Evaluating the Impact of K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum Implementation on Early Literacy Development

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and its perceived impact on early literacy development among learners in selected schools in Cebu City during the School Year 2024–2025. Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 30 teacher respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using an adapted survey questionnaire and analyzed using weighted mean and Pearson's r correlation analysis. Findings revealed that the MATATAG Curriculum was frequently implemented, particularly in terms of aligning literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness, appropriateness of instructional materials, and integration of child-centered literacy instruction. The curriculum was likewise perceived to positively influence learners' oral communication, writing, and reading skills, with stronger outcomes observed in foundational reading competencies. Despite these positive findings, teachers reported moderate challenges related to the adequacy of instructional resources, large class sizes, and addressing diverse learner readiness levels. Correlation analysis further revealed a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between the extent of curriculum implementation and early literacy outcomes, indicating that effective implementation contributes substantially to learners' literacy development. The findings underscore the importance of sustained instructional support, developmentally appropriate literacy practices, and resource provision in strengthening early literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum, Early Literacy Development, Descriptive-Correlational Method, Cebu City, Cebu, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Early literacy plays a vital role in language development, academic achievement, and social participation. It encompasses key foundational skills such as oral communication, reading comprehension, and written expression, all of which are essential for lifelong learning and cognitive growth. Snow (2020) emphasized that strong early literacy development significantly influences children's ability to succeed across academic disciplines. This perspective is reinforced by recent studies showing that children who develop strong literacy skills during the early grades are more likely to achieve sustained academic and social success (Piasta, Justice, & O'Connell, 2020; Wasik & Hindman, 2020). These findings underscore the critical importance of strengthening early literacy instruction, particularly during the foundational years of education.

Within the Philippine educational context, challenges in early literacy remain persistent, particularly in public school systems. Findings from national and international large-scale assessments, including the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM, 2019) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2018), revealed significant gaps in foundational learning competencies among Filipino learners. In response to these concerns, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in 2023 as part of a broader educational reform initiative aimed at strengthening foundational learning outcomes. The MATATAG Curriculum prioritizes developmental appropriateness, alignment of learning competencies, and the use of child-centered and engaging instructional practices. It was specifically designed to address curriculum congestion in the previous curriculum framework and to improve learner outcomes through focused content delivery and foundational skill development (DepEd, 2023).

Despite the curriculum's promising goals, its successful implementation continues to face substantial challenges at the classroom level. Teachers, as the primary agents of curriculum implementation, encounter difficulties related to limited access to instructional resources, insufficient professional training, and challenges in adapting instructional materials to diverse learner needs (Alvarado & Bautista, 2024). These concerns become more pronounced in multilingual and multi-ability classrooms, where teachers are expected to deliver developmentally appropriate and inclusive literacy instruction. Jaca and Lopez-Baroman (2021) further identified systemic gaps in the implementation of previous curriculum reforms, emphasizing that teachers often feel underprepared and inadequately supported, particularly in the area of early literacy instruction within linguistically diverse settings.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of curriculum reform largely depends on how teachers perceive and interpret its relevance, clarity, and practicality. Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions significantly influence their instructional decisions and shape how curricula are enacted in classroom practice (Voogt, Pieters, & Handelzalts, 2020). When teachers perceive a curriculum as coherent, contextually relevant, and beneficial to learners, they are more likely to implement it with fidelity. Conversely, when they experience a disconnect between curriculum expectations and classroom realities, they may modify, dilute, or selectively implement curriculum components, thereby reducing the intended impact of the reform (Aguanta & Tumibay, 2021).

The MATATAG Curriculum strongly advocates child-centered approaches, including play-based learning, exploratory activities, and integrated literacy instruction aligned with learners' developmental readiness. Existing literature affirms that such approaches significantly enhance children's engagement, comprehension, and academic achievement (Justice, Logan, & Damschroder, 2020; Neuman & Gambrell, 2021). However, in resource-constrained educational environments, the practical application of these strategies often remains limited. Teachers may acknowledge these approaches in lesson planning but encounter difficulties in consistently integrating them into classroom instruction due to constraints in time, training, instructional materials, and classroom space (Malinao & Miano, 2025). Consequently, there is a need to critically examine how early childhood teachers perceive and implement the MATATAG Curriculum, particularly its literacy-related components.

Given these concerns, this study assessed the perceptions of early childhood education teachers regarding the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and its perceived impact on early literacy instruction in selected early childhood education schools in Cebu during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, the study examined the extent of curriculum implementation in terms of the alignment of literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness, the appropriateness of instructional materials for early literacy, and the integration of child-centered literacy instruction. It also determined the perceived impact of MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction on learners' oral communication, writing, and reading skills, as well as the level of challenges encountered by early childhood teachers in implementing early literacy instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum. Moreover, the study investigated the significant relationships between the extent of curriculum implementation, the perceived impact of literacy instruction on learners, and the challenges encountered by teachers.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide evidence-based insights into curriculum implementation during a critical stage of child development. By grounding the investigation in the experiences of early childhood educators in Cebu, the findings may contribute to the development of localized instructional enhancement plans aimed at strengthening early literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum. The study may also support DepEd's continuing efforts to monitor, refine, and contextualize curriculum implementation based on classroom realities and teacher experiences. Ultimately, ensuring that curriculum reforms such as the MATATAG Curriculum fulfill their intended goals requires bridging the gap between policy design and classroom practice, which this study seeks to address.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Early literacy development is widely recognized as a critical foundation for later academic achievement, making its integration within the K–3 MATATAG Curriculum particularly essential during the formative years of learning. Contemporary educational research consistently emphasizes that early literacy competencies

significantly influence learners' long-term educational outcomes, social participation, and cognitive development (Snow, 2020; Piasta, Justice, & O'Connell, 2020). In support of this, UNESCO highlighted that strengthening foundational literacy remains one of the most urgent educational priorities globally, particularly in developing countries where literacy gaps persist among early-grade learners. Likewise, recent studies have demonstrated that high-quality literacy instruction in the early years improves language acquisition, comprehension, and academic resilience among young learners (Neuman & Gambrell, 2021; Wasik & Hindman, 2020).

The implementation of curriculum reforms such as the MATATAG Curriculum is strongly influenced by teachers' competence, preparedness, and instructional adaptability. According to Fullan (2007), successful curriculum reform depends not only on curriculum design but also on the active engagement and professional capacity of teachers. Recent studies further affirmed that teachers' pedagogical competence significantly influences the quality of literacy instruction and learner outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Guskey, 2021). Similarly, Florian (2021) emphasized that inclusive and developmentally responsive teaching practices contribute to more meaningful literacy learning experiences among young children. In the Philippine context, Alvarado and Bautista (2024) found that limited training opportunities and insufficient instructional resources remain among the major barriers encountered by teachers in implementing literacy reforms effectively.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory continues to provide strong theoretical support for child-centered and socially interactive literacy instruction. The theory emphasizes the importance of scaffolding, collaborative learning, and guided interaction in supporting children's cognitive and literacy development. Johnson and Lee (2023) reported that teacher-guided peer collaboration significantly improved preschool learners' engagement and critical thinking skills. Similarly, Santos and Reyes (2022) found that scaffolding techniques such as guided questioning, modeling, and interactive storytelling effectively bridged literacy gaps among Filipino kindergarten learners. Additional studies by Mendoza and Soriano (2021), Liu and Zhang (2022), and Cruz (2020) confirmed that socially interactive and play-based literacy activities significantly enhance learners' vocabulary development, reading readiness, and oral communication skills. These findings reinforce the MATATAG Curriculum's emphasis on child-centered and developmentally appropriate literacy instruction.

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory also provides substantial support for developmentally appropriate literacy instruction within early childhood education. Piaget emphasized that children construct knowledge through active interaction with their environment and progress through distinct cognitive stages. During the preoperational stage, children develop symbolic thinking, language acquisition, and imaginative play, which are foundational to literacy learning. Smith and Brown (2023) emphasized that instructional materials and literacy activities should align with children's developmental readiness to maximize learning outcomes. Likewise, Lee and Kim (2022) observed that symbolic and pretend play activities significantly enhance language development and early reading competencies. In the Philippine setting, Garcia and Santos (2021) argued that literacy instruction should incorporate cognitively engaging and experiential learning strategies to support young learners' developmental needs. Rodriguez et al. (2023) further provided longitudinal evidence linking early literacy exposure to improved cognitive growth and academic readiness. Tomlinson and Moon (2021) further emphasized that differentiated and learner-responsive instruction strengthens literacy engagement and supports diverse developmental needs among early-grade learners.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory highlights that literacy development is shaped not only by classroom instruction but also by broader environmental systems that influence children's learning experiences. This perspective underscores the importance of collaboration among schools, families, communities, and educational institutions in supporting literacy development. Rivera and Castillo (2022) found that parental involvement significantly improves learners' reading fluency and comprehension. Similarly, Panicker and Nedungottil (2021) reported that children from low-income households often experience limited access to literacy materials and supportive home learning environments, negatively affecting literacy readiness. Allay (2023) further emphasized that active parental engagement enhances children's reading motivation and literacy exposure at home. These findings suggest that successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum requires strong home-school partnerships and community support systems. UNICEF (2021) likewise

emphasized that supportive learning environments and family engagement are essential in strengthening foundational literacy among young learners.

Peer interaction also plays a significant role in literacy acquisition and social development during early childhood. Juhoven et al. (2019) demonstrated that learners exposed to supportive peer environments develop stronger communication skills and higher levels of reading engagement. Conversely, learners experiencing bullying or social exclusion often demonstrate reduced confidence and lower participation in literacy-related activities. Lopez et al. (2021) further found that structured peer collaboration activities, such as paired reading and cooperative storytelling, substantially improve vocabulary acquisition and learner confidence. These studies support the integration of collaborative and inclusive literacy practices within the MATATAG Curriculum framework.

Classroom-related barriers continue to affect the effective implementation of literacy instruction in early childhood education. Teachers frequently encounter challenges associated with diverse learner needs, behavioral management, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient instructional materials. Chetty (2021) highlighted the importance of smooth transitions from home or preschool settings to formal schooling to minimize literacy gaps among learners. Yu (2023) similarly stressed the value of differentiated instruction and play-based strategies in sustaining learner engagement and literacy participation. Furthermore, De Nobile et al. (2018) observed that limited teacher training and inadequate access to age-appropriate learning resources often constrain the successful implementation of literacy programs. These findings indicate that curriculum reforms require not only pedagogical innovation but also institutional and systemic support mechanisms. World Bank (2020) further noted that foundational literacy challenges in developing countries are closely associated with instructional inequities, inadequate teacher preparation, and limited access to quality learning resources.

Several internationally recognized literacy programs further demonstrate the long-term impact of high-quality early literacy instruction. Murray et al. (2018) found that the Incredible Years curriculum, which integrates emotional literacy and social skills into reading instruction, significantly improved learners' literacy outcomes while reducing behavioral difficulties. Smith (2021) emphasized that the Reggio Emilia approach enhances creativity, critical thinking, and language development by positioning children as active co-constructors of knowledge. Similarly, the Perry Preschool Project demonstrated that high-quality early childhood literacy programs contribute to sustained academic achievement and improved social outcomes later in life (Olds, 2019). These studies affirm the importance of developmentally responsive and learner-centered literacy practices consistent with the objectives of the MATATAG Curriculum.

Recent studies within the Philippine educational setting further revealed that inadequate teacher preparation, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to instructional resources continue to hinder effective literacy instruction. Lindsay et al. (2018) found that Filipino learners receiving active parental support demonstrated stronger reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Healy et al. (2022) likewise reported that parent-led reading activities at home significantly enhanced learners' decoding and fluency skills. However, existing challenges related to instructional readiness and educational resources remain critical concerns affecting the implementation of literacy reforms in public schools. OECD (2021) emphasized that strengthening foundational literacy requires sustained teacher support, equitable instructional access, and learner-centered educational reforms.

Collectively, these theories and empirical studies provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding the implementation of the K–3 MATATAG Curriculum in relation to early literacy instruction. Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and social interaction, Piaget supports developmentally appropriate learning practices, Bronfenbrenner situates literacy development within broader ecological systems, and Fullan underscores the critical role of teachers and institutional support in curriculum reform. Anchored on Philippine educational policies such as Republic Act No. 10533 and DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2024, this study recognizes that successful curriculum implementation requires the integration of child-centered pedagogy, teacher competence, parental involvement, and systemic educational support. This integrated perspective provides a strong conceptual and empirical basis for examining how the MATATAG Curriculum addresses the opportunities and challenges of early literacy instruction within the Philippine educational context.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine and describe the perceptions of early childhood education teachers regarding the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and its perceived impact on early literacy instruction in selected schools in Cebu during the School Year 2025–2026. The descriptive design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to determine the current extent of curriculum implementation in terms of alignment of literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness, appropriateness of instructional materials, and integration of child-centered literacy instruction without manipulating the variables. The correlational aspect examined the relationships between curriculum implementation, perceived literacy outcomes, and the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing early literacy instruction. A quantitative approach was utilized through structured survey questionnaires to gather measurable data and analyze relationships among variables using statistical tools (Seeram, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants

This study involved thirty (30) early childhood education teachers from the selected schools in Cebu City during the School Year 2025–2026. The respondents were intentionally selected because of their direct involvement in implementing the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and delivering early literacy instruction in classroom settings. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate for the study since it specifically required participants with relevant knowledge, experience, and engagement in early childhood literacy instruction. This sampling approach ensured that the gathered data reflected the actual experiences, perceptions, and challenges encountered by teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum.

Data Collection Tools

The study utilized a structured questionnaire developed and adapted from related literature and studies to collect quantitative data regarding the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and its perceived impact on early literacy instruction. The questionnaire consisted of two major sections aligned with the objectives of the study. Part I examined the extent of implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in terms of developmental readiness, appropriateness of instructional materials, and child-centered literacy instruction. Part II assessed the perceived impact of MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction on learners' oral communication, writing, and reading skills, as well as the challenges encountered by teachers during implementation. The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Prior to administration, the questionnaire underwent expert validation to ensure content validity, clarity, and reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through the personal administration of the survey questionnaire to ensure clarity and accuracy of responses. Prior to data gathering, the researcher secured approval from the Schools Division Superintendent and the school administrators of the identified research locale. The respondents were oriented regarding the objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations of the study, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. Informed consent was secured from all participants before the distribution of the questionnaires. The accomplished questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to minimize missing responses and ensure completeness of data. All information gathered was treated with strict confidentiality in accordance with ethical research standards and the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173).

Data Analysis

The collected data were organized, encoded, and statistically analyzed to ensure accuracy and reliability of the findings. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation were

utilized to describe the demographic profile of the respondents and determine the extent of curriculum implementation, perceived literacy outcomes, and implementation challenges. Pearson's r or Spearman's rho correlation analysis was employed to determine the significant relationships among curriculum implementation, literacy outcomes, and challenges encountered by teachers, depending on the normality of data distribution. These statistical procedures enabled the study to measure the strength and direction of relationships among variables. All analyses were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance to ensure validity and reliability of the findings.

RESULTS

Table 1

The Extent of the Implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
A. Alignment of Literacy Competencies with Learners' Developmental Readiness			
1	Literacy tasks are developmentally appropriate for learners' age and abilities.	3.83	Frequently Implemented
2	Activities align with expected literacy milestones (e.g., phonemic awareness, vocabulary).	3.83	Frequently Implemented
3	Lessons build on learners' prior knowledge and readiness.	3.63	Frequently Implemented
4	Reading and writing tasks are progressively structured.	3.63	Frequently Implemented
5	Teachers adapt literacy instruction to suit diverse developmental needs.	3.73	Frequently Implemented
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.73**	**Frequently Implemented**
	Standard Deviation	**0.10**	
B. Appropriateness of Instructional Materials for Early Literacy			
6	Instructional materials support early reading and writing skills.	3.30	Moderately Implemented
7	Learning resources are culturally relevant and language-appropriate.	3.47	Frequently Implemented

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
8	Supplementary literacy tools (e.g., big books, flashcards) are available.	3.27	Moderately Implemented
9	Materials reflect the use of Mother Tongue in literacy instruction.	3.17	Moderately Implemented
10	Print-rich materials are accessible and used regularly.	3.47	Frequently Implemented
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.33**	**Moderately Implemented**
	Standard Deviation	**0.13**	
C. Integration of Child-Centered Literacy Instruction			
11	Learners engage in play-based literacy activities.	3.47	Frequently Implemented
12	Literacy tasks encourage learner autonomy and expression.	3.43	Frequently Implemented
13	Storytelling, role-play, and interactive reading are used in instruction.	3.73	Frequently Implemented
14	The classroom environment supports exploration and creativity in literacy.	3.43	Frequently Implemented
15	Children are given choices in their literacy tasks.	3.43	Frequently Implemented
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.50**	**Frequently Implemented**
	Standard Deviation	**0.13**	
	Overall Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.52**	**Frequently Implemented**

Legend: 4.21–5.00 = Extensively Implemented; 3.41–4.20 = Frequently Implemented; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Implemented; 1.81–2.60 = Minimally Implemented; 1.00–1.80 = Not Implemented

Table 1 presents the overall extent of the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in terms of alignment of literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness, appropriateness of instructional materials for early literacy, and integration of child-centered literacy instruction. The findings revealed an overall aggregate weighted mean of 3.52, verbally interpreted as "Frequently Implemented," indicating that the K to 3

MATATAG Curriculum is consistently implemented in early childhood classrooms, particularly in promoting developmentally appropriate and learner-centered literacy instruction.

Among the three domains, alignment of literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness obtained the highest aggregate weighted mean of 3.73, interpreted as "Frequently Implemented." This suggests that teachers consistently align literacy tasks and activities with learners' developmental stages, literacy milestones, and readiness levels. Specifically, the indicators "Literacy tasks are developmentally appropriate for learners' age and abilities" (WM = 3.83) and "Activities align with expected literacy milestones such as phonemic awareness and vocabulary" (WM = 3.83) obtained the highest ratings within the domain. These findings indicate that teachers place strong emphasis on age-appropriate literacy instruction and foundational literacy development. Likewise, "Teachers adapt literacy instruction to suit diverse developmental needs" (WM = 3.73) further suggests that teachers recognize the importance of differentiated literacy instruction in addressing learners' varying abilities and readiness levels.

The integration of child-centered literacy instruction ranked second with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.50, also verbally interpreted as "Frequently Implemented." This indicates that teachers consistently employ learner-centered and participatory literacy approaches in classroom instruction. The indicator "Storytelling, role-play, and interactive reading are used in instruction" (WM = 3.73) obtained the highest mean score within the domain, reflecting teachers' frequent use of engaging and interactive literacy activities that support language development, creativity, and learner participation. Similarly, "Learners engage in play-based literacy activities" (WM = 3.47) and other indicators related to learner autonomy, exploration, and creativity were likewise interpreted as "Frequently Implemented," emphasizing the integration of active and experiential literacy learning practices in early childhood classrooms.

In contrast, appropriateness of instructional materials for early literacy obtained the lowest aggregate weighted mean of 3.33, verbally interpreted as "Moderately Implemented." Although indicators such as "Learning resources are culturally relevant and language-appropriate" (WM = 3.47) and "Print-rich materials are accessible and used regularly" (WM = 3.47) were interpreted as "Frequently Implemented," other indicators including "Instructional materials support early reading and writing skills" (WM = 3.30), "Supplementary literacy tools such as big books and flashcards are available" (WM = 3.27), and "Materials reflect the use of Mother Tongue in literacy instruction" (WM = 3.17) were only "Moderately Implemented." These findings suggest that while literacy resources are being utilized in classrooms, there remain limitations in the accessibility, availability, and adequacy of instructional materials necessary to support effective early literacy instruction. Furthermore, the low standard deviations across the three domains indicate relatively consistent responses among the respondents regarding the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum.

Table 2

The Extent of Impact of the MATATAG-aligned Early Literacy Instruction on Learners

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
A. Oral Communication Skills			
1	Learners can express ideas clearly using age-appropriate vocabulary.	3.50	Agree
2	Learners participate actively in classroom discussions and storytelling.	3.50	Agree
3	Learners demonstrate improved listening and turn-taking skills.	3.13	Neutral

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
4	Learners show confidence in speaking in front of peers.	3.20	Neutral
5	Learners respond appropriately to questions and verbal prompts.	3.37	Neutral
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.34**	**Neutral**
	Standard Deviation	**0.17**	
B. Writing Skills			
6	Learners can write letters and words legibly.	3.40	Neutral
7	Learners can compose simple sentences related to personal experiences.	2.93	Neutral
8	Learners use punctuation and capitalization correctly at their level.	2.60	Disagree
9	Learners show creativity in drawing and labeling their work.	3.27	Neutral
10	Learners can copy and write dictated sentences with minimal assistance.	2.93	Neutral
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.03**	**Neutral**
	Standard Deviation	**0.31**	
C. Reading Skills			
11	Learners recognize and name letters of the alphabet.	3.63	Agree
12	Learners can read simple words and short sentences.	3.53	Agree
13	Learners demonstrate comprehension of read-aloud texts.	2.97	Neutral
14	Learners can match pictures with printed words.	3.77	Agree
15	Learners can retell stories using their own words.	3.13	Neutral
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.41**	**Agree**
	Standard Deviation	**0.34**	
	Overall Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.26**	**Neutral**

Legend: 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 2.61–3.40 = Neutral; 1.81–2.60 = Disagree; 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 presents the extent of the impact of MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction on learners in terms of oral communication, writing, and reading skills. The findings revealed an overall aggregate weighted mean of 3.26, verbally interpreted as “Neutral,” indicating that the perceived impact of MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction on learners’ literacy development is moderate and still developing across the identified domains.

Among the three domains, reading skills obtained the highest aggregate weighted mean of 3.41, verbally interpreted as "Agree," suggesting that literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum has positively contributed to the development of learners' foundational reading competencies. Specifically, the indicators "Learners can match pictures with printed words" (WM = 3.77), "Learners recognize and name letters of the alphabet" (WM = 3.63), and "Learners can read simple words and short sentences" (WM = 3.53) received the highest ratings. These findings imply that the curriculum effectively supports basic decoding, word recognition, and print awareness skills among early learners. However, indicators related to higher-order literacy abilities such as "Learners demonstrate comprehension of read-aloud texts" (WM = 2.97) and "Learners can retell stories using their own words" (WM = 3.13) were only interpreted as "Neutral," indicating that comprehension and expressive literacy skills require further enhancement.

Oral communication skills obtained an aggregate weighted mean of 3.34, verbally interpreted as "Neutral." The indicators "Learners can express ideas clearly using age-appropriate vocabulary" (WM = 3.50) and "Learners participate actively in classroom discussions and storytelling" (WM = 3.50) obtained the highest ratings within the domain, indicating that MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction positively supports vocabulary development and learner participation in oral activities. However, indicators such as "Learners demonstrate improved listening and turn-taking skills" (WM = 3.13), "Learners show confidence in speaking in front of peers" (WM = 3.20), and "Learners respond appropriately to questions and verbal prompts" (WM = 3.37) remained within the "Neutral" range, suggesting that oral confidence, communication fluency, and conversational interaction skills still need reinforcement among learners.

Meanwhile, writing skills obtained the lowest aggregate weighted mean of 3.03, verbally interpreted as "Neutral," indicating that the impact of MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction on writing development remains relatively limited. Among the indicators, "Learners can write letters and words legibly" (WM = 3.40) obtained the highest mean score, followed by "Learners show creativity in drawing and labeling their work" (WM = 3.27). These findings suggest that learners demonstrate emerging foundational writing skills and creative expression. However, indicators such as "Learners can compose simple sentences related to personal experiences" (WM = 2.93), "Learners can copy and write dictated sentences with minimal assistance" (WM = 2.93), and particularly "Learners use punctuation and capitalization correctly at their level" (WM = 2.60) obtained lower ratings, indicating persistent difficulties in sentence construction, writing independence, and application of writing conventions among learners. The standard deviations across the three domains further indicate relatively consistent perceptions among the respondents regarding the impact of early literacy instruction on learners' literacy development.

Table 3

The Level of the Challenges Encountered by Early Childhood Teachers in Implementing Early Literacy Instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	Lack of developmentally appropriate learning materials	3.50	Agree
2	Inadequate training or professional development related to MATATAG early literacy strategies	3.23	Neutral
3	Insufficient time to focus on individualized literacy instruction	3.57	Agree
4	Limited parental involvement and support in literacy development	3.30	Neutral
5	Difficulty addressing diverse literacy levels within one class	3.20	Neutral
6	Challenges in implementing MTB-MLE due to learners' varied language backgrounds	3.07	Neutral

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
7	Lack of access to technology and literacy-enhancing resources	3.43	Agree
8	Difficulty in assessing literacy progress due to limited tools	3.63	Agree
9	Large class sizes affecting literacy instruction effectiveness	3.73	Agree
10	Lack of administrative or supervisory support for literacy-focused instruction	3.67	Agree
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	**3.43**	**Agree**
	Standard Deviation	**0.22**	

Table 3 presents the level of the challenges encountered by early childhood teachers in implementing early literacy instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum. The findings revealed an aggregate weighted mean of 3.43, verbally interpreted as "Agree," indicating that teachers generally experience considerable challenges in implementing literacy instruction within early childhood classrooms.

Among the identified challenges, "Large class sizes affecting literacy instruction effectiveness" obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.73, interpreted as "Agree." This indicates that overcrowded classrooms significantly affect teachers' ability to provide focused and effective literacy instruction to young learners. Similarly, "Lack of administrative or supervisory support for literacy-focused instruction" (WM = 3.67) and "Difficulty in assessing literacy progress due to limited tools" (WM = 3.63) were also rated highly, suggesting that institutional support and assessment-related limitations remain major concerns in literacy instruction implementation. Furthermore, "Insufficient time to focus on individualized literacy instruction" (WM = 3.57) and "Lack of developmentally appropriate learning materials" (WM = 3.50) were likewise interpreted as "Agree," indicating that instructional constraints and resource limitations continue to hinder effective literacy delivery.

Meanwhile, indicators such as "Lack of access to technology and literacy-enhancing resources" (WM = 3.43) also reflected notable instructional difficulties experienced by teachers. In contrast, challenges related to "Inadequate training or professional development related to MATATAG early literacy strategies" (WM = 3.23), "Limited parental involvement and support in literacy development" (WM = 3.30), "Difficulty addressing diverse literacy levels within one class" (WM = 3.20), and "Challenges in implementing MTB-MLE due to learners' varied language backgrounds" (WM = 3.07) were verbally interpreted as "Neutral," suggesting that although these concerns are present, they are perceived as moderately experienced compared to the more dominant institutional and classroom-related challenges. The standard deviation of 0.22 indicates relatively consistent responses among the respondents regarding the challenges encountered in literacy instruction implementation.

Table 4

Test of Relationship Between the Extent of MATATAG Curriculum Implementation and the Perceived Impact on Early Literacy Outcomes Among Learners

Variable	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Remarks
MATATAG Curriculum and Early Literacy Outcomes	0.791	Very Strong Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Table 4 presents the test of relationship between the extent of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and the perceived impact on early literacy outcomes among learners. The findings revealed an r-value of 0.791, indicating a "Very Strong Positive" correlation between the variables. Furthermore, the computed p-value of

0.000 is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the extent of implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and the perceived improvement in early literacy outcomes among learners. The results imply that higher levels of curriculum implementation are associated with more positive literacy outcomes in terms of learners' oral communication, reading, and writing skills. The findings suggest that when teachers consistently implement developmentally appropriate, child-centered, and literacy-focused instructional strategies aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum, learners tend to demonstrate stronger foundational literacy competencies. The very strong positive correlation further indicates that effective curriculum implementation plays a substantial role in influencing learners' literacy development in early childhood education settings.

Table 5

Test of Relationship Between the Perceived Impact on Early Literacy Outcomes and the Level of Challenges Encountered

Variable	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Level of Challenges and Oral Skills	0.076	Negligible Positive	0.738	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Level of Challenges and Writing Skills	0.530	Moderate Positive	0.102	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Level of Challenges and Reading Skills	-0.042	Negligible Negative	0.873	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Table 5 presents the test of relationship between the perceived impact on early literacy outcomes and the level of challenges encountered by early childhood teachers in implementing literacy instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum. The findings revealed that all computed p-values were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that no statistically significant relationship exists between the level of challenges encountered and learners' oral communication, writing, and reading skills. Specifically, the relationship between the level of challenges and oral communication skills yielded an r-value of 0.076, interpreted as a "Negligible Positive" correlation, with a p-value of 0.738, leading to the decision to not reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that the challenges encountered by teachers have minimal influence on the development of learners' oral communication skills. Similarly, the relationship between the level of challenges and writing skills obtained an r-value of 0.530, interpreted as a "Moderate Positive" correlation; however, the p-value of 0.102 indicates that the relationship is not statistically significant. Meanwhile, the relationship between the level of challenges and reading skills produced an r-value of -0.042, interpreted as a "Negligible Negative" correlation, with a p-value of 0.873, also indicating a non-significant relationship. The findings imply that although teachers encounter several instructional and institutional challenges in implementing early literacy instruction, these challenges do not significantly affect the perceived literacy outcomes of learners in terms of oral communication, writing, and reading skills. The results suggest that teachers may still be able to sustain literacy instruction and support learner development despite the presence of implementation difficulties.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum strongly emphasizes developmentally appropriate and child-centered literacy instruction within early childhood classrooms. The highest rating obtained by the domain on alignment of literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness demonstrates that teachers consistently consider learners' developmental stages, literacy readiness, and cognitive abilities when planning and delivering literacy instruction. This suggests that teachers are implementing literacy practices that are responsive to learners' age, readiness, and foundational literacy needs, which are among the central objectives of the MATATAG Curriculum. The consistent

implementation of literacy tasks aligned with literacy milestones such as phonemic awareness and vocabulary development further reflects teachers' commitment to strengthening foundational literacy competencies during the early years of education. These findings support the assertion of Snow (2020) that early literacy instruction becomes more effective when learning experiences are developmentally aligned and responsive to children's cognitive readiness. Similarly, Piasta, Justice, and O'Connell (2020) emphasized that literacy competencies introduced during the early years significantly influence long-term academic achievement and language development. The findings also affirm Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and guided instruction that matches learners' developmental readiness and learning capacity. When literacy instruction is appropriately aligned with learners' developmental stages, learners become more capable of participating meaningfully in literacy tasks and constructing knowledge through guided experiences. Similarly, Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory highlights the significance of developmentally appropriate learning activities in promoting cognitive growth and literacy acquisition among young children. The favorable ratings in this domain therefore suggest that teachers are increasingly applying learner-responsive and developmentally aligned literacy practices consistent with contemporary early childhood education principles. These findings are consistent with the study of Johnson and Lee (2023), which revealed that teacher-guided literacy activities significantly improve learner engagement and early literacy performance. Likewise, Garcia and Santos (2021) emphasized that developmentally responsive literacy instruction enhances learners' readiness and comprehension in early childhood classrooms. The findings further demonstrate that child-centered literacy instruction is consistently integrated within classroom practices. The high ratings obtained by storytelling, role-playing, interactive reading, and play-based literacy activities indicate that teachers frequently utilize engaging and experiential literacy strategies that encourage learner participation, creativity, and communication. These practices reflect the learner-centered orientation of the MATATAG Curriculum, which advocates active learning, experiential instruction, and meaningful learner engagement. The integration of child-centered literacy activities further suggests that teachers recognize the importance of allowing learners to actively construct literacy knowledge through interaction, exploration, and collaborative experiences. These findings support the work of Neuman and Gambrell (2021), who argued that interactive and play-based literacy experiences significantly improve learners' motivation, comprehension, and language acquisition. Similarly, Gonzales (2021) found that literacy environments that encourage creativity, exploration, and learner participation contribute positively to reading engagement and literacy achievement among young learners. The results also strongly align with Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory and Dewey's experiential learning perspective, both of which emphasize active participation and experiential learning as essential components of meaningful education. Play-based literacy instruction, storytelling, and interactive reading create opportunities for learners to develop language, comprehension, and critical thinking skills through authentic and enjoyable literacy experiences. Moreover, the findings indicate that literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum increasingly promotes learner autonomy, creativity, and participation, which are essential characteristics of effective early childhood literacy instruction. This observation is consistent with the findings of Lee and Kim (2022), who emphasized that symbolic play and experiential literacy activities significantly strengthen language development and literacy readiness among early learners. Likewise, Mendoza and Soriano (2021) highlighted that interactive and learner-centered literacy practices contribute to improved literacy engagement and classroom participation. Despite these positive findings, the domain on appropriateness of instructional materials for early literacy obtained only a moderate level of implementation, highlighting an important area for improvement in curriculum implementation. Although teachers acknowledged the availability of culturally relevant and print-rich literacy materials, the lower ratings related to supplementary literacy tools and mother tongue-based materials suggest continuing limitations in instructional resource provision. These findings imply that while teachers are implementing learner-centered and developmentally appropriate strategies, the effectiveness of literacy instruction may still be constrained by inadequate instructional materials and unequal access to literacy resources across schools. This finding supports the observations of Alvarado and Bautista (2024), who reported that insufficient instructional resources and limited access to literacy materials remain among the major barriers affecting literacy instruction in Philippine classrooms. Similarly, World Bank (2020) emphasized that inequitable access to quality instructional resources contributes significantly to foundational literacy gaps among learners in developing countries. The moderate implementation observed in this domain further reinforces the importance of instructional materials as critical components of literacy development. According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, language and instructional materials function as cultural tools that facilitate learning and cognitive development. Likewise, Bruner's theory of scaffolding emphasizes that effective literacy learning

depends on the availability of meaningful and developmentally appropriate instructional supports. The limited availability of supplementary literacy resources and mother tongue-based materials may therefore hinder opportunities for learners to fully engage in contextualized and culturally responsive literacy experiences. These findings are supported by Reyes (2022), who emphasized that culturally responsive and print-rich literacy environments significantly strengthen learner engagement and reading readiness. In the same manner, UNICEF (2021) highlighted that access to contextualized and language-appropriate literacy materials is essential in improving foundational literacy outcomes among young learners. The findings suggest that the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum is positively influencing literacy instruction by promoting developmentally responsive and child-centered teaching practices among early childhood educators. However, the moderate implementation observed in instructional materials indicates the need for stronger institutional support, improved resource allocation, and sustained provision of contextualized literacy materials to ensure more effective and equitable literacy instruction. Strengthening access to print-rich, culturally responsive, and mother tongue-based literacy resources may further enhance the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and improve foundational literacy outcomes among young learners in Philippine early childhood education settings. These findings align with the recommendations of OECD (2021), which emphasized that successful literacy reforms require sustained teacher support, equitable instructional access, and learner-centered educational practices to achieve long-term improvements in foundational literacy development.

The findings of the study indicate that MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction demonstrates a moderate yet promising impact on learners' literacy development, particularly in the area of foundational reading skills. The highest ratings obtained by indicators related to alphabet recognition, picture-word matching, and reading of simple words suggest that the MATATAG Curriculum effectively supports emergent literacy competencies among early learners. These findings imply that the curriculum's emphasis on foundational literacy and developmentally appropriate instruction contributes positively to learners' decoding abilities, print awareness, and early reading acquisition. This supports the assertion of Snow (2020) that strong foundational literacy instruction during the early years significantly improves children's readiness for formal reading and long-term academic success. Similarly, Piasta, Justice, and O'Connell (2020) emphasized that early exposure to literacy-rich and developmentally aligned instruction strengthens children's reading fluency and language acquisition. The positive impact observed in foundational reading skills also reflects the principles of the MATATAG Curriculum, which prioritizes age-appropriate literacy competencies and learner-centered instruction. The favorable ratings on picture-word association and simple reading tasks suggest that teachers are effectively implementing literacy activities that strengthen visual recognition, phonemic awareness, and basic comprehension. These findings align with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that literacy development occurs through guided interaction and scaffolded learning experiences. Likewise, Wasik and Hindman (2020) noted that literacy instruction becomes more effective when learners are immersed in interactive and language-rich learning environments that promote active engagement with print and oral language. However, the findings also reveal that higher-order reading skills such as comprehension and story retelling remain only moderately developed among learners. Although learners demonstrate competence in recognizing words and symbols, their ability to process meaning, comprehend texts, and express understanding remains limited. This suggests that literacy instruction may currently place stronger emphasis on foundational and mechanical reading skills than on deeper comprehension and interpretative literacy development. These findings are consistent with the observations of Neuman and Gambrell (2021), who emphasized that while foundational decoding skills are essential, comprehension development requires sustained exposure to interactive reading experiences, higher-level questioning, and meaningful language interactions. Similarly, Liu and Zhang (2022) found that learners' comprehension skills improve significantly when literacy instruction incorporates storytelling, discussion, and contextualized literacy activities. In terms of oral communication skills, the findings suggest that MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction positively supports learners' vocabulary development and participation in classroom discussions. The favorable ratings regarding learners' ability to express ideas using age-appropriate vocabulary and actively participate in storytelling activities indicate that literacy instruction encourages verbal interaction and language exposure among learners. These findings support the view of Johnson and Lee (2023) that interactive literacy activities and collaborative classroom discussions significantly improve learners' oral language development and communicative confidence. Likewise, Mendoza and Soriano (2021) emphasized that storytelling and participatory literacy experiences strengthen children's expressive language skills and social communication abilities. Despite these positive observations, oral communication

skills related to confidence, listening, and conversational interaction remained only moderately developed. This finding suggests that while learners are exposed to oral literacy activities, opportunities for sustained verbal interaction, learner confidence-building, and communicative practice may still be limited within classroom instruction. According to Florian (2021), inclusive and learner-centered literacy environments must provide opportunities for active participation, communication, and collaborative learning to fully develop learners' confidence and expressive abilities. Similarly, UNICEF (2021) highlighted that early literacy instruction should not only develop reading skills but also strengthen learners' communication, participation, and social interaction competencies. The findings further indicate that writing skills remain the least developed domain among the three literacy areas. Although learners demonstrate emerging abilities in writing letters, words, and labeling activities, they continue to experience difficulties in sentence construction, independent writing, and application of writing conventions such as punctuation and capitalization. These findings imply that writing development among early learners remains an area requiring stronger instructional support and more sustained literacy practice. The lower ratings in writing-related indicators may also reflect the complexity of writing as a literacy skill that requires the integration of motor, cognitive, and language competencies simultaneously. The moderate impact observed in writing development aligns with the findings of Garcia and Santos (2021), who reported that early writing instruction remains challenging among young learners due to limitations in fine motor development, vocabulary range, and instructional scaffolding. Likewise, Bruner (1983) emphasized that writing development requires continuous scaffolding, guided practice, and meaningful literacy experiences to strengthen learners' independent writing abilities. The findings also support the argument of Reyes (2022) that access to developmentally appropriate literacy materials and sustained teacher guidance significantly influence learners' writing confidence and literacy performance. The findings suggest that MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction positively contributes to the development of learners' foundational literacy competencies, particularly in reading and oral language development. However, the moderate outcomes observed in comprehension, oral confidence, and writing skills indicate that literacy instruction still requires further enhancement to fully support holistic literacy development among early learners. Strengthening interactive literacy practices, comprehension-based activities, writing scaffolds, and learner-centered communication opportunities may further improve the effectiveness of literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum. These findings reinforce the recommendations of OECD (2021) and World Bank (2020), which emphasized that sustained teacher support, developmentally appropriate instruction, and equitable access to literacy resources are critical in improving foundational literacy outcomes among young learners.

The findings of the study reveal that early childhood teachers encounter considerable challenges in implementing early literacy instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum. The high overall rating suggests that despite the curriculum's learner-centered and developmentally responsive orientation, teachers continue to experience significant institutional, instructional, and classroom-related constraints that affect the effective delivery of literacy instruction. The most prominent challenge identified was large class sizes, indicating that overcrowded classrooms remain a major barrier to individualized and developmentally appropriate literacy instruction. This finding implies that teachers struggle to provide sufficient attention, differentiated instruction, and close literacy monitoring among learners due to the high number of pupils within a single classroom setting. This observation supports the findings of Alvarado and Bautista (2024), who emphasized that classroom overcrowding significantly limits teachers' capacity to implement learner-centered literacy instruction effectively. Similarly, OECD (2021) noted that large class sizes negatively affect instructional quality, learner engagement, and individualized support, particularly in early literacy development where close teacher guidance is essential. The findings further align with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that effective scaffolding and guided literacy interaction require sustained teacher-learner engagement. When class sizes become excessively large, opportunities for individualized scaffolding and meaningful literacy interaction may become limited. The findings also revealed that limited administrative and supervisory support remains a significant concern among teachers implementing literacy instruction. This suggests that teachers may require stronger instructional leadership, monitoring, and institutional assistance to effectively implement MATATAG-aligned literacy practices. Effective curriculum implementation is highly dependent on continuous institutional support, teacher mentoring, and professional guidance. According to Fullan (2007), educational reforms become more sustainable when teachers receive consistent administrative support, collaborative opportunities, and professional assistance throughout implementation. Likewise, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized that strong school leadership and teacher support systems significantly improve instructional effectiveness and

curriculum implementation outcomes. Another major challenge identified in the study was the difficulty in assessing literacy progress due to limited assessment tools. This finding indicates that teachers may experience challenges in monitoring learners' literacy development accurately and consistently. Effective literacy assessment is critical in identifying learners' literacy needs, monitoring progress, and designing responsive instructional interventions. However, the limited availability of appropriate assessment tools may hinder teachers' ability to provide timely and evidence-based literacy support. This finding supports the work of Guskey (2021), who emphasized that effective educational assessment requires accessible and developmentally appropriate assessment tools that support instructional decision-making. Similarly, Reyes (2022) highlighted that inadequate literacy assessment resources often constrain teachers' ability to provide differentiated literacy support among early learners. The study further revealed that insufficient time for individualized literacy instruction remains a significant instructional challenge. This implies that teachers may struggle to accommodate diverse literacy needs within limited instructional periods, especially in classrooms with varying learner readiness and literacy levels. Individualized literacy instruction is particularly important in early childhood education because learners develop literacy competencies at different rates and require differentiated support. These findings align with Florian (2021), who emphasized that inclusive literacy instruction requires adequate instructional time, flexible teaching strategies, and learner-responsive practices to effectively address individual learning needs. Likewise, Tomlinson and Moon (2021) argued that differentiated instruction becomes more effective when teachers are provided with sufficient time and instructional flexibility to respond to learner diversity. The findings additionally highlight persistent concerns regarding the lack of developmentally appropriate learning materials and limited access to literacy-enhancing technology and resources. These results suggest that resource limitations continue to affect the quality and effectiveness of literacy instruction within early childhood classrooms. Access to print-rich, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate literacy materials is essential in strengthening learner engagement, language acquisition, and reading readiness. According to UNICEF (2021), literacy instruction becomes more meaningful and inclusive when learners are provided with contextualized and accessible learning resources. Similarly, World Bank (2020) emphasized that inequitable access to instructional materials and educational technology contributes significantly to literacy gaps among learners in developing educational systems. Although challenges related to teacher training, parental involvement, learner diversity, and MTB-MLE implementation were only moderately experienced, these findings still indicate areas requiring continued attention and support. Literacy instruction in multilingual and diverse classrooms requires teachers to possess strong pedagogical competence, differentiated instruction skills, and culturally responsive literacy strategies. Furthermore, parental involvement remains an essential factor in reinforcing literacy development beyond the classroom environment. These findings support the study of Panicker and Nedungottil (2021), which emphasized that home literacy environments and parental engagement significantly influence learners' literacy development and academic readiness. The findings suggest that while the MATATAG Curriculum promotes developmentally appropriate and learner-centered literacy instruction, effective implementation remains challenged by classroom conditions, instructional limitations, inadequate resources, and institutional support gaps. Addressing these challenges requires stronger administrative assistance, improved resource allocation, enhanced literacy assessment tools, and sustained teacher development programs. Strengthening these support mechanisms may significantly improve the implementation of early literacy instruction and contribute to more responsive and equitable literacy learning environments for young learners.

The findings of the study demonstrate a statistically significant and very strong positive relationship between the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and early literacy outcomes among learners. This indicates that effective and consistent implementation of the curriculum contributes substantially to the improvement of learners' oral communication, reading, and writing skills. The strong correlation suggests that when literacy instruction is developmentally appropriate, learner-centered, and aligned with literacy competencies, learners are more likely to exhibit stronger literacy performance and foundational language development. These findings strongly support the goals of the MATATAG Curriculum, which emphasizes foundational literacy, developmental readiness, and child-centered learning approaches as essential components of early childhood education. The results imply that the curriculum's emphasis on interactive, play-based, and developmentally responsive literacy instruction positively influences learners' literacy acquisition and classroom engagement. This finding aligns with the work of Snow (2020), who emphasized that high-quality early literacy instruction significantly contributes to children's long-term academic achievement and language development. Similarly,

Piasta, Justice, and O'Connell (2020) highlighted that literacy experiences during the early years strongly shape learners' reading readiness, communication skills, and overall academic success. The strong relationship observed in the study further reinforces Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which posits that literacy development occurs through guided interaction, scaffolding, and meaningful social learning experiences. When teachers effectively implement literacy-focused instructional practices aligned with learners' developmental readiness, learners become more capable of engaging in meaningful literacy activities and constructing language knowledge. Likewise, Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory supports the idea that literacy instruction becomes more effective when learning activities are developmentally appropriate and aligned with children's cognitive abilities. These theoretical perspectives explain why stronger curriculum implementation corresponds with improved literacy outcomes among learners. The findings are also consistent with previous empirical studies emphasizing the relationship between effective curriculum delivery and literacy achievement. Neuman and Gambrell (2021) argued that literacy-rich, interactive, and learner-centered classrooms significantly improve learners' literacy engagement and comprehension development. Similarly, Johnson and Lee (2023) found that child-centered and collaborative literacy practices enhance learners' communication skills, participation, and literacy confidence. The strong positive relationship observed in the study therefore suggests that the MATATAG Curriculum is achieving its intended objective of strengthening foundational literacy through developmentally responsive and learner-centered instruction. Furthermore, the findings indicate that literacy outcomes improve when teachers consistently integrate instructional practices such as storytelling, interactive reading, culturally responsive materials, and differentiated literacy instruction. According to Wasik and Hindman (2020), early literacy instruction becomes more effective when learners are immersed in meaningful oral language experiences and print-rich learning environments. Likewise, Florian (2021) emphasized that inclusive and adaptive literacy practices contribute positively to learners' participation, literacy engagement, and academic growth. These findings imply that curriculum implementation is most effective when teachers are adequately supported in delivering flexible, engaging, and literacy-focused instruction. The statistically significant relationship identified in the study also highlights the importance of strengthening implementation support systems to maximize literacy outcomes among learners. Although the curriculum demonstrates a positive influence on literacy development, earlier findings in the study revealed existing challenges related to instructional materials, classroom size, assessment tools, and institutional support. These barriers may affect the consistency and overall effectiveness of curriculum implementation if left unaddressed. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), successful educational reforms require sustained teacher support, adequate resources, and strong institutional leadership to ensure effective instructional delivery and learner achievement. The findings confirm that the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum plays a significant role in improving early literacy outcomes among learners when implemented effectively. The very strong positive correlation underscores the importance of sustained curriculum implementation, teacher preparedness, learner-centered pedagogy, and literacy-rich instructional environments in promoting foundational literacy development among young learners. These findings further support the recommendations of OECD (2021) and World Bank (2020), which emphasized that effective literacy reforms depend on strong instructional implementation, equitable access to learning resources, and continuous educational support systems to improve literacy achievement and long-term learning outcomes.

The findings of the study revealed no statistically significant relationship between the level of challenges encountered by early childhood teachers and the perceived impact on learners' oral communication, writing, and reading skills. This indicates that although teachers experience various institutional, instructional, and classroom-related difficulties, these challenges do not significantly hinder the perceived literacy development of learners under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum. The findings suggest that teachers may have developed adaptive instructional strategies and coping mechanisms that allow them to continue delivering literacy instruction effectively despite existing barriers and constraints. The negligible positive relationship between challenges and oral communication skills implies that learners' oral language development may continue to progress even in the presence of classroom and instructional difficulties. This may be attributed to the naturally interactive and communicative nature of early childhood learning environments, where learners are consistently exposed to oral language activities such as storytelling, classroom discussions, and peer interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978), language development is strongly influenced by social interaction and collaborative learning experiences, suggesting that oral communication skills can still develop through everyday classroom engagement despite instructional limitations. Similarly, Johnson and Lee (2023) emphasized that interactive

classroom practices and collaborative literacy activities significantly contribute to oral language growth among early learners. Although writing skills obtained a moderate positive correlation with the level of challenges encountered, the relationship was still found to be statistically non-significant. This finding suggests that while writing instruction may be more sensitive to classroom challenges such as limited instructional time, inadequate materials, and large class sizes, these factors do not necessarily determine learners' writing outcomes. Writing development in early childhood often progresses gradually and is influenced by multiple factors including teacher guidance, learner readiness, and opportunities for literacy practice. According to Garcia and Santos (2021), early writing acquisition requires sustained scaffolding, repetitive literacy exposure, and learner engagement, which teachers may continue to provide despite instructional difficulties. Likewise, Bruner (1983) emphasized that literacy learning remains possible when teachers provide consistent guidance and supportive learning experiences even under constrained educational conditions. The negligible negative relationship between challenges and reading skills further suggests that the literacy challenges encountered by teachers do not substantially weaken learners' reading development. Despite the presence of resource limitations, classroom overcrowding, and instructional constraints, learners may still acquire foundational reading competencies through consistent literacy exposure and teacher facilitation. This finding aligns with Snow (2020), who argued that foundational reading development can still progress when learners are provided with meaningful literacy experiences and sustained instructional support. Similarly, Neuman and Gambrell (2021) emphasized that early literacy development is influenced not only by instructional conditions but also by learner engagement, language exposure, and interactive reading experiences within the classroom environment. The absence of statistically significant relationships across all literacy domains may also indicate that teachers remain committed to implementing literacy instruction regardless of the challenges they encounter. The findings suggest that teachers demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and instructional flexibility in sustaining literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum. This observation supports the work of Fullan (2007), who emphasized that teacher commitment and professional adaptability play critical roles in sustaining educational reforms even in challenging instructional contexts. Likewise, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) noted that effective teachers often develop responsive strategies that allow them to maintain instructional quality despite resource and institutional limitations. Furthermore, the findings imply that factors beyond classroom challenges may exert stronger influence on learners' literacy development. Learner motivation, home literacy environments, parental involvement, instructional quality, and learner readiness may contribute more substantially to literacy outcomes than the perceived challenges encountered by teachers alone. According to Panicker and Nedungottil (2021), literacy development is influenced by a combination of school-based and home-based learning experiences. Similarly, UNICEF (2021) highlighted that family support, language exposure, and learner participation significantly affect literacy acquisition during the early years of education. The findings suggest that while teachers experience moderate levels of challenges in implementing early literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum, these difficulties do not significantly diminish learners' literacy outcomes. The results reflect the adaptability and resilience of early childhood educators in sustaining literacy instruction despite instructional constraints. Nevertheless, addressing the identified challenges remains essential to further strengthen instructional quality, improve literacy learning environments, and maximize literacy outcomes among young learners. Continued institutional support, teacher development programs, and improved access to literacy resources may further enhance the effectiveness of early literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the extent of implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and its perceived effects on early literacy instruction among grade school learners. The findings revealed that the MATATAG Curriculum was generally implemented at a favorable level, particularly in terms of aligning literacy instruction with learners' developmental readiness and integrating child-centered literacy practices. Teachers consistently employed age-appropriate and interactive literacy strategies that supported foundational literacy development among learners. The study further revealed that MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction positively contributed to learners' oral communication, reading, and writing development, with the strongest outcomes observed in foundational reading skills such as alphabet recognition, word decoding, and picture-word association. Despite these positive outcomes, the findings also identified continuing challenges related to instructional materials, classroom size, literacy assessment tools, and administrative support. Areas involving higher-order literacy competencies, particularly comprehension, story retelling, and writing conventions, remained less developed

compared to foundational literacy skills. Nevertheless, the study established a statistically significant and very strong positive relationship between the extent of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and learners' literacy outcomes, confirming that effective curriculum implementation substantially contributes to improved literacy development among young learners. Conversely, the level of challenges encountered by teachers was not found to have a statistically significant relationship with literacy outcomes, suggesting that teachers continue to demonstrate resilience and instructional adaptability despite existing implementation constraints. The study concludes that the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum serves as a significant framework for strengthening foundational literacy instruction in early childhood education. However, maximizing its effectiveness requires sustained institutional support, adequate instructional resources, strengthened teacher development programs, and enhanced collaboration among schools, families, and educational stakeholders. The findings underscore the importance of consistent, developmentally appropriate, and learner-centered literacy instruction in promoting meaningful and equitable literacy development among young learners.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and improve early literacy instruction among young learners. First, schools and educational administrators may strengthen the provision of developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and print-rich instructional materials to support more effective literacy instruction, particularly in reading comprehension and writing development. Increased access to literacy-enhancing resources and assessment tools may further improve learners' literacy engagement and progress monitoring.

Second, continuous professional development programs focusing on child-centered literacy instruction, differentiated teaching strategies, literacy assessment, and comprehension-based instruction may be intensified to further enhance teachers' pedagogical competence in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Teacher training programs may also include strategies for strengthening oral language development, writing instruction, and higher-order literacy skills among early learners.

Third, school administrators and policymakers may provide stronger institutional and supervisory support through regular monitoring, instructional coaching, and collaborative learning opportunities to help teachers effectively address classroom challenges such as large class sizes, diverse learner needs, and limited instructional time. Strengthening administrative support systems may contribute to more consistent and sustainable curriculum implementation.

Fourth, schools may strengthen parental involvement and home-school partnerships by conducting literacy-related activities, parent orientation programs, and family literacy initiatives that encourage active participation in children's literacy development beyond the classroom. Since literacy development is influenced by both school-based and home-based learning experiences, stronger family engagement may further reinforce learners' literacy acquisition and motivation.

Finally, future researchers may conduct similar studies involving larger samples and multiple schools or educational settings to further validate the findings of the present study. Additional investigations focusing on comprehension-based literacy instruction, writing development, and long-term literacy outcomes under the MATATAG Curriculum may also provide deeper insights into improving early literacy education within the Philippine educational context.

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