connections between letters and sounds, facilitating efficient word decoding. Cabell et al. (2023) likewise emphasized that frequent exposure to print-rich environments significantly enhances children's alphabet knowledge and contributes to successful early reading development. The consistency of these studies with the present findings underscores the importance of maintaining print-rich classrooms and engaging learners in meaningful alphabet experiences during the kindergarten years.

Letter-Sound Correspondence

Table 13

Letter-Sound Correspondence

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Differentiates letter names and sounds	3.05	0.71	High
2	Uses letter sounds in word formation	3.05	0.71	High
3	Identifies vowel sounds accurately	3.05	0.71	High
4	Applies letter sounds when blending	3.06	0.70	High
	Aggregate Mean	3.05		High
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.71	High

The findings indicated that kindergarten learners exhibited a high level of letter-sound correspondence, demonstrating their ability to associate alphabet letters with their respective sounds. This reflects the learners' growing understanding of the alphabetic principle, which enables them to apply phonics knowledge during beginning reading activities.

The educational significance of this finding lies in the essential role of letter-sound correspondence in developing decoding skills. Learners who understand the relationship between letters and sounds are better equipped to read unfamiliar words independently, thereby strengthening reading accuracy and confidence. This competence also provides a strong foundation for spelling, word recognition, and reading fluency, all of which are necessary for successful literacy development in the primary grades.

The findings are consistent with Ehri's (2021) theory of orthographic mapping, which emphasizes that successful reading depends on children's ability to connect letters with their corresponding speech sounds. Similarly, Cabell et al. (2023) emphasized that explicit and systematic phonics instruction, including letter-sound correspondence, is essential for developing decoding skills and promoting successful early reading outcomes. These studies support the



present findings by demonstrating that mastery of letter-sound correspondence provides a critical foundation for reading acquisition.

Vocabulary Development

Table 14

Vocabulary Development

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Names common objects correctly	2.58	0.87	High
2	Uses age-appropriate vocabulary	2.58	0.87	High
3	Understands simple story words	2.58	0.87	High
4	Answers “what” and “who” questions	2.70	0.87	High
5	Uses newly learned words	2.58	0.87	High
6	Follows simple verbal instructions	2.58	0.87	High
7	Identifies objects from descriptions	2.58	0.87	High
8	Demonstrates vocabulary growth	2.58	0.87	High
	Aggregate Mean	2.59		High
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.87	High

The results revealed that kindergarten learners demonstrated a high level of vocabulary development, indicating that they possessed adequate receptive and expressive vocabulary appropriate for their developmental stage. The learners were generally able to identify common objects, understand familiar words, follow verbal instructions, and use newly learned vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

Educationally, vocabulary development extends beyond word knowledge because it directly influences children's listening comprehension, oral communication, and reading comprehension. Learners with richer vocabularies are better able to understand stories, interpret classroom instructions, and construct meaning from printed texts. Although vocabulary development received a high rating, it obtained the lowest mean among the early reading readiness components, suggesting that language enrichment should remain a priority within kindergarten literacy instruction.

The findings agree with the work of Snow and Matthews (2021), who reported that vocabulary knowledge serves as a strong predictor of reading comprehension because it enables children to derive meaning from written texts. Similarly, the International Literacy Association (2020) emphasized that meaningful conversations, shared reading, and interactive storytelling significantly promote vocabulary growth during early childhood.

Print Awareness

Table 15

Print Awareness

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Holds book correctly	2.61	0.84	High
2	Identifies front and back of book	2.83	0.79	High
3	Tracks print left to right	2.61	0.84	High
4	Recognizes that print carries meaning	2.61	0.84	High
5	Recognizes familiar environmental print	2.61	0.84	High
6	Understands top-to-bottom reading direction	2.61	0.84	High
7	Participates in shared reading sessions	2.64	0.85	High
	Aggregate Mean	2.65		High
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.83	High

The findings showed that kindergarten learners demonstrated a high level of print awareness, indicating that they understood the basic conventions of printed language, including proper book handling, print directionality, and the



recognition that print carries meaning. These skills reflect learners' readiness to engage meaningfully with written texts during formal reading instruction.

The educational significance of print awareness lies in its contribution to children's understanding of how written language functions. Before learners can decode words successfully, they must first recognize that print follows predictable conventions and serves as a medium for communication. Print awareness therefore provides the conceptual foundation upon which decoding, fluency, and comprehension are developed. The learners' high level of print awareness suggests that they have acquired the basic concepts necessary to participate effectively in shared reading and other literacy activities.

The present findings support Cabell et al. (2023) which further noted that print-rich classroom environments promote children's awareness of written language and strengthen overall literacy readiness. These studies reinforce the present findings by highlighting the importance of maintaining literacy-rich environments that encourage active engagement with print.

Summary of Early Reading Readiness

Table 16

Summary of Early Reading Readiness

Components	WM	SD	Verbal Description
Letter Recognition	3.05	0.71	High
Letter-Sound Correspondence	3.05	0.71	High
Vocabulary Development	2.59	0.87	High
Print Awareness	2.65	0.83	High
Grand Mean	2.84		High
Grand Standard Deviation		0.78	High

The overall findings demonstrated that kindergarten learners possessed a high level of early reading readiness, indicating that they had acquired the foundational literacy competencies necessary for successful participation in formal reading instruction. Among the assessed components, learners performed strongest in letter recognition and letter-sound correspondence, while vocabulary development and print awareness, although still rated high, obtained comparatively lower ratings. This pattern suggests that learners exhibited greater proficiency in code-based literacy skills than in language comprehension-related competencies.

The educational significance of this finding lies in the multidimensional nature of reading readiness. Successful reading development depends not only on children's ability to recognize letters and decode words but also on their capacity to understand language, acquire vocabulary, and interact meaningfully with printed texts. The learners' strong performance in alphabetic knowledge indicates that current instructional practices effectively develop foundational decoding skills. However, the relatively lower ratings in vocabulary development and print awareness suggest opportunities to strengthen oral language experiences, shared reading, and comprehension-focused activities to achieve more balanced literacy development.

The findings are consistent with the National Early Literacy Panel (2020), which identified alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and print concepts as interconnected predictors of later reading achievement. Similarly, Snow and Matthews (2021) emphasized that effective early literacy instruction should integrate code-based skills with language comprehension to promote successful reading development. Cabell et al. (2023) likewise concluded that balanced literacy instruction, combining phonics, oral language development, vocabulary enrichment, and meaningful print experiences, produces stronger long-term reading outcomes than emphasizing a single literacy component. These studies reinforce the present findings by highlighting the importance of developing all domains of early reading readiness to support children's transition to formal reading instruction.



Relationship Between Phonological Awareness and Early Reading Readiness

Table 17

Test of Relationship Between Phonological Awareness Skills and Early Reading Readiness

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Remarks
Rhyming Skills and Early Reading Readiness	0.385*	Weak Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Syllable Awareness and Early Reading Readiness	0.380*	Weak Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Beginning Sound Identification and Early Reading Readiness	0.396*	Weak Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Sound Blending and Early Reading Readiness	0.396*	Weak Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

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

Table 17 presents the relationship between the different components of phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness among kindergarten learners. The results revealed that all four dimensions of phonological awareness, rhyming skills, syllable awareness, beginning sound identification, and sound blending, were significantly and positively related to early reading readiness. Although the correlations were consistently classified as weak positive relationships, all obtained statistically significant p-values, indicating that phonological awareness contributes meaningfully to children's readiness for reading instruction. These findings affirm that learners with stronger phonological awareness generally tend to demonstrate higher levels of early reading readiness, although phonological awareness alone does not completely explain children's literacy preparedness.

The presence of significant but weak positive relationships has important educational implications. Rather than suggesting that phonological awareness has little value, the findings indicate that early reading readiness is a multidimensional construct influenced by several interacting factors. While phonological awareness provides the auditory foundation for decoding and word recognition, children's reading readiness is likewise shaped by vocabulary knowledge, oral language proficiency, print awareness, quality of classroom instruction, home literacy experiences, parental involvement, and opportunities for meaningful interactions with language. Consequently, improving phonological awareness alone may enhance reading readiness, but the greatest educational gains are achieved when phonological instruction is integrated with comprehensive early literacy experiences.

The findings revealed a significant weak positive relationship between rhyming skills and early reading readiness. This indicates that learners who demonstrated stronger abilities in recognizing and producing rhyming words generally exhibited higher levels of readiness for beginning reading. Although the relationship was not strong, the statistical significance suggests that rhyming remains an important foundational skill that contributes to children's understanding of sound patterns, which subsequently supports later decoding and word recognition.

The findings support Lonigan et al. (2022) who found that children with stronger rhyming abilities generally perform better in emergent literacy tasks because they become more sensitive to the sound structures of language. However, these researchers likewise emphasized that rhyming should not be considered an independent predictor of reading achievement because later reading success depends on the interaction of multiple literacy skills. This perspective helps explain why the relationship observed in the present study was statistically significant yet relatively weak.

The findings likewise revealed a significant weak positive relationship between syllable awareness and early reading readiness. This suggests that learners who demonstrated greater ability to segment and identify syllables also tended to exhibit higher readiness for beginning reading. Although the association was relatively weak, it confirms that understanding the internal structure of spoken words contributes to children's early literacy development.

These findings agree with Ehri (2021), who described syllable awareness as an important developmental stage that supports children's transition from oral language to printed text. Similarly, the International Literacy Association (2020) emphasized that explicit instruction in syllable segmentation enhances decoding efficiency and reading fluency.



among beginning readers. On the other hand, Scarborough's Reading Rope proposes that skilled reading develops through the interaction of multiple language and word-recognition processes rather than through phonological skills alone. This broader perspective provides a plausible explanation for the relatively weak correlation observed in the present study.

Among the four dimensions of phonological awareness, beginning sound identification obtained the highest correlation coefficient, although it remained within the range of a weak positive relationship. This indicates that learners who were more proficient in identifying initial sounds generally demonstrated better early reading readiness than those with lower beginning sound identification skills.

The findings are consistent with Ehri's (2021) theory of orthographic mapping, which explains that efficient word reading depends on children's ability to connect speech sounds with written symbols. Likewise, the Institute of Education Sciences (Foorman et al., 2024) recommends explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and letter-sound relationships as essential practices for developing beginning readers' decoding abilities. However, despite obtaining the strongest correlation among the four domains, the relationship remained weak, suggesting that successful reading readiness also depends on learners' vocabulary knowledge, oral language competence, motivation, instructional quality, and home literacy environment.

The findings further revealed a significant weak positive relationship between sound blending and early reading readiness. Learners who demonstrated greater ability to combine individual phonemes into meaningful words generally exhibited higher levels of reading readiness. Although the magnitude of the relationship was relatively weak, the statistical significance confirms that sound blending contributes meaningfully to children's preparation for formal reading instruction.

The findings agree with Cabell et al. (2023) emphasized that explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, including blending activities, significantly improves beginning reading outcomes when integrated with vocabulary and oral language instruction. Nevertheless, the relatively weak relationship observed in this study indicates that blending skills function as one component of a broader literacy framework rather than as the sole determinant of reading readiness.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that phonological awareness significantly contributes to early reading readiness, thereby supporting the theoretical proposition that children's sensitivity to spoken language forms the foundation of beginning reading. However, the consistently weak positive correlations indicate that reading readiness cannot be explained solely by phonological awareness. Instead, children's literacy development results from the combined influence of code-based skills, language comprehension, environmental support, instructional practices, and meaningful literacy experiences. Therefore, kindergarten literacy instruction should adopt a balanced approach that simultaneously develops phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, oral language, print awareness, and comprehension to maximize children's readiness for successful reading acquisition.

Summary of Findings

The majority of the kindergarten learners were within the recommended age for kindergarten enrollment. The respondents included slightly more male learners than female learners, and most had attended pre-kindergarten before entering formal kindergarten.

The kindergarten learners demonstrated an overall advanced level of phonological awareness. Among its components, beginning sound identification and sound blending emerged as the learners' strongest skills, while rhyming skills and syllable awareness, although advanced, were comparatively less developed.

The kindergarten learners exhibited a high level of early reading readiness. They showed stronger performance in letter recognition and letter-sound correspondence, whereas vocabulary development and print awareness, although likewise rated high, were relatively less developed.

A significant positive relationship was found between all components of phonological awareness and early reading readiness. The findings indicate that learners with better phonological awareness generally demonstrated higher levels



of early reading readiness, highlighting the importance of phonological awareness as one of the foundational skills that supports early literacy development.

Based on the findings, a Phonological Awareness Enhancement Guide was developed to strengthen learners' phonological awareness and support the continued development of early reading readiness through structured and developmentally appropriate literacy activities.

Output of the Study

Read to Rise: Phonological Awareness Enhancement Guide was developed for Old Bucao Elementary School based on the study's findings. Learners demonstrated advanced phonological awareness and high early reading readiness, with weak positive associations between each phonological awareness domain and reading readiness. The guide addresses continued development in rhyming, syllable awareness, vocabulary, and print awareness while sustaining beginning sound identification, sound blending, letter recognition, and letter-sound correspondence.

The guide proposes eight weeks of structured, play-based activities during the regular Kindergarten literacy block, with three sessions per week lasting 30–40 minutes each. Activities include rhyming games, syllable clapping, sound identification, blending, alphabet activities, vocabulary tasks, and shared reading. Teacher observation, performance tasks, checklists, reflection, and parent-supported home activities provide monitoring and reinforcement. Appendix A retains the source's weekly guide, assessment checklist, implementation matrix content, and success indicators. These provisions describe the proposed guide and do not establish additional measured intervention outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the kindergarten learners of Old Bucao Elementary School demonstrated an advanced level of phonological awareness and a high level of early reading readiness, indicating that they possess the foundational literacy skills necessary for successful transition to formal reading instruction. The learners exhibited stronger performance in beginning sound identification and sound blending, as well as in letter recognition and letter-sound correspondence, while rhyming skills, syllable awareness, vocabulary development, and print awareness present opportunities for further enhancement to achieve more balanced literacy development.

The study further concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between phonological awareness skills and early reading readiness, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Although the relationship was weak, the findings affirm that phonological awareness is one of the important contributing factors to early reading readiness. Learners with stronger phonological awareness generally demonstrated better readiness for reading; however, reading readiness is influenced by multiple factors, including oral language development, vocabulary knowledge, print awareness, quality of instruction, home literacy experiences, and supportive learning environments. Thus, phonological awareness should be viewed as a fundamental component within a broader framework of early literacy development rather than as its sole determinant.

The findings have important implications for educational practice. Kindergarten teachers should continue to provide explicit, systematic, and developmentally appropriate phonological awareness instruction while integrating activities that strengthen vocabulary, oral language, and print awareness. A balanced literacy approach that combines phonological awareness with meaningful language and reading experiences will better prepare learners for successful reading acquisition.

Furthermore, the results provide a basis for the development and implementation of school-based and district-level early literacy programs that prioritize foundational reading skills. The Phonological Awareness Enhancement Guide developed through this study serves as a practical instructional resource that may assist teachers in delivering structured and engaging literacy activities. Likewise, school administrators and education leaders may utilize the findings in planning professional development initiatives, strengthening early literacy interventions, and supporting policies that promote evidence-based reading instruction in kindergarten. Such efforts can contribute to improving learners' readiness for reading and fostering stronger literacy outcomes in the early grades.



Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the Phonological Awareness Enhancement Guide be adopted and implemented as a supplementary instructional resource in kindergarten classrooms to strengthen learners' phonological awareness and support the development of early reading readiness. The guide may be utilized by teachers in implementing the proposed activities, monitoring procedures, implementation timeline, success indicators, and evaluation strategies outlined in the program matrix to promote systematic and sustainable early literacy development.

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