

Teaching Pre-Reading in Kindergarten: A Focus on Teachers' Pedagogical Skills, Challenges, and Practices

Judy Anne G. Juson¹, Trixie E. Cubillas, PhD²

¹judyanne.gauran@deped.gov.ph, ²tecubillas@carsu.edu.ph

¹Department of Education, New Demar Elementary School
² Caraga State University

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Abstract- This study seeks to explore and shed light on the pedagogical skills, the encountered challenges, and the employed practices of kindergarten teachers during pre-reading instruction. The study employed a descriptive-correlational design, involving 65 kindergarten teachers as participants. Data were gathered using a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The analysis of the survey data revealed that teachers encounter moderate challenges in several areas. These include adapting teaching methods to cater to diverse learning needs, managing classroom dynamics, integrating various perspectives, fostering a sense of belonging, and maintaining learners' interests, all while dealing with limited resources. Moreover, the study discovered a strong positive correlation between the pedagogical skills of kindergarten teachers and their teaching practices. This suggests a potential trend: as their pedagogical skills enhance, their teaching practices become more effective. This study enhances early childhood education knowledge by highlighting the complexities of pre-reading instruction in kindergarten settings. It provides valuable insights for educators, policy-makers, and researchers. The findings emphasize the need for continuous professional development for teachers and resource allocation in early childhood education. It lays the groundwork for further research on improving pre-reading instruction quality in kindergarten.

Keywords: early childhood education, early literacy, pedagogical skills and practices, teaching pre-reading

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is essential for developing fundamental reading skills among children. Kindergarten, which can be viewed as the pinnacle of a child's academic journey, is the basis for children to establish their reading ability (Carol, 2020). Hence, kindergarten teachers' roles in molding pupils' potential for reading success become crucial.

Understanding the unique pedagogical skills required for effective pre-reading instruction is fundamental in the kindergarten classroom. In these early years, teachers must possess a deep understanding of language development, phonemic awareness, and emergent literacy concepts. Research has shown that a teacher's competence in these areas significantly influences a child's pre-reading development (Jakobson et al., 2022). Teaching pre-reading skills to kindergarteners is an endeavor fraught with challenges. These challenges span a broad spectrum, including diverse learners' needs, limited classroom resources, and varying levels of learner readiness (Endo, 2023). It is incumbent upon teachers to navigate these obstacles effectively, fostering an inclusive learning environment where all learners have the opportunity to thrive.

Beyond the challenges, kindergarten teachers employ a multitude of practices to facilitate pre-reading development. These practices encompass a wide range of activities, from interactive read-aloud sessions to phonics instruction, and creative literacy activities (Suárez et al., 2020). The diverse set of strategies and techniques educators utilize forms the heart of pre-reading instruction in kindergarten. This research seeks to illuminate the range of practices teachers employ, providing a detailed exploration of the methods used to support learners' literacy growth.

This study represents a focused empirical exploration of how teachers in diverse kindergarten settings adapt their pedagogical approaches to meet individual learners' needs in varying classroom environments. While there is a wealth of literature on early literacy instruction, there is a notable dearth of comprehensive studies that investigate the specific strategies and practices employed by kindergarten teachers in the local context. This is particularly true when it comes to addressing challenges such as linguistic diversity,

varied learning styles, and the integration of technology into the classroom. This research gap hinders the understanding of the nuanced pedagogical choices teachers make and the effectiveness of their practices in promoting early literacy skills. By addressing this gap, this study aims to contribute to the development of evidence-based recommendations for improving pre-reading instruction in kindergarten, ultimately enhancing the quality of early literacy education.

OBJECTIVES

The study aims to examine the level of pedagogical skills, challenges, and practices of Kindergarten Teachers in teaching pre-reading. It also seeks to deduce whether or not there is a significant relationship between the pedagogical skills of the kindergarten teacher and the challenges and practices. Ultimately, the study seeks to propose an intervention training program designed for teachers to improve teaching effectiveness continually.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive-correlational approach which involved 65 Kindergarten Teachers of Bayugan City Division to answer a researcher-made survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was validated by the two Master teachers in kindergarten from the Department of Education and a full-fledged Master's degree holder in Early Childhood Development from Caraga State University, for logical and content validation. The survey questionnaire was changed after the responses and recommendations from the experts. The research instrument was also piloted using thirty Kindergarten Teachers in the same Division. The results of the reliability test of the survey tool used revealed a strong internal consistency as shown in Cronbach's Alpha of 0.873. In other words, all questionnaires were retained as they are in the tool. Data analysis utilized SPSS software, employing Weighted Mean to gauge the level of Pedagogical Skills, Challenges, and Practices. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to discern relationships between teachers' pedagogical skills to challenges, and practices.

RESULTS

Problem 1. What is the level of pedagogical skills of the teachers in terms of phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, reading comprehension, oral fluency, and vocabulary instruction?

1. Level of Teachers Pedagogical Skills

1.1 Teachers' pedagogical skills in terms if phonemic awareness

Table 1. Mean distribution of the level of teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of phonemic awareness

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. The teacher effectively incorporates phonemic awareness activities into the curriculum.	4.58	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
2. The teacher demonstrates a strong understanding of phonemic awareness concepts.	4.65	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
3. The teacher provides clear and engaging phonemic awareness instruction.	4.62	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
4. The teacher effectively assesses learners' phonemic awareness skills and adapts instruction accordingly.	4.57	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
5. The teacher's pedagogical skills in phonemic awareness significantly contribute to the learners' language development	4.54	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
Weighted Mean	4.59	Strongly Agree	Very extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

As shown in Table 1, the results indicate that the teachers possess a strong understanding of phonemic awareness concepts, as evidenced by a highest mean score of 4.65. This underscores the teachers' depth of knowledge in this area, contributing to their ability to impart this understanding to their learners effectively. The collective impact of the teacher's pedagogical skills in phonemic awareness on learners' language development is underscored by the lowest mean score of 4.54. This still indicates a high level of agreement among respondents that these skills significantly contribute to the enhancement of pupils' language development. The overall positive assessment is supported by the average weighted mean of 4.59, indicating a significant positive impact on pupils' language development. However, the data emphasizes the need for continued support and development in this area, including ongoing training, professional development opportunities, and resources.

A recent study found that phonemic awareness resources, content, and pedagogy training are necessary for teachers to enhance the reading skills of young children. High-quality textbooks, reading materials, clear teaching strategies, and a culture that values literacy are also essential for teacher education programs. (Haile & Mendesu, 2023).

1.2 Teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of alphabetical principle

Table 2. Mean distribution of the level of teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of alphabetical principle

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. The teacher effectively teaches the Alphabetical Principle, helping learners to understand the relationship between letters and sounds.	4.72	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
2. The teacher uses engaging and effective instructional methods to teach the Alphabetical Principle.	4.65	Strongly Agree	Very extensive

3. The teacher provides clear explanations and examples to help learners grasp the concept of the Alphabetical Principle.	4.63	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
4. The teacher assesses learners' understanding of the Alphabetical Principle and adjusts instruction accordingly.	4.60	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
5. The teacher's pedagogical skills in teaching the Alphabetical Principle significantly contribute to learners' literacy development.	4.63	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
Weighted Mean	4.65	Strongly Agree	Very extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

As given in Table 2, the assessment of teachers' pedagogical skills related to the Alphabetical Principle reveals a high level of proficiency across key indicators. Teachers are highly skilled in teaching the principle, with a highest mean score of 4.72, demonstrating their ability to help learners understand the relationship between letters and sounds. Moreover, the results indicate that teachers actively assess learners' understanding of this principle and modify their teaching approach accordingly, as reflected in the lowest mean score of 4.60. By doing this, they ensure that instruction is tailored to each learner's individual needs, resulting in a more personalized and effective learning environment.

The average weighted mean score of 4.65 highlights the larger impact of teachers' pedagogical skills on learners' overall literacy development, indicating their crucial role in fostering literacy growth among learners.

The study by Toole (2023) shows that combining multiple professional development approaches can lead to inconsistent implementation, but the findings could have a positive impact on society by providing educators and professional development designers with insights to consider when deciding on phonological methods of professional development.

1.3 Teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of reading comprehension

Table 3. Mean distribution of the level of teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of reading comprehension

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. The teacher effectively teaches reading comprehension strategies to learners.	4.42	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
2. The teacher provides a variety of reading materials and activities that promote reading comprehension skills.	4.62	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
3. The teacher helps learners develop critical thinking skills to enhance reading comprehension.	4.45	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
4. The teacher assesses learners' reading comprehension regularly and uses the results to tailor instruction.	4.42	Agree	Moderately extensive
5. The teacher's pedagogical skills in teaching reading comprehension significantly contribute to the learners' overall literacy development.	4.55	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
Weighted Mean	4.49	Agree	Moderately extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

The teachers are also demonstrating excellent expertise in teaching reading comprehension strategies. They regularly assess learners' comprehension and use the results to customize instruction. The same least significant mean score of 4.42 suggests that there is a significant use of strategies that improve learners' ability to comprehend written material and assess reading comprehension. The cumulative influence of teachers' pedagogical competencies on reading comprehension and literacy enhancement is moderately significant, with an average mean score of 4.49. However, there is room for improvement, especially in regular assessment and customized instruction. By continuing to focus on these areas, higher levels of learners' success can be achieved.

A study by Fathimath (2023) found that teachers lack the necessary linguistic knowledge to provide explicit and methodical reading training to children. Reading comprehension boosts confidence while teaching morphological concepts can lead to less confidence. Teachers' self-reported abilities to teach reading do not differ significantly. Key Stage 1 time is spent on reading comprehension exercises and texts, while vocabulary instruction focuses on word memorization and spelling. Obstacles include lack of resources, time constraints, teacher ratios, curriculum clarity, professional support, and students' reading competencies.

1.4 Teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of oral fluency

Table 4. Mean distribution of the level of teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of oral fluency

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. The teacher effectively encourages and supports learners in developing their oral fluency skills.	4.71	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
2. The teacher provides opportunities for learners to practice speaking fluently and articulately.	4.65	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
3. The teacher uses a variety of speaking activities and exercises to enhance learners' oral fluency.	4.55	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
4. The teacher provides constructive feedback to help learners improve their oral fluency skills.	4.49	Agree	Moderately extensive
5. The teacher's pedagogical skills in oral fluency significantly contribute to learners' overall language development.	4.43	Agree	Moderately extensive
Weighted Mean	4.57	Strongly Agree	Very extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

On the data presented in Table 4, teachers' pedagogical skills in oral fluency skills have consistently shown high proficiency, indicating a positive impact on learners' language development. Teachers play a crucial role in motivating and assisting learners to improve their oral fluency skills, with the highest mean score of 4.71. This underscores the teachers' commitment to creating an environment that fosters confident and fluent oral expression among learners. While providing constructive feedback to help learners improve their oral fluency skills, they received a slightly lower mean score of 4.43. The majority still recognize the teachers' efforts in this aspect, indicating

a moderately extensive impact on students' improvement in oral fluency. Teachers are highly effective in fostering oral fluency skills among learners, with an average weighted mean score of 4.57. They excel in encouraging, supporting, and providing practice opportunities using diverse activities. Feedback provision has a slightly lower mean score, but the overall impact of teachers' pedagogical skills on oral fluency is deemed very extensive, contributing significantly to students' language development. According to the University of Greenwich (2024), a constructive feedback dialogue can allow learners to take control of their assessment and become active participants in the learning process.

1.5 Teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of vocabulary instruction

Table 5. Mean distribution of the level of teachers' pedagogical skills in terms of vocabulary instruction

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. The teacher effectively teaches vocabulary to learners using a variety of strategies.	4.51	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
2. The teacher provides engaging and meaningful activities to help learners learn new vocabulary words.	4.54	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
3. The teacher helps learners understand word meanings in context and encourages their use in speaking and writing.	4.58	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
4. The teacher assesses learners' vocabulary knowledge regularly and adjusts instruction to meet their needs.	4.42	Agree	Moderately extensive
5. The teacher's pedagogical skills in teaching vocabulary significantly contribute to the learners' overall language proficiency.	4.40	Agree	Moderately extensive
Weighted Mean	4.49	Agree	Moderately extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

The data on teachers' pedagogical skills in vocabulary instruction reveals a generally high level of proficiency with a variety of strategies used to enhance learners' language proficiency. The teachers' efforts in helping learners understand word meanings in context and encouraging their use in speaking and writing are also acknowledged with a highest mean score of 4.58. This demonstrates the teachers' success in promoting not only rote memorization but also the practical application of vocabulary in various contexts. However, the lowest mean score of 4.40 suggests that teachers' pedagogical skills in vocabulary instruction contribute to learners' overall language proficiency, the extent of this contribution is moderately extensive, suggesting areas for improvement. Despite a slightly lower score in regular assessment, the overall impact of teachers' pedagogical skills on vocabulary instruction is moderately extensive, with an overall weighted mean of 4.49, highlighting the importance of effective vocabulary instruction in language learning.

Teachers excel in vocabulary instruction but need improvement in assessment methods, frequency, and feedback. Schmitt's (2019) research agenda advises a practical model of vocabulary acquisition, understanding of vocabulary knowledge progression, and better measures of vocabulary knowledge (Schmitt's, 2019).

Problem 2. What are the challenges encountered by the teachers in terms of diversity, engagement, and resources?

2. The extent level of Challenges

2.1 Teachers' challenges in terms of diversity

Table 6. Mean distribution of the challenges encountered by the teachers in terms of diversity

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Teachers face challenges in adapting their teaching methods to meet the diverse learning needs of learners.	3.95	Agree	Moderately extensive
2. Teachers encounter difficulties in addressing cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom.	3.66	Agree	Moderately extensive
3. Teachers struggle with managing diverse classroom dynamics and ensuring an inclusive environment.	3.72	Agree	Moderately extensive
4. Teachers find it challenging to incorporate diverse perspectives and materials into their curriculum.	3.72	Agree	Moderately extensive
5. Teachers face obstacles in fostering a sense of belonging and equity among all learners, regardless of their background.	3.52	Agree	Moderately extensive
Weighted Mean	3.72	Agree	Moderately extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

The table reveals that teachers face significant challenges in dealing with diversity in the classroom. Teachers encounter challenges in adapting their teaching methods to meet the diverse learning needs of learners, as indicated by the highest mean score of 3.95. This suggests that there is a moderately extensive acknowledgment of the complexities associated with tailoring instruction to accommodate the varied learning styles and needs of a diverse learner population. The least significant challenge is creating an inclusive environment with a mean score of 3.52 emphasizing the importance of a classroom that celebrates diversity. This suggests that there are moderate challenges in creating an environment that promotes inclusivity and a sense of belonging for every learner, regardless of their cultural or socio-economic background. The overall weighted mean score is 3.72 indicating moderate agreement among respondents. The data suggests comprehensive approaches to address these challenges, including enhancing teacher support through professional development programs, improving educational material, and implementing adaptations to school policies and procedures. To effectively center cultural diversity, educators should critically evaluate professional development frameworks, aligning them with justice principles and promoting collaborative learning with pupils, families, and communities (Szelei et al., (2019).

2.2 Teachers' challenges in terms of engagement

Table 7. Mean distribution of the challenges encountered by the teachers in terms of engagement

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Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Teachers face challenges in maintaining learners' interest and attention during lessons.	3.62	Agree	Moderately extensive
2. Teachers find it difficult to adapt their teaching methods to engage learners with different learning styles.	3.49	Moderate	Adequate
3. Teachers encounter obstacles in making the curriculum relevant and interesting to learners.	3.52	Agree	Moderately extensive
4. Teachers struggle to create a classroom environment that fosters active participation and interaction among learners.	3.51	Agree	Moderately extensive
5. Teachers face challenges in motivating disengaged learners and helping them become more involved in their own learning.	3.62	Agree	Moderately extensive
Weighted Mean	3.55	Agree	Moderately extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

Teachers encounter significant challenges in both motivating disengaged learners to participate actively in their learning and maintaining their interest and attention throughout lessons. These challenges are underscored by a mean score of 3.62 indicating a moderately extensive consensus among respondents. This consensus highlights the difficulties in stimulating active involvement from initially disengaged learners and sustaining learners' engagement and focus during instructional sessions. On the other hand, teachers find it difficult to adapt their teaching methods to engage learners with different learning styles, as indicated by the lowest mean score of 3.49. This implies that there is recognition of the challenge in tailoring instruction to effectively engage learners with diverse learning preferences. Overall, other challenges include making the curriculum relevant, fostering active participation, and motivating disengaged learners. The average mean score of 3.55 indicates moderate agreement on these challenges. Teachers need targeted professional development and resources to overcome these challenges, including training on differentiated instruction, engaging curriculum resources, and strategies for motivating learners. Further research is needed to explore specific support mechanisms that benefit teachers in overcoming these challenges. Additionally, novice teachers need support and additional professional learning in classroom management, as studies show that providing effective professional development improves practices and increases learners engagement. (Hirsch et al.,2021).

2.3 Teachers' challenges in terms of resources

Table 8. Mean distribution of the challenges encountered by the teachers in terms of resources

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Teachers face challenges in accessing up-to-date and relevant teaching materials and resources.	3.49	Moderate	Adequate
2. Teachers find it difficult to secure adequate funding for classroom supplies and educational tools.	3.46	Moderate	Adequate
3. Teachers encounter obstacles in adapting their teaching to the availability of technology and digital resources.	3.57	Agree	Moderately extensive
4. Teachers struggle to provide learners with a diverse range of learning materials and experiences due to resource limitations.	3.55	Agree	Moderately extensive
5. Teachers face challenges in ensuring that all learners have equitable access to necessary educational resources.	3.71	Agree	Moderately extensive
Weighted Mean	3.56	Agree	Moderately extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

Teachers encounter various resource-related challenges such as accessing current teaching materials, securing adequate funding, adapting to technological limitations, providing diverse learning materials, and ensuring equitable access to educational resources. The teachers face challenges in ensuring that all learners have equitable access to necessary educational resources, as reflected in the highest mean score of 3.71. This suggests a moderately extensive agreement on the challenges associated with ensuring fairness and equal access to resources among learners. On the other hand, teachers find it difficult to secure adequate funding for classroom supplies and educational tools, as indicated by a mean score of 3.46. This implies a recognition of the moderate challenges teachers encounter in obtaining the necessary financial resources to support their teaching materials and tools. Based on the average weighted mean of 3.56, there is a moderate level of agreement associated with these resource constraints in the educational setting. It is crucial to address these challenges effectively to improve the quality of education. This can be achieved by developing strategies that ensure equal access to educational resources for all learners.

To address these challenges, Rowan et al., (2020) recommend the development of policies for fair resource distribution or programs that provide resources to learners in need. This approach will ensure equitable access to resources and effectively address the challenges faced in education. By doing so, they will create an inclusive and conducive learning environment for all learners.

Problem 3. What are the practices of kindergarten teachers in teaching pre-reading in terms of phonics, storytelling, and play-based learning?

3. The level of Practices

3.1 Teachers' practices in terms of phonics

Table 9. Mean distribution of the practices of kindergarten teachers in teaching reading in terms of phonics

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Effectively incorporate phonics instruction into their reading lessons.	4.57	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
2. Use a variety of engaging activities to teach phonics concepts to their learners.	4.60	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
3. Provide clear and systematic phonics instruction, building on learners' prior knowledge.	4.54	Strongly Agree	Very Extensive
4. Assess learners' phonics skills regularly and adjust instruction accordingly.	4.51	Strongly Agree	Very extensive

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5. Practices in teaching phonics significantly contribute to learners' early reading development.	4.52	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
Weighted Mean	4.55	Strongly Agree	Very extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

The practices of kindergarten teachers in teaching reading specifically focusing on phonics, are highly commendable, as indicated by the results presented in Table 10. Teachers use a variety of engaging activities to teach phonics concepts to their learners as indicated by a highest mean score of 4.60 This underscores the teachers' creativity and effectiveness in employing diverse and captivating activities that make phonics learning enjoyable and meaningful for young learners. On the other hand, teachers assess learners' phonics skills regularly and adjust instruction accordingly, as indicated by the lowest mean score of 4.51. This emphasizes the teachers' commitment to ongoing assessment and responsiveness to individual student needs, ensuring a tailored approach to phonics instruction. The overall positive assessment is confirmed by the weighted average of 4.55, indicating that kindergarten teachers utilize effective, engaging, and systematic practices in teaching phonics, which significantly contribute to their students' early reading development.

A year-long mentoring program was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of enhancing teachers' ability to teach systematic phonics to beginning readers. The program improved teachers' phonics instruction, leading to better student performance in spelling and reading comprehension. Therefore, it is recommended to continue the practice of periodic assessment of learners' phonics skills to ensure the overall effectiveness of phonics instruction. (Ehri & Flugman, 2019)

3.2 Teachers' practices in terms of storytelling

Table 10. Mean distribution of the practices of kindergarten teachers in teaching reading in terms of storytelling

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Effectively incorporate storytelling into their reading lessons to engage learners.	4.62	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
2. Use a variety of stories and books to introduce new vocabulary and reading concepts.	4.51	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
3. Encourage active participation and interaction through storytelling, such as asking questions and discussing stories with learners.	4.62	Strongly Agree	Ver extensive
4. Adapt storytelling to meet the individual needs and interests of their students.	4.48	Agree	Moderately extensive
5. Use of storytelling significantly contributes to learners' love for reading and comprehension skills.	4.57	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
Weighted Mean	4.56	Strongly Agree	Very extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

The study highlights the successful integration of storytelling into reading lessons, as evidenced by the highest mean score of 4.62. This approach, which promotes active participation and interaction, effectively captivates young learners and fosters a dynamic storytelling environment that enhances both engagement and comprehension. However, the lowest mean score of 4.48 suggests that teachers adapt storytelling to meet the individual needs and interests of their learners. The overall positive assessment is further supported by a weighted mean of 4.56, indicating the teachers' high proficiency and the significant positive impact of their practices on instilling a love for reading and improving comprehension skills among young learners.

The study advocates for the continued use of effective storytelling practices by kindergarten teachers but suggests more focus on tailoring storytelling to meet individual needs and interests. A study on oral storytelling for Latin American immigrant children in preschool classrooms found that oral storytelling enhanced teacher language input and improved young children's narrative skills, impacting Latino education and underscoring the diverse effects of story-sharing. (Schick, 2015)

3.3 Teachers' practices in terms of play-based learning

Table 11. Mean distribution of the practices of kindergarten teachers in teaching reading in terms of play-based learning

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Effectively use play-based activities to teach reading skills and concepts.	4.60	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
2. Incorporate imaginative play and storytelling to enhance learners' reading development.	4.52	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
3. Create a literacy-rich play environment that encourages exploration and experimentation with reading materials.	4.49	Agree	Moderately extensive
4. Adapt their play-based reading activities to meet the diverse needs and interests of their learners.	4.51	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
5. Use of play-based methods significantly contributes to learners' early literacy skills and enthusiasm for reading.	4.52	Strongly Agree	Very extensive
Weighted Mean	4.53	Strongly Agree	Very extensive

Range of Means: 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.49 Moderate; 3.50-4.49 Agree; 4.50-5.00 Strongly Agree

The data revealed that the practices of kindergarten teachers in teaching reading through play-based learning are highly effective and engaging, as indicated by the results presented in Table 11. Kindergarten teachers effectively use play-based activities to teach reading skills and concepts, as reflected in an impressive mean score of 4.60. This underscores the teachers' success in integrating play-based methods seamlessly into their instructional strategies, effectively promoting reading skills and concepts engagingly and enjoyably. On the other hand, teachers create a literacy-rich play environment that encourages exploration and experimentation with reading materials, as reflected in the lowest mean score of 4.49. This suggests a moderately extensive agreement that teachers foster an environment where students can freely engage with reading materials, promoting hands-on exploration and experimentation. The overall positive assessment

is further consolidated by a weighted mean of 4.53 affirming the high proficiency and extensive positive impact of the teachers' practices on early literacy skills and enthusiasm for reading among young learners. The study recommends that kindergarten teachers continue to use play-based methods, incorporate imaginative play and storytelling, create a literacy-rich play environment, and adapt activities to meet individual needs. These practices significantly contribute to the development of early literacy skills and a love for reading among students. However, more emphasis could be placed on creating a more literacy-rich play environment, as this area received the lowest mean score. Play-based pre-primary education is becoming increasingly popular globally, including in Bangladesh. The study evaluates data from pre-primary teachers in Dhaka North and South City, finding that the majority of participants had favorable opinions about reading skills and play-based teaching. (Mostafa, 2023).

Problem 4. Is there a significant relationship between the pedagogical skills of the kindergarten teacher and the challenges and practices?

Table 12 employs correlation coefficients (r-values) and p-values to evaluate the relationships between the pedagogical skills, challenges, and practices of kindergarten teachers.

Table 12. *The significant relationship between the level of mathematical apprehension and the level of educational performance*

Variable 1	Variable 2	r-value	p-value	Decision	Significant
Pedagogical Skills	• Challenges	-.229	.067	Fail to reject	Not Significant
	• Practices	.524**	.000	Reject Ho	Significant

Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The r-value of -0.229 and p-value of 0.067 indicate a negative relationship between pedagogical skills and challenges. Despite the p-value exceeding the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicating a lack of statistical significance, the negative correlation suggests a potential trend: teachers' challenges may decrease as pedagogical skills improve. However, no statistical evidence supports this relationship.

The correlation between pedagogical skills and practices is expressed by an r-value of 0.524 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates an extensive beneficial relationship between the pedagogical skills and practices of kindergarten teachers. The null hypothesis is rejected (Reject Ho), indicating that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. In practice, the effectiveness of teaching practices improves significantly as teachers' pedagogical skills improve. The data implies that the statistical analysis reveals a possible, but statistically insignificant, negative correlation between pedagogical skills and challenges. However, there is a highly significant positive correlation between pedagogical skills and teaching practices, implying that teachers' pedagogical skills improve, resulting in more effective teaching practices.

The negative correlation between pedagogical skills and challenges suggests a potential trend where challenges decrease as pedagogical skills improve, though not statistically supported. Conversely, the significant positive correlation between pedagogical skills and teaching practices indicates that as teachers' pedagogical skills improve, their teaching practices become more effective, rejecting the null hypothesis, while a possible negative correlation between pedagogical skills and challenges exists, the significant positive correlation between pedagogical skills and teaching practices underscores the importance of enhancing teachers' pedagogical skills for improved instructional outcomes.

In connection to the results above, Santos (2023) revealed in the study that despite facing challenges teachers provide equal opportunities for their students due to their positive attitude and love for their work, aiming to enhance their knowledge in child development and pedagogy. (Santos, 2023)

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made. The remarkable pedagogical skill of kindergarten teachers is highlighted by this study, particularly in the areas of oral fluency, vocabulary instruction, and reading practices. These teachers demonstrate a high level of competency in applying a range of strategies, creating engaging activities, and providing helpful criticism all of which have a positive impact on the language acquisition of their pupils. These teachers exhibit remarkable resilience and adaptability, despite facing moderate challenges in managing classroom dynamics and meeting the needs of diverse students. A strong positive correlation between teachers' pedagogical skills and their successful teaching practices is shown in the research's findings. In line with this, teachers who continue to improve their craft are more likely to use engaging and effective teaching strategies. It is possible to continue improving early childhood education while also emphasizing the strengths of kindergarten teachers through the practices seen in this study.

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