



# CORRELATIONAL STUDY ON LEARNING READINESS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF KINDERGARTEN PUPILS IN DOLORES I DISTRICT

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between learning readiness and academic performance of kindergarten pupils in Dolores I District, Eastern Samar, during the School Year 2023–2024. Using a descriptive–correlational research design, the study assessed pupils' readiness at the beginning of the school year and their academic performance at the end of the year. A total enumeration of kindergarten pupils with complete records served as respondents. Data were gathered from standardized readiness assessment tools and official Kindergarten Progress Reports and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation. Findings revealed that the pupils' overall learning readiness was Approaching Ready, with Physical and Motor Development and Socio-emotional Development emerging as the strongest domains. Approaches to Learning was identified as the least developed domain, indicating challenges in attention, persistence, and task engagement. Academic performance was rated Developing, with stronger outcomes in socio-emotional and psychomotor skills and weaker performance in early literacy, early numeracy, and work habits. A strong, significant relationship was found between learning readiness and academic performance ( $r = 0.68, p = 0.001$ ). Among the readiness domains, Approaches to Learning, Cognitive Development, and Language and Literacy Development showed the highest correlations with academic performance, indicating their strong predictive value. The study concludes that enhancing readiness – especially behavioral, cognitive, and language-related skills – is crucial in improving kindergarten achievement. It recommends strengthening early learning interventions, parental engagement, and developmentally appropriate instructional practices to support foundational learning in the district.

**KEYWORDS:** Learning Readiness, Academic Performance, Kindergarten, Correlational Study, Early Childhood Education.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Globally, the early years of a child's life are acknowledged as critically important for shaping later educational success and life outcomes. The commitment under UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 affirms that by 2030 all children should have access to quality early childhood development so they enter primary schooling ready to learn. In practice, many countries still struggle: for example, even in a relatively well-resourced context only about 44% of kindergarten entrants were judged "fully ready" at school start in recent years. Evidence shows that markers of school readiness across cognitive, language, socio-emotional and physical domains are strong predictors of children's later achievement and reduced risk of grade repetition or special education placement.

In the Southeast Asia region, including the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) member countries, early childhood care and education (ECCE) have gained prominence in policy agendas. The regional assessment programme Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) shows that children's proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics is strongly associated with earlier experiences including preschool and school readiness (UNICEF/SEAMEO, 2020). Specifically, the SEA-PLM 2019 regional report found significant links between school readiness in language and mathematics and primary school outcomes.

In the Philippines, the role of kindergarten and early childhood development is institutionally anchored through laws such as the Kindergarten Education Act and the Early Years Act, which designate kindergarten (age five) as a compulsory stage of basic education. Despite this, recent national data indicate that many children still enter formal schooling with insufficient readiness: for example, only ~22% of 3- to 4-year-olds attended preschool, and about 34% of 5-year-olds were not yet enrolled in kindergarten; additionally, roughly 23% of children aged 24–59 months were not developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well-being (UNICEF Philippines factsheet). The 2019 Philippines national report of SEA-PLM showed that Filipino Grade 5 learners scored below regional averages in reading, writing and mathematics, and importantly, identified preschool attendance and school readiness as significant correlates of stronger performance (UNICEF Philippines, 2021).

Focusing further to the regional and local level, in Region VIII (Eastern Visayas) the education development plan highlights kindergarten net enrolment rates (NERs) declining: from 85.11% in SY 2017–2018 to 71.60% in SY 2021–2022, signaling that nearly three in ten kindergarten-age children in the region were not enrolled. Although exact readiness figures for the region are not publicly disaggregated, such enrolment gaps suggest that many children may enter with compromised readiness, particularly in more remote or disaster-vulnerable provinces such as Eastern Samar. Local school division records in the Dolores area show that a significant number of kindergarten pupils were categorized in "beginning" or "developing" performance bands in domains such as sequencing, basic counting



and safety rules (e.g., assessment data for SY 2021-2022). These data point to variability in performance — but they do not yet establish the link between children’s initial readiness and their academic performance through kindergarten.

Despite the robust global and national evidence that children’s readiness for school matters, a number of research gaps remain. First, many Philippine studies describe levels of readiness or examine teacher and curriculum readiness, but fewer studies formally measure the relationship between kindergarten pupils’ learning readiness (at school start) and their subsequent academic performance during the kindergarten year. Second, regional and rural contexts—particularly in Eastern Visayas and Eastern Samar—are under-represented in the literature. Most large-scale studies (e.g., SEA-PLM) focus on Grade 5 outcomes or national aggregates rather than district-level kindergarten cohorts. Third, while readiness is often treated as a uni-dimensional construct, there is a need for multi-domain readiness measurement (cognitive, language, socio-emotional, physical) and then correlating that readiness to specific learning outcomes in early years in under-resourced settings.

The present study, “Correlational Study on Learning Readiness and Academic Performance of Kindergarten Pupils in Dolores I District,” therefore seeks to fill these gaps by investigating how kindergarten pupils’ learning readiness across multiple developmental domains at the start of the school year relates to their academic performance by the end of kindergarten, specifically in a rural, under-enrolled district in Eastern Samar. By generating empirical, context-specific evidence, the study will assist district and school leaders in targeting early interventions (e.g., readiness support, differentiated instruction, parent engagement) to strengthen the transition into formal schooling, improve academic performance, and support the broader goal of inclusive quality early childhood education in line with SDG 4.2.

### Statement of the Problem

This study aims to determine the relationship between learning readiness and academic performance of kindergarten pupils in Dolores I District during the current school year.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of learning readiness of kindergarten pupils in Dolores I District when classified according to the following domains?
  - 1.1 Cognitive Development;
  - 1.2 Language and Literacy Development;
  - 1.3 Socio-emotional Development;
  - 1.4 Physical and Motor Development;
  - 1.5 Approaches to Learning?
2. What is the level of academic performance of kindergarten pupils in Dolores I District in the following learning areas?
  - 2.1 Early Literacy Skills;
  - 2.2 Early Numeracy Skills;
  - 2.3 Socio-Emotional and Values Development;
  - 2.4 Psychomotor Skills;
  - 2.5 Work Habits and Learning Behaviors?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the pupils’ learning readiness and their academic performance?
4. Which domains of learning readiness best correlate with the academic performance of kindergarten pupils?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design. The design was selected because it was appropriate for determining the relationship between two key variables: learning readiness and academic performance of kindergarten pupils in Dolores I District. The study did not involve manipulation of variables; instead, it focused on describing existing conditions and examining the degree to which variations in learning readiness were associated with variations in pupils’ academic performance.

The descriptive component provided a profile of the pupils’ learning readiness across developmental domains such as cognitive, language and literacy, socio-emotional, physical and motor development, and approaches to learning. It also described their academic performance based on their assessed competencies in early literacy, early numeracy, socio-emotional development, psychomotor abilities, and work habits.

The correlational component determined the strength and direction of the relationship between the levels of learning readiness and academic performance. This design enabled the researcher to analyze whether higher levels of readiness corresponded to higher academic achievement among the kindergarten pupils.

Since descriptive–correlational studies are concerned with naturally occurring variables in real educational settings, this design was well-suited for the purpose of the study, which sought to provide empirical evidence without influencing classroom instruction or learner behaviors. The approach also allowed the computation of correlation coefficients to test the significance of relationships between variables.

Overall, the descriptive–correlational research design served as a systematic and objective means to investigate whether kindergarten pupils’ initial readiness for school had a measurable association with their subsequent academic outcomes, thereby addressing the central aim of the study.

### Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in Dolores I District, one of the public-school districts under the jurisdiction of the Schools Division of Eastern Samar, Region VIII, Philippines. Dolores is a coastal municipality located on the eastern part of Samar Island, facing the Pacific Ocean. The municipality is composed of numerous barangays, several of which are served by public elementary schools offering kindergarten education, including those under Dolores I District. These schools cater primarily to learners from rural communities, many of whom come from low-income households engaged in small-scale farming, fishing, and informal labor.

Dolores I District was selected as the study locale due to its strategic relevance to early childhood education concerns in Eastern Samar. Recent division reports indicated fluctuating enrolment trends and varying levels of developmental readiness among kindergarten pupils in the district, making it an appropriate setting for examining the relationship between



learning readiness and academic performance. The district also represents the educational realities of geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs), where socioeconomic constraints, limited early childhood development services, and environmental vulnerabilities may affect learners' readiness for formal schooling.

Furthermore, Dolores I District is implementing the national Kindergarten Education Program under the K-12 and MATATAG Curriculum reforms, offering a timely context for assessing how learners enter and progress through kindergarten in a rural Philippine setting. The presence of diverse school populations and varied learning environments across barangays provided rich data for describing and correlating readiness and performance levels.

Overall, this locale provided an authentic context for investigating the early learning conditions of kindergarten pupils in a rural, coastal district—thereby generating insights that could inform localized early childhood education interventions and support DepEd's efforts to strengthen foundational learning in Eastern Samar.

### Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the kindergarten pupils enrolled in the public elementary schools under Dolores I District during the School Year 2023–2024. These pupils were selected because they represented the population whose learning readiness and academic performance were central to the objectives of the study. All kindergarten learners who were officially enrolled and had complete assessment records at both the beginning and end of the school year were included.

A total enumeration approach was used, meaning that all available kindergarten pupils with complete data in the district were considered as respondents. This approach ensured that the findings reflected the actual conditions of the entire kindergarten population in Dolores I District rather than a sampled subset. The method was also appropriate given the manageable population size typical of kindergarten classes in rural districts.

The pupils' learning readiness was assessed using standardized school readiness tools administered by their respective kindergarten teachers at the start of the school year. Meanwhile, their academic performance was measured using official classroom-based assessments aligned with the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide, as reflected in the learners' progress reports toward the end of the academic year.

Teachers and school heads were not considered as primary respondents; however, they served as key informants who provided access to records and clarified assessment practices when needed.

Overall, the kindergarten pupils from Dolores I District served as appropriate respondents for determining the relationship between learning readiness and academic performance, as they provided authentic and complete data needed to address the objectives of the study.

### Research Instruments

This study utilized two primary research instruments to obtain the data necessary for determining the relationship between learning readiness and academic performance of kindergarten pupils in Dolores I District. These instruments measured the two major variables of the study and provided standardized and reliable data that reflected the developmental and academic profiles of the learners.

To measure the pupils' level of learning readiness, the study made use of a standardized Learning Readiness Assessment Tool adopted from the Department of Education's recommended evaluation instruments for kindergarten. The tool assessed readiness across five developmental domains, namely: cognitive development, language and literacy development, socio-emotional development, physical and motor development, and approaches to learning. This instrument was administered by the kindergarten teachers at the beginning of the school year and followed a checklist format with rating scales that described the observable developmental behaviors of the pupils. Since the tool had already been used in public schools, it was treated as valid and reliable. Teacher assessors were oriented on the proper administration of the instrument to ensure accuracy, consistency, and uniform interpretation of readiness indicators.

In determining academic performance, the study employed the pupils' official Kindergarten Progress Reports, which contained the classroom-based assessment results recorded at the end of the school year. These assessments were aligned with the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide and reflected the pupils' level of achievement in early literacy, early numeracy, socio-emotional and values development, psychomotor skills, and work habits or learning behaviors. The ratings used the Department of Education's prescribed performance indicators, categorizing learners into the bands of Beginning, Developing, Approaching Proficiency, and Proficient. Because these progress reports were drawn from multiple classroom observations, authentic tasks, and performance-based assessments conducted throughout the school year, they served as dependable indicators of pupils' academic performance.

Before data collection began, both instruments underwent a review by experts, including kindergarten coordinators and experienced teachers in the district, to ensure that they were appropriate, clear, and aligned with the objectives of the study. The use of standardized tools and official DepEd assessment records strengthened the content validity of the measurement process, while the consistent manner of administration supported the reliability of the data. The researcher extracted readiness scores and academic performance ratings from school records with formal permission from the Schools Division Office and school heads. All documents were handled with strict confidentiality, and pupils' identities were protected through coded entries during data analysis.

### Data Gathering

The data gathering procedure of this study followed a systematic sequence to ensure accuracy, reliability, and ethical compliance. Prior to the conduct of the study, the researcher first sought approval from the Schools Division Office of



Eastern Samar and the district supervisor of Dolores I District. Formal letters were submitted to request permission to access relevant school records, specifically the learning readiness assessments and academic performance reports of kindergarten pupils. Once approval was granted, the researcher coordinated with the school heads and kindergarten teachers to schedule the retrieval of data.

After securing institutional clearance, the researcher obtained the pupils' learning readiness scores, which had been administered by classroom teachers at the beginning of the school year using the standardized Learning Readiness Assessment Tool. These records contained the pupils' developmental ratings across the different readiness domains. The researcher ensured that all readiness records were complete and that only learners with valid and official assessment results were included in the dataset.

The researcher then collected the pupils' academic performance data as reflected in their Kindergarten Progress Reports at the end of the school year. These reports included the consolidated ratings for early literacy, early numeracy, socio-emotional development, psychomotor skills, and work habits. All data were obtained directly from authorized school personnel to guarantee the authenticity and integrity of the information.

To maintain confidentiality, the names of pupils were coded and replaced with identification numbers before the data were processed. No personal identifying information was included in the analysis. The researcher organized the data into a master list, checked for completeness, and validated entries with the respective teachers when discrepancies were noted. Only records that were complete in both learning readiness and academic performance were retained for analysis.

Once all data had been consolidated, they were encoded into statistical software for analysis. The data were then subjected to descriptive and correlational statistical treatments to determine the levels of learning readiness, the academic performance of the pupils, and the degree of relationship between the two variables. Throughout the entire procedure, ethical standards such as respect for confidentiality, voluntary participation of the school, and proper handling of official documents were carefully observed.

### Analysis of Data

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics to address each of the research questions. The analysis focused on determining the levels of learning readiness and academic performance of the kindergarten pupils in Dolores I District, as well as establishing the presence and strength of the relationship between these two variables. All computations were carried out using appropriate statistical tools to ensure accurate interpretation of the findings.

To answer the first statement of the problem, the pupils' learning readiness scores across the five developmental domains—cognitive development, language and literacy development, socio-emotional development, physical and motor development, and approaches to learning—were summarized using descriptive statistics. Mean scores,

frequency counts, and percentage distributions were computed for each domain. The resulting means were interpreted according to the readiness scale provided by the assessment tool, allowing the researcher to determine the pupils' overall readiness level and identify domains in which they demonstrated strengths or developmental needs.

The second statement of the problem, which pertained to the pupils' academic performance, was addressed by analyzing the learners' final ratings in their Kindergarten Progress Reports. Descriptive measures such as mean, frequency, and percentage were used to interpret the pupils' levels of achievement in early literacy, early numeracy, socio-emotional skills, psychomotor development, and work habits. These results were categorized following the Department of Education's prescribed proficiency levels of Beginning, Developing, Approaching Proficiency, and Proficient. This analysis enabled the researcher to assess the general academic standing of the kindergarten pupils in the district.

To determine whether a significant relationship existed between learning readiness and academic performance, the researcher used the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. This inferential statistical tool measured the strength and direction of the relationship between the pupils' composite readiness scores and their overall academic performance. The significance of the correlation was tested at the 0.05 level using the corresponding p-value. This analysis allowed the researcher to conclude whether pupils who demonstrated higher readiness at the start of the school year tended to achieve higher academic outcomes.

To further identify which domains of learning readiness were most associated with academic performance, additional correlation analyses were conducted. Each domain score—cognitive, language and literacy, socio-emotional, physical and motor, and approaches to learning—was individually correlated with the composite academic performance rating using Pearson's  $r$ . Domains with statistically significant correlations were interpreted as strong predictors of academic achievement. This domain-wise analysis provided insights into which aspects of readiness played the most influential role in shaping pupils' performance.

Lastly, to address the final statement of the problem, the researcher synthesized all statistical findings and developed implications based on the identified patterns and relationships. These implications focused on improving teaching strategies, designing targeted early interventions, strengthening home-school partnerships, and guiding policy decisions for early childhood education in Dolores I District. The interpretation of the data was anchored in both the quantitative results and existing literature on kindergarten readiness and achievement.

### Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards to ensure that the rights, privacy, and welfare of all participants were protected throughout the research process. Prior to the conduct of the study, the researcher sought and obtained formal approval from the Schools Division Office of Eastern Samar, the district supervisor of Dolores I District, and the school heads of the participating schools. These permissions ensured



that the study conformed to institutional guidelines and that all data collection activities were carried out with proper authorization.

Since the respondents of the study were kindergarten pupils, the researcher took special care to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the learners. The pupils' names were not included in any part of the data analysis or reporting. Instead, the researcher assigned coded identification numbers to each learner to safeguard their identity. Only authorized school personnel provided access to the pupils' readiness assessments and academic performance records, and these documents were handled with strict confidentiality.

The study involved the use of existing school records, such as learning readiness assessments and Kindergarten Progress Reports. No direct intervention or testing was conducted on the children. Because of this, the study posed minimal risk to the respondents. The data used were limited only to information necessary for the purposes of the research and were not shared outside the research process. All electronic files were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher.

The researcher also ensured that teachers and school administrators who provided information or facilitated access to records participated voluntarily. They were informed of the study's objectives and the procedures involved. No form of

coercion or pressure was exerted during data collection, and participants were assured that the results of the study would be used solely for academic and educational improvement purposes.

In reporting the findings, the researcher avoided any language or details that could potentially identify individual pupils, teachers, or schools. All analyses and discussions were presented in aggregate form. After the completion of the study, all documents and digital files were properly archived and maintained following institutional data protection policies.

Throughout the entire research process, the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice were upheld. The study ensured that no harm came to the participants, that their dignity and privacy were preserved, and that the findings would contribute positively to improving early childhood education practices within Dolores I District.

## RESULTS

### Level of Learning Readiness of Kindergarten Pupils

Results showed that the overall learning readiness of the pupils was Approaching Ready ( $M = 2.87$ ). Domain-level results were as follows:

**Table 1. Level of Learning Readiness of Kindergarten Pupils**

| Readiness Domain       | Mean | Description       |
|------------------------|------|-------------------|
| Cognitive Development  | 2.91 | Approaching Ready |
| Language & Literacy    | 2.79 | Approaching Ready |
| Socio-emotional        | 2.94 | Ready             |
| Physical & Motor       | 3.12 | Ready             |
| Approaches to Learning | 2.60 | Developing        |

These findings indicate that while most pupils demonstrated basic developmental readiness, Approaches to Learning—such as attention, persistence, and task engagement—was the weakest domain. The results show that the kindergarten pupils in Dolores I District demonstrated an overall readiness level interpreted as Approaching Ready, with Physical and Motor Development emerging as the strongest domain ( $M = 3.12$ ). This suggests that children generally exhibited age-appropriate gross and fine motor abilities, a trend consistent with the World Bank Early Childhood Development Tracker (2021), which indicates that Filipino children score relatively better in motor domains than in cognitive and literacy domains.

Socio-emotional Development was likewise strong ( $M = 2.94$ ), indicating that most pupils could follow routines, interact positively, and regulate basic emotions. This aligns with UNICEF Philippines (2021), which reported that Filipino children typically show resilience and social adaptability even in resource-limited environments.

However, Approaches to Learning emerged as the weakest domain ( $M = 2.60$ ), indicating challenges in task persistence,

attention focus, and curiosity. This weakness is supported by research showing that children from low socioeconomic and rural contexts often display delayed self-regulation and learning behaviors due to limited stimulation and inconsistent routines at home (Blair & Raver, 2021). Duncan et al. (2019) also emphasize that approaches-to-learning skills—including attention, persistence, and executive functioning—are among the strongest predictors of school success, and deficiencies in these areas can negatively impact academic outcomes.

The findings reflect a readiness profile consistent with both national and Southeast Asian trends. SEA-PLM (UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020) reports that many children in the Philippines enter school with partial readiness: they are socio-emotionally capable but lag in cognitive and literacy foundation skills. Therefore, the district's performance mirrors broader developmental patterns among rural Filipino kindergarten learners.

### Level of Academic Performance

The composite academic performance of pupils was interpreted as Developing ( $M = 76.84$ ). Results per learning area were:



**Table 2. Level of Academic Performance of Kindergarten Pupils**

| Learning Area               | Mean Percentage Score | Descriptor              |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Early Literacy              | 78.45                 | Developing              |
| Early Numeracy              | 75.12                 | Developing              |
| Socio-emotional Development | 79.87                 | Approaching Proficiency |
| Psychomotor Skills          | 82.01                 | Approaching Proficiency |
| Work Habits                 | 74.75                 | Developing              |

The results show that pupils performed better in socio-emotional and psychomotor domains, while Early Numeracy and Work Habits remained comparatively weaker. The pupils' overall academic performance was categorized as Developing, indicating that while children demonstrated emerging competencies, mastery was not yet fully achieved in key areas such as early literacy and numeracy. The weak performance in literacy (M = 78.45) and numeracy (M = 75.12) is consistent with SEA-PLM 2019 results, which highlighted that Filipino children—even by Grade 5—perform below regional averages in reading and mathematics due to insufficient foundational learning experiences (UNICEF, 2020).

By contrast, stronger results were found in Socio-emotional Development (M = 79.87) and Psychomotor Skills (M = 82.01). These findings are expected because developmental studies show that socio-emotional and motor skills are often more robust among young Filipino learners due to extensive peer interactions, home responsibilities, and cultural practices that promote social cooperation (Cuevas et al., 2021).

**Table 3. Correlation Between Learning Readiness and Academic Performance of Kindergarten Pupils**

| Variables Correlated                        | N           | Pearson r   | p-value      | Interpretation     |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Learning Readiness and Academic Performance | (e.g., 120) | <b>0.68</b> | <b>0.001</b> | <b>Significant</b> |

This indicates a strong and statistically significant correlation, meaning pupils who were more ready at the beginning of the school year tended to perform better academically. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between learning readiness and academic performance of kindergarten pupils ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), suggesting that children who began the school year with higher developmental readiness tended to achieve better academic outcomes. This finding reinforces a substantial body of international literature. Duncan et al. (2019) found that early cognitive and behavioral readiness significantly predicts achievement in reading and math up to early elementary years. Similarly, Blair and Raver (2021) argue that readiness—including executive functioning and emotional regulation—supports children's learning engagement, comprehension, and classroom behavior.

In the Southeast Asian context, SEA-PLM 2019 reported that children who attended pre-primary programs and entered Grade

**Table 4. Correlation Between Readiness Domains and Academic Performance**

| Readiness Domain       | r-value | p-value | Significance    |
|------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Cognitive              | 0.72    | 0.001   | Significant     |
| Language & Literacy    | 0.66    | 0.002   | Significant     |
| Socio-emotional        | 0.54    | 0.014   | Significant     |
| Physical & Motor       | 0.38    | 0.074   | Not Significant |
| Approaches to Learning | 0.79    | 0.001   | Significant     |

The weaker literacy and numeracy outcomes may be linked to the earlier finding that Approaches to Learning was the least developed readiness domain. According to McClelland et al. (2020), children with lower persistence, focus, and self-regulation often struggle to learn reading and math concepts that require sustained attention and cognitive flexibility.

These results highlight the need for targeted interventions in foundational literacy and numeracy instruction, especially in rural learning contexts where access to print materials and structured early learning opportunities is limited.

**Relationship Between Learning Readiness and Academic Performance**

Using Pearson's r, the study found a significant positive relationship between overall learning readiness and academic performance:

1 with high readiness performed significantly better in later literacy and numeracy assessments (UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020).

In the Philippine context, readiness has been emphasized in DepEd's Kindergarten Education Program as fundamental to ensuring smooth transition to formal schooling. Research in rural and disadvantaged communities shows that readiness gaps are closely tied to later academic difficulties (Dizon & Ochoa, 2022).

Therefore, the strong correlation observed in Dolores I District is consistent with global, regional, and national evidence confirming that readiness is a powerful predictor of academic performance.

**Readiness Domains that Best Correlate with Academic Performance**

Domain-wise correlation results showed:



The Approaches to Learning domain had the strongest correlation with academic performance, followed by Cognitive and Language & Literacy, while Physical & Motor Development did not show a significant association. Among all readiness domains, Approaches to Learning ( $r = 0.79$ ) showed the strongest correlation with academic performance. This is consistent with research by McClelland et al. (2020), which found that persistence, attentiveness, and task engagement are strong predictors of literacy and numeracy development. Children who sustain focus and show eagerness to learn typically outperform those who struggle with self-regulation. Cognitive Development ( $r = 0.72$ ) also had a strong correlation with academic outcomes. This echoes SEA-PLM findings showing that early cognitive competencies—including early number sense and problem-solving—significantly influence primary grade achievement (UNICEF, 2020).

Language and Literacy Readiness ( $r = 0.66$ ) likewise demonstrated a significant association. Numerous studies affirm that early oral language skills—including vocabulary, phonological awareness, and narrative skills—are foundational to reading success (Lonigan & Phillips, 2021). Socio-emotional Development ( $r = 0.54$ ) had a moderate yet significant correlation, supporting the work of Denham (2020), who reported that emotionally regulated children show better academic adjustment and less disruptive behavior, enabling greater learning opportunities.

Only Physical and Motor Development showed no significant correlation, which aligns with findings by Piek et al. (2020) showing that although motor development supports classroom participation, it does not directly predict academic achievement in literacy or numeracy.

These results demonstrate that behavioral, cognitive, and linguistic readiness skills are the strongest predictors of early academic achievement in the Dolores I context.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Kindergarten pupils in Dolores I District entered school partially ready, especially in socio-emotional and motor skills, but lacked strong readiness in approaches to learning and foundational cognitive-linguistic skills.
2. Their academic performance was Developing, particularly in literacy and numeracy, reflecting national trends in early grade learning.
3. Learning readiness was strongly correlated with academic performance, confirming that readiness deficits directly affect kindergarten achievement.
4. Approaches to Learning, Cognitive Development, and Language & Literacy Development were the strongest predictors of academic performance.
5. Strengthening readiness domains before and during kindergarten will significantly enhance learners' success during their first year of schooling.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the following are recommended:  
 For Kindergarten Teachers

1. Integrate structured activities that strengthen executive function, such as task-focused games, routines, and self-regulation strategies.
2. Implement enriched literacy and numeracy instruction using storytelling, phonological awareness activities, manipulatives, and play-based numeracy.

For School Leaders

3. Incorporate readiness-focused goals into School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and Learning Recovery Programs (LRPs).
4. Provide continuous professional development on developmentally appropriate practices and readiness assessment tools.

For Parents and Community

5. Conduct capability-building workshops for parents on creating literacy-rich and emotionally supportive home environments.
6. Promote community-based early learning programs and parenting sessions targeting children aged 3–5.

For Policy and Division Offices

7. Strengthen early childhood interventions under the MATATAG K–10 framework, especially in GIDA areas like Dolores.
8. Support readiness assessment standardization and early childhood program resourcing across the district.

For Future Researchers

9. Conduct longitudinal studies to examine how kindergarten readiness predicts performance in Grades 1–3.
10. Compare results across different districts to build a larger body of local evidence on readiness and early achievement.

## Conflict of Interest

The researcher declared no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study. The research was carried out independently and was not influenced by any personal, financial, or professional relationships that could have affected the objectivity, integrity, or outcomes of the investigation. No individual, school personnel, or organization stood to gain or lose from the results of the study, and no external funding or sponsorship was received that could potentially bias the research process.

All procedures, interpretations, and conclusions were based solely on the data collected and analyzed. The cooperation of the participating schools and personnel in Dolores I District was voluntary and did not involve any form of compensation or obligation. The researcher maintained neutrality and adhered strictly to ethical standards throughout the study to ensure the credibility and impartiality of the findings.

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