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LEARNING CAPABILITIES AND BARRIERS OF YOUNG LEARNERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT TOWARD AN INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Leny B. Cruz[1], Melinda F. Marquez, PhD[2]
[1] *MA Student, University of Perpetual Help System DALTA - Las Piňas City*
[2] *Professor, University of Perpetual Help System DALTA - Las Piňas City*

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the learning capabilities and barriers young learners face in early childhood education within public elementary schools in the Division of Imus City during the 2024-2025 school year. The research involved two respondent groups: kindergarten teachers and parents of kindergarten learners. A descriptive research design was used, with data gathered through a researcher-made questionnaire distributed via surveys. The study focused on assessing the children's learning capabilities in terms of cognitive, creative, language, and motor development. Additionally, the barriers to learning were identified, particularly concerning parental involvement, educational support, learning disabilities, learning environment, and available resources. The results indicated significant differences in the learning capabilities of kindergarten learners as assessed by teachers, with differences observed in cognitive, creative, language, and motor aspects. Furthermore, the study revealed that learning capabilities varied according to the parents' profile, including age, gender, and highest educational attainment. However, no significant relationship was found between the children's learning capabilities and the barriers to learning, as assessed by both parents and teachers. This study highlights the importance of understanding the developmental capabilities and the challenges young learners face in early childhood education, providing insights into how these factors influence educational outcomes.

KEYWORDS: *Barriers to learning, Cognitive development, Creative development, Early childhood education, learning capabilities, learning environment, Learning resources, Motor development, Parental involvement, Teacher assessments.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) is a crucial framework for children's development from birth to eight years old. It focuses on fostering cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development during their critical formative years, ensuring that children leave the premises equipped to demonstrate curiosity and originality in their studies. High-quality ECE programs equip children with essential skills for academic success, fostering curiosity, creativity, and a zest for life.

Republic Act No. 10410, or the Early Years Act of 2013, promotes the rights of children to survival, development, and special protection, emphasizing the need for developmentally appropriate experiences. The Kindergarten Education program aims to ensure all five-year-old children achieve the standards and competencies expected of them, considering their diverse backgrounds, prior knowledge, experiences, skills, attitudes, personal traits, and interests.

Despite numerous strategies to support ECE, challenges persist in enhancing access to and the quality of ECE. These include a lack of understanding about comprehensive, multisectoral, and integrated strategies for holistic child development outcomes, inadequacies in the working conditions of the ECCE workforce, ongoing disparities in ECCE provision, a quality assessment mechanism that predominantly emphasizes quantitative indicators and document reviews rather than evaluating child outcomes, and insufficient focus on establishing a seamless transition in pedagogy, school climate, and curriculum content across ECCE programs and age groups, including into primary education.

In the Philippines, initiatives aim to fulfill Sustainable Development Goal 4 by providing inclusive and equitable quality education for all children. Parents and teachers play crucial roles in facilitating children's cognitive and social development, but home learning presents challenges for self-regulation of young children due to time and expertise demands.

This research identifies early childhood learning barriers and proposes targeted interventions to close developmental gaps, supporting successful learning outcomes, enhancing school performance, and increasing retention rates as outlined in the national framework for ECE.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

1. What are the learning capabilities of the young learners in early childhood education as assessed by the parents and teacher-respondents with respect to the following aspects in child development?
   1.1. cognitive;
   1.2. creative;
   1.3. language; and
   1.4. motor?

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2. What are the barriers in learning early education with respect to:
   2.1. parental involvement;
   2.2. educational support;
   2.3. learning disabilities;
   2.4. learning environment; and
   2.5. learning resources?
3. Is there a significant difference in the learning capabilities of the kindergarten in early childhood education as assessed by the teacher-respondents with respect to the aspects in childhood development?
4. Is there a significant difference in the learning capabilities of the young learners in early childhood education when grouped according to parents' profile?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the learning capabilities and barriers to learning early childhood as assessed by the parents and teacher-respondents?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Learning Capabilities of Kindergarten in Early Childhood

Saptatiningsih and Permana (2019) research suggests that early childhood character education can be improved through collaboration between schools and families in kindergarten settings, incorporating technology education to prevent misuse and encourage creativity and participation.

Rukiyati et al. (2020) highlight early childhood as a crucial period for moral education. Herianto et al. (2021) show that teachers use three models to improve character education: integration within subjects, fostering school culture, and learning activities. However, implementing character education on local content is ineffective due to cultural diversity, lack of standards, and lack of technological models. Duncan et al. (2020) found that school readiness skills predict educational success, health, and social-emotional outcomes. Early Development Instrument scores significantly correlate with academic competency, with language and cognitive development, communication skills, general knowledge, and social competence indicating children's potential for future academic achievement.

Denervaud et al. (2019) highlights the benefits of Montessori education, including enhanced executive functioning, academic performance, creativity skills, and self-reported well-being. Montessori students outperformed regular school students in kindergarten, with creative skills significantly influencing academic achievement. Early childhood education, as emphasized by Dere (2019), promotes healthy development and creativity, highlighting the importance of resources stimulating creativity and promoting diverse perspectives.

Washington-Nortey et al. (2020) suggest early language abilities are crucial for academic achievement and social outcomes. However, a comprehensive examination of social interaction's impact on ELLs' language development is lacking.

Diaz et al. (2022) found that oral language plays a crucial role in early childhood development, with semantics being the most prominent. Friskawati et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of fundamental motor skills in early childhood education, suggesting structured and unstructured play programs. Fitrianto et al. (2023) used the teaching games for understanding methodology to improve motor skills, but environmental factors and parental influence may affect outcomes. Kurniawan et al. (2021) found varying correlations between FMS competence and physical activity.

Abastillas et al. (2024) found a correlation between social-emotional development and academic achievement in early childhood learners. However, interaction with adults only showed a significant correlation with success in Mathematics and AP. Lauronilla et al. (2024) found no significant correlation between social-emotional competencies and academic achievement. Gumban (2024) found a substantial association between teacher-kindergarten interaction and social-emotional development in kindergarten students.

Barriers to Learning in Early Childhood Education

Magallanes et al. (2022) found that teachers in the Philippines have concerns about K-12 implementation, with consequences and collaboration being the main concerns. They suggest that the Philippine government should facilitate professional development initiatives to foster teamwork and collaboration among educators. Barnes et al. (2019) found that cognitive capacity differences in pre-kindergarten can provide predictive information about learning risk, particularly for comorbid difficulties in mathematics and reading. They found that continuous attention could be an early risk indicator for comorbid MDRD, a serious learning disability. Balikci and Melekoglu (2020) argue that a thorough assessment of academic skills cannot be conducted in preschool-aged children, but preschool educators must identify children at risk of learning problems to facilitate early detection and intervention. They emphasize the importance of preschool educators and families being attuned to the traits of children susceptible to learning difficulties within the framework of early intervention.

Danniels and Pyle (2021) highlight the increasing inclusion of children with developmental impairments in mainstream classrooms. At the kindergarten level, pedagogical adjustments have been made towards play-based learning, but little is known about how educators can facilitate inclusion in play. Jaca and Lopez-Baroman (2021) evaluate the preparedness level of teachers in public elementary schools in Cebu City, Philippines, revealing a high correlation between age, educational levels, and experience in teaching. The study also identifies three main hindrances to kindergarten curriculum implementation: preparation time, instructional material development, and teacher training. Trinidad (2020) highlights disparities in academic performance across schools and students, with gender and socioeconomic level serving as predictors but not entirely accounting for the difference. Zieleniewski (2020), who examined the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding the significance of skills influencing kindergarten preparedness. The examination of parental demographics indicated numerous statistically significant disparities categorized by race, educational attainment, and household income.

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The study by Li et al. (2024) evaluated the effectiveness of instructional resources in teaching reading to primary school children in China, finding that visual learners are most effective. Abarquez (2020) investigated the effect of manipulative concrete teaching materials on elementary mathematics teaching, finding that manipulatives were more effective than other methods. Bartolome (2022) highlighted the importance of children's perspectives in school decision-making and the need for parental involvement in early childhood education. Barnett et al. (2020) found that early childhood education (ECE) providers' practices, such as engaging parents, participating in home learning activities, and providing school engagement, were associated with children's academic readiness for kindergarten. These findings suggest that supporting ECE practices to enhance parent involvement and home learning activities could strengthen children's school readiness. Sobri et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of parents' engagement in children's education, with the Malaysian government policy promoting partnerships between parents, schools, and teachers. Setiawan et al. (2020) tested the effects of parents' attention, affection, security, and attention toward early childhood character education. The results showed that parental attention, affection, and security directly impact the character education of early childhood. Further research is needed to understand parental engagement from children's perspectives and its positive effects on the education system.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design, which provides a detailed analysis of characteristics, behaviors, and trends. This design is conclusive, evaluating hypotheses, characterizing traits, and influencing decision-making. Descriptive research uses surveys, polls, and experiments to reveal patterns and trends over time. The survey method was used to collect data on learning capabilities and barriers in early childhood education. The study aimed to provide insights to parents and teachers of kindergarten learners, helping them address the problem presented.

Population and Sampling

This study surveyed kindergarten teachers and kindergarten parents in Imus City during 2024-2025 using simple random probaility sampling and included parents of kindergarten learners.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of 80 kindergarten teachers from public elementary schools in the Division of Imus City. The respondents were randomly chosen by the researcher from ten (10) public elementary schools in the Division of Imus City. There were also 80 parents of kindergarten learners included as respondents of the study randomly chosen.

Statistical Treatment

The study used statistical procedures to analyze data on early childhood education. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to determine parent-respondent profiles, while weighted mean was used to measure learning capacities. Impediments to learning were calculated based on parental participation, instructional support, learning disabilities, learning environment, and materials. A paired t-test was used to determine significant differences in learning potential and a Pearson r test to determine a relationship between learning abilities and obstacles.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Composite Table on Learning Capabilities of Young Learners in Early Childhood Education as Assessed by the Parents and Teacher-Respondents with Respect to Cognitive, Creative, Language, and Motor Aspects in Child Development

	Parent		Teacher		Composite	
	Mean	**VI**	**Mean**	**VI**	**Mean**	**VI**
Cognitive	2.90	Agree	2.88	Agree	2.89	Agree
Creative	2.86	Agree	2.96	Agree	2.91	Agree
Language	2.78	Agree	2.84	Agree	2.81	Agree
Motor	2.69	Agree	2.82	Agree	2.76	Agree
Learning capabilities of young learners in early childhood	**2.81**	**Agree**	**2.87**	**Agree**	**2.84**	**Agree**

4 - (3.50 - 4.00) Strongly Agree 3 – (2.50 - 3.49) Agree 2 – (1.50 - 2.49) Disagree 1– (1.00 - 1.49) Strongly Disagree

The study reveals that both parents and teachers agree on the positive indicators of early childhood education's learning capabilities in cognitive, creative, language, and motor aspects. The overall mean of 2.84 indicates a well-rounded development of kindergarten learners in these areas. This agreement highlights the effectiveness of early childhood education in fostering growth in these areas. Schools and educators should continue to build on these strengths by ensuring balanced curricula and activities. Activities related to cognitive, creative, language, and motor skills improvement should be integrated at home and in classrooms to maintain growth and promote future academic success.

The study supports Duncan et al.'s (2020) claim that school readiness abilities predict future educational achievement, health, and social-emotional outcomes. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) scores significantly correlate with academic competency, indicating children's potential for future academic success, guiding educational strategies.

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Table 2 Composite Table on the Barriers to Learning Early Education with Respect to Parental Involvement, Educational Support, Learning Disabilities, Learning Environment, and Learning Resources

	Parent		Teacher		Composite	
	Mean	**VI**	**Mean**	**VI**	**Mean**	**VI**
Parent Involvement	2.77	Agree	2.80	Agree	2.78	Agree
Educational Support	2.84	Agree	2.86	Agree	2.85	Agree
Learning Disabilities	2.92	Agree	2.83	Agree	2.87	Agree
Learning Environment	2.71	Agree	2.77	Agree	2.74	Agree
Barriers in Learning Early Childhood	**2.81**	**Agree**	**2.80**	**Agree**	**2.81**	**Agree**

4 - (3.50 - 4.00) Strongly Agree 3 – (2.50 - 3.49) Agree 2 – (1.50 - 2.49) Disagree 1– (1.00 - 1.49) Strongly Disagree

The study reveals that barriers to early childhood education include parental involvement, educational support, learning disabilities, learning environment, and learning resources. Both parents and teachers agree that these factors are the primary barriers to learning. Educational support and learning disabilities are identified as the leading causes, emphasizing the need for intervention. The study suggests that efforts to remove these barriers should focus on improving educational support, addressing learning disorders early, and fostering stronger relationships between parents, schools, and communities. Additionally, the learning environment and resources must be improved, and collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial for successful early education.

The result shows Barnett et al. (2020) found that early childhood education (ECE) providers' practices, such as engaging parents, participating in home learning activities, and providing school engagement, were associated with children's academic readiness for kindergarten. These findings suggest that supporting ECE practices to enhance parent involvement and home learning activities could strengthen children's school readiness. Similarly, Sobri et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of parents' engagement in children's education, with the Malaysian government policy promoting partnerships between parents, schools, and teachers.

Table 3 Test of Significant Differences in the Learning Capabilities of Kindergarten in Early Childhood Education as Assessed by the Teacher-Respondents with Respect to the Aspects of Childhood Development

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision	Remarks
Teacher - Cognitive	-31.917	79	0.000	Reject	Significant
Teacher - Creative	-31.705	79	0.000	Reject	Significant
Teacher - Language	-30.998	79	0.000	Reject	Significant
Teacher - Motor	-18.554	79	0.000	Reject	Significant

The table shows significant differences in kindergarten learning capabilities in early childhood education, with a probability value of 0.000, rejecting null hypotheses. These differences are observed in cognitive, creative, language, and motor aspects. The rejection of the null hypothesis suggests that teaching strategies, curriculum, and classroom environment affect the overall development of young children. Identifying these differences and rejecting the null hypothesis indicates the importance of continuous assessment and intervention in teaching to meet learners' demands effectively.

Duncan et al. (2020) found that school readiness skills predict educational success, health, and social-emotional outcomes. Early Development Instrument scores significantly correlate with academic competency, with language and cognitive development, communication skills, general knowledge, and social competence indicating children's potential for future academic achievement. Similarly, Denervaud et al. (2019) highlights the benefits of Montessori education, including enhanced executive functioning, academic performance, creativity skills, and self-reported well-being. Montessori students outperformed regular school students in kindergarten, with creative skills significantly influencing academic achievement.

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Table 4 Test of Significant Differences in the Learning Capabilities of Kindergarten in Early Childhood Education When Grouped According to Parents' Profile

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision	Remarks
Age - learning capabilities of young learners in early childhood	-9.204	79	0.000	Reject	Significant
Sex - learning capabilities of young learners in early childhood	-21.823	79	0.000	Reject	Significant
Highest Educational Attainment - learning capabilities of young learners in early childhood	13.090	79	0.000	Reject	Significant

The study reveals significant differences in the learning capabilities of kindergarten children in early childhood education based on parents' demographic profiles. The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that demographic factors impact parents' perceptions of their children's learning abilities. The findings suggest the need for more individualized approaches in early childhood education, ensuring support that fits parents' specific needs and backgrounds. This insight can help schools engage parents more effectively and improve their involvement in their children's education. In relation to Zieleniewski (2020), who examined the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding the significance of skills influencing kindergarten preparedness. The examination of parental demographics indicated numerous statistically significant disparities categorized by race, educational attainment, and household income.

Table 5 Test of Significant Relationship Between the Learning Capabilities and Barriers to Learning in Early Childhood as Assessed by the Parents and Teacher-Respondents

		Barriers In Learning Early Childhood
Learning capabilities of young learners in early childhood	Pearson Correlation	-0.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.592
	N	160

The study found no significant relationship between learning capabilities and barriers in early childhood education, as assessed by parents and teachers. The probability value of 0.592 is greater than the 0.05 confidence level, indicating no significant correlation. The Pearson r correlation coefficient of -0.043 indicates a weak negative correlation. The findings suggest that factors other than identified barriers may influence a young child's learning ability in more significant ways. Lauronilla et al. (2024) found no significant correlation between social-emotional competencies and academic achievement. Barnes et al. (2019) found that cognitive capacity differences in pre-kindergarten can provide predictive information about learning risk, particularly for comorbid difficulties in mathematics and reading. They found that continuous attention could be an early risk indicator for comorbid MDRD, a serious learning disability.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that most respondents are mothers aged 30 and below, who are parents of kindergarten learners from the last school year. This gender distribution is crucial for effective intervention programs, considering the different preferences, schedules, and responsibilities of mothers. Educational and community programs should target mothers as primary respondents for early childhood education programs, including mother-centered workshops, flexible learning materials, and support systems. Both parents and teachers agree that parental involvement in learning is a barrier in early childhood education. To overcome these barriers, schools and teachers should recognize disabilities early and address the need for a personally adapted strategy and resources. An inclusive learning environment that accounts for diverse learning needs can help ensure all children have a fair chance for success. There are significant differences in learning capabilities in kindergartens in early childhood education, grouped according to parents' profiles in terms of age, gender, and highest educational attainment. There is no significant and weak negative relationship between learning capabilities and barriers to learning in early childhood, as assessed by parents and teacher-respondents. The study's output is an intervention program aimed at enhancing kindergarten learning capabilities and addressing early childhood education barriers.

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