

Challenges and Opportunities in Early Literacy Instruction Under the K to 3 Matatag Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Early literacy development is essential in strengthening learners' academic achievement, communication skills, and lifelong learning outcomes. This study assessed the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and its perceived impact on early literacy instruction among selected schools in Cebu during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, the study examined the 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. It also investigated 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 study employed a descriptive-correlational research design using a quantitative approach. Thirty (30) early childhood education teachers were purposively selected as respondents. Data were gathered through a validated survey questionnaire and analyzed using weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's r correlation analysis.

Findings revealed that the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum was extensively implemented across all identified dimensions. Teachers consistently integrated developmentally appropriate, learner-centered, and literacy-focused instructional practices in classroom settings. The results further showed that MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction positively influenced learners' oral communication, writing, and reading development. Although teachers experienced moderate challenges related to classroom size, multilingual settings, and limited instructional support, these challenges did not significantly affect learners' literacy outcomes. Moreover, a significant strong positive relationship was found between curriculum implementation and early literacy outcomes. The findings affirm that the MATATAG Curriculum serves as an effective framework for strengthening foundational literacy development among early learners.

Keywords: Early Literacy Development, K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum, Child-Centered Instruction, Developmental Readiness, Literacy Instruction, Early Childhood Education

INTRODUCTION

Early literacy plays an essential role in children's language development, academic success, and social participation. It encompasses foundational competencies such as oral communication, reading comprehension, and written expression, which are all critical for lifelong learning and cognitive growth. As emphasized by Snow, strong early literacy development significantly shapes children's capacity to

succeed across academic disciplines and social contexts. More recent studies further affirm that learners who acquire strong literacy foundations during the early grades are more likely to demonstrate higher academic achievement, improved communication abilities, and stronger social participation later in life (Piasta, Justice, & O'Connell, 2020; Wasik & Hindman, 2020).

Within the Philippine educational context, however, concerns regarding early literacy continue to persist, particularly in public elementary schools. Results from national and international 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 literacy learning among Filipino learners. These findings highlighted the urgent need for curriculum reforms that would strengthen literacy instruction during the formative years of education. In response, the Department of Education introduced the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in 2023 as part of a broader educational reform agenda designed to improve foundational learning outcomes, reduce curriculum congestion, and enhance developmental appropriateness in instruction. The MATATAG Curriculum places strong emphasis on aligning literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness, utilizing appropriate instructional materials, and promoting child-centered teaching practices that foster meaningful and engaging learning experiences (DepEd, 2023).

Despite the promising goals of the MATATAG Curriculum, its effective implementation remains a major concern at the classroom level. Teachers serve as the primary implementers of curriculum reforms, and the success of any educational innovation largely depends on their capacity, readiness, and instructional support. Existing studies revealed that early childhood teachers continue to encounter challenges such as insufficient instructional resources, inadequate professional training, and difficulties in adapting literacy instruction to diverse learner needs (Alvarado & Bautista, 2024). These concerns become even more pronounced in multilingual and multi-ability classrooms where learners demonstrate varying developmental readiness and literacy competencies. Similarly, Jaca and Lopez-Baroman (2021) observed that teachers often feel underprepared and inadequately supported during the implementation of curriculum reforms, particularly in delivering early literacy instruction within linguistically diverse learning environments.

Moreover, the effectiveness of curriculum implementation is strongly influenced by teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward the curriculum itself. Teachers' instructional decisions are often shaped by how relevant, feasible, and contextually appropriate they perceive a curriculum to be (Voogt, Pieters, & Handelzalts, 2020). When educators view curricular reforms as beneficial and aligned with the realities of their classrooms, they are more likely to implement them effectively and consistently. Conversely, when there is a disconnect between curriculum expectations and classroom realities, teachers may modify, minimize, or inconsistently apply curriculum components, thereby affecting the intended learning outcomes (Aguanta & Tumibay, 2021). This highlights the importance of examining teachers' experiences and perceptions in understanding the actual implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in early literacy education.

The MATATAG Curriculum strongly advocates for child-centered literacy instruction through the integration of play-based learning, exploratory activities, collaborative tasks, and developmentally appropriate literacy experiences. Research consistently supports the effectiveness of these approaches in improving learners' engagement, comprehension, language acquisition, and overall academic achievement (Justice, Logan, & Damschroder, 2020; Neuman & Gambrell, 2021). However, the practical application of these strategies in resource-constrained educational settings remains a challenge. Teachers

may acknowledge the importance of child-centered instruction in theory, yet struggle to consistently implement such practices due to limitations in instructional materials, classroom space, time allocation, and professional preparation (Malinao & Miano, 2025).

Given these realities, there is a pressing need to critically examine the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in relation to early literacy instruction. Specifically, it is important to assess the extent to which literacy competencies are aligned with learners' developmental readiness, determine the appropriateness of instructional materials used in literacy instruction, and evaluate the integration of child-centered literacy practices in classroom settings. Equally important is understanding the perceived impact of MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction on learners' oral communication, writing, and reading skills, as well as identifying the challenges encountered by early childhood teachers during implementation. Investigating these variables is essential in determining whether the goals of the curriculum reform are being effectively translated into meaningful classroom practices and learner outcomes.

Anchored on these considerations, this study seeks to assess the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and its perceived impact on learners' early literacy development. Specifically, the study examines the 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. It also investigates 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. Furthermore, the study determines whether significant relationships exist between the extent of curriculum implementation, the perceived impact on learners, and the challenges encountered by teachers. Based on the findings, the study aims to propose an instructional enhancement plan that may strengthen the delivery of early literacy instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide evidence-based insights into the implementation of one of the country's most recent and critical curriculum reforms during the foundational years of learning. By grounding the investigation in the actual experiences and perceptions of early childhood teachers in Cebu, the study contributes valuable information that may guide localized instructional enhancement initiatives, teacher support mechanisms, and curriculum improvement efforts. The findings may also serve as an important reference for the Department of Education in monitoring, evaluating, and refining the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum based on classroom realities and contextual challenges. Ultimately, strengthening early literacy instruction through responsive and evidence-informed educational practices remains essential in ensuring that curriculum reforms such as MATATAG fulfill their promise of improving foundational learning outcomes for Filipino learners.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The successful implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum is deeply grounded in established educational theories and influenced by teachers' competence, expertise, commitment, and adaptability. These factors are essential in ensuring that learners develop strong foundational literacy skills that will support their academic progression and lifelong learning. This study is anchored on four major theoretical foundations: Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and Fullan's Curriculum Implementation Theory. Collectively, these frameworks provide a comprehensive and multidimensional lens for understanding

curriculum implementation, literacy instruction, learner development, and the broader educational environment in early childhood education.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development emphasizes the central role of social interaction in the learning process. Central to this theory is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between what a child can independently accomplish and what can be achieved with guidance and support from teachers, parents, or peers. Within the context of the MATATAG Curriculum, this theory highlights the importance of scaffolding, collaborative learning, peer interaction, and child-centered instructional practices, where teachers serve as facilitators of learning rather than mere transmitters of information.

Empirical studies strongly support this perspective. Johnson and Lee (2023) found that teacher-guided peer collaboration significantly enhanced preschool learners' engagement, participation, and critical thinking skills. Similarly, Santos and Reyes (2022) demonstrated that scaffolding strategies such as guided questioning, modeling, and assisted reading effectively bridged literacy gaps among Filipino kindergarten learners. Studies conducted by Mendoza and Soriano (2021), Liu and Zhang (2022), and Cruz (2020) further confirmed that interactive storytelling, collaborative learning, and play-based literacy instruction rooted in social interaction substantially improve learners' oral communication and reading comprehension skills. These findings collectively emphasize the importance of creating socially engaging and developmentally responsive learning environments that align with the literacy goals of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum. Moreover, these studies affirm that literacy learning is not an isolated cognitive process but a socially mediated experience shaped by interaction, communication, and guided participation. In relation to the present study, Vygotsky's theory provides strong theoretical support for examining how child-centered literacy instruction, collaborative classroom practices, and teacher facilitation contribute to learners' literacy development under the MATATAG Curriculum.

While Vygotsky highlights the significance of social interaction, Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory focuses on how children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and progress through distinct developmental stages. Of particular relevance to early literacy instruction is the preoperational stage, which typically occurs between the ages of two and seven. During this stage, children develop symbolic thinking, language acquisition, imagination, and pretend play, all of which serve as critical foundations for literacy development. Piaget's theory strongly supports the use of developmentally appropriate instructional strategies in early childhood education. Smith and Brown (2023) emphasized that instructional materials and literacy activities should be tailored to children's cognitive readiness to maximize learning outcomes. Likewise, Lee and Kim (2022) found that symbolic and imaginative play significantly nurture language acquisition and communication skills among young learners. Within the Philippine context, Garcia and Santos (2021) and Mendoza and Cruz (2020) argued that Filipino teachers must design cognitively engaging and learner-centered literacy activities aligned with Piagetian principles to effectively support literacy acquisition. Furthermore, Rodriguez et al. (2023) provided longitudinal evidence demonstrating that early literacy development contributes substantially to cognitive growth and later academic success. These studies reinforce the MATATAG Curriculum's emphasis on developmentally appropriate literacy instruction by recognizing that young learners acquire literacy skills more effectively when instruction aligns with their cognitive capacities, interests, and developmental readiness. Consequently, Piaget's theory serves as a critical framework for analyzing the alignment of literacy competencies, instructional materials, and classroom practices within the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum.

To fully understand literacy instruction and curriculum implementation, it is equally important to examine the broader ecological systems that influence children's learning experiences. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains that child development occurs within interconnected environmental systems, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. These systems collectively shape children's educational experiences and developmental outcomes. The microsystem includes immediate environments such as classrooms and families, while the mesosystem reflects the relationships between these environments, particularly home-school collaboration. The exosystem involves institutional structures and administrative support systems that indirectly affect learning, whereas the macrosystem encompasses broader societal values, educational policies, and cultural beliefs. Lastly, the chronosystem considers changes over time, including educational reforms and societal disruptions that influence teaching and learning processes. Empirical studies support the relevance of this theory in curriculum implementation and literacy instruction. Dizon and Almazan (2023) found that classroom-related challenges and insufficient administrative support constrained the effective delivery of literacy instruction, highlighting the influence of microsystem and exosystem factors. Rivera and Castillo (2022) similarly reported that strong parental involvement significantly enhanced learners' reading comprehension and fluency, emphasizing the importance of mesosystem interactions. Furthermore, Navarro (2021) and Santos and de la Cruz (2021) identified policy-practice gaps in curriculum implementation, demonstrating the impact of macrosystem factors on actual classroom realities. Villanueva and Ramos (2020) also highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted educational systems and required adaptive literacy instruction strategies, illustrating the influence of the chronosystem on learning environments. These findings advocate for a holistic and systems-oriented approach to literacy instruction in which curriculum implementation is supported not only within classrooms but also through family involvement, institutional support, and responsive educational policies. Bronfenbrenner's theory therefore provides an important framework for understanding the contextual realities influencing the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in early literacy education.

In addition to the foundational learning theories, this study is also guided by Fullan's Curriculum Implementation Theory (2007), which emphasizes that the success of curriculum reform depends not only on sound curriculum design but also on teachers' active participation, competence, commitment, and capacity to implement educational change effectively. According to Fullan, major factors influencing curriculum implementation include teacher readiness, school leadership, professional development opportunities, institutional support, and resource availability. Within the context of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum, this theory underscores the importance of providing adequate teacher training, collaborative school environments, and sustained administrative and policy support. Fullan further argues that curriculum implementation is both a technical and cultural process that requires continuous adaptation and shared commitment among educational stakeholders. This perspective is particularly relevant in understanding the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing early literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum.

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum is further reinforced by existing Philippine educational laws and policies. Republic Act No. 10533, otherwise known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, mandates that basic education be inclusive, contextualized, learner-centered, and responsive to the needs of Filipino learners and communities. The law emphasizes the importance of mother tongue-based instruction, localized instructional materials, and teacher preparedness in foundational literacy education. Section 5 of the law specifically requires that the K to 3 curriculum be developmentally

appropriate and responsive to learners' linguistic, cultural, and cognitive realities. Similarly, Republic Act No. 10410, or the Early Years Act of 2013, strongly advocates for play-based, child-centered, and developmentally appropriate programs for children in their formative years. These policy directions align directly with the MATATAG Curriculum's emphasis on developmentally responsive literacy instruction and child-centered pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2024, provides policy guidelines for the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and serves as a blueprint for instructional planning, assessment practices, and curriculum delivery. Collectively, these policies reinforce the need for evidence-based, learner-centered, and contextually appropriate literacy instruction that supports the holistic development of Filipino learners during the foundational years of education.

Early literacy development is widely recognized as a crucial foundation for later academic achievement, making its integration within the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum particularly significant. However, the implementation of curriculum reforms often presents challenges associated with learner diversity, teacher preparedness, instructional resources, and classroom realities. Existing literature consistently demonstrates that the effectiveness of any curriculum reform depends not only on curriculum design but also on how it is implemented, supported, and contextualized within actual learning environments.

Studies have shown that socioeconomic status and parental involvement are strong predictors of learners' literacy development. Panicker and Nedungottil (2021) found that children from low-income households frequently lack access to literacy materials and supportive home learning environments, negatively affecting their readiness for formal literacy instruction. Similarly, Allay (2023) observed that active parental involvement significantly improves children's reading fluency, literacy motivation, and overall engagement in learning. However, literacy exposure tends to be limited when parents are unavailable due to work demands and socioeconomic constraints. These findings highlight the importance of strong home-school collaboration in supporting the literacy goals of the MATATAG Curriculum.

Peer interactions also play a vital role in learners' literacy and social development. Juhoven et al. (2019) demonstrated that supportive peer environments promote communication skills, comprehension, and learner confidence, while experiences of bullying and social exclusion negatively affect learners' participation in literacy activities. Lopez et al. (2021) further emphasized that structured peer collaboration, such as paired reading and group literacy tasks, substantially enhances vocabulary development, confidence, and reading engagement among young learners. These findings support the MATATAG Curriculum's emphasis on collaborative and inclusive literacy instruction.

Classroom-related challenges likewise affect the successful implementation of literacy instruction. Teachers frequently encounter diverse learning needs, behavioral concerns, limited instructional time, and varying learner readiness levels that complicate literacy teaching. Chetty (2021) emphasized the importance of smooth transitions from preschool to formal schooling in reducing literacy gaps, while Yu (2023) stressed the need for differentiated instruction and play-based approaches to sustain learners' engagement. Moreover, De Nobile et al. (2018) noted that insufficient instructional resources and limited teacher preparation continue to hinder the effective implementation of literacy strategies in early childhood education.

Teacher well-being and instructional readiness also significantly influence the successful implementation of early literacy instruction. Ahmed and Farouk (2020) emphasized that teachers experiencing excessive workload, emotional stress, and instructional fatigue often encounter difficulties in sustaining high-quality and individualized literacy instruction. Their findings suggest that teacher well-being directly affects instructional quality, classroom engagement, and the effectiveness of literacy interventions among early

learners. This highlights the importance of providing continuous professional and institutional support to teachers implementing the MATATAG Curriculum.

The socio-cultural environment of the classroom likewise plays an essential role in literacy acquisition. Ahmed and Nasir (2021) found that positive socio-cultural classroom environments enhance learners' language development, participation, and literacy engagement. Similarly, Del Rosario (2020) emphasized that effective teacher talk, verbal scaffolding, and guided classroom discussions significantly strengthen emergent literacy skills among Filipino kindergarten learners. These findings reinforce Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that literacy development is strengthened through interaction, communication, and guided participation within socially supportive learning environments.

Several studies also highlighted the importance of developmentally appropriate literacy materials and cognitively responsive instructional practices. Hernandez (2022) found that teachers perceive culturally responsive and age-appropriate literacy resources as highly effective in improving learners' motivation, comprehension, and participation during literacy instruction. Likewise, Wong and Chan (2021) argued that curriculum design aligned with children's cognitive development promotes more meaningful literacy acquisition and active learner engagement in early childhood classrooms.

Research focusing on cognitive readiness and symbolic literacy development further supports the principles embedded within the MATATAG Curriculum. Li and Zhang (2021) emphasized that literacy programs tailored to children's cognitive readiness significantly improve reading engagement and language acquisition. Nguyen (2023) similarly found that symbolic thinking activities such as storytelling, pretend play, drawing, and visual representation positively contribute to literacy development among kindergarten learners. In multilingual educational settings, Patel and Kumar (2020) further noted that literacy instruction grounded in Piagetian principles enhances comprehension and contextual understanding among young learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Collaborative and interactive literacy practices were also found to positively influence learners' literacy outcomes. Tan and Villanueva (2023) revealed that group literacy activities significantly improve vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and classroom participation among Cebu early graders. Similarly, Thompson and Rivers (2023) highlighted that digital storytelling and peer interaction enhance learners' communication skills, creativity, and literacy engagement through technology-supported literacy experiences. These findings suggest that collaborative and interactive literacy strategies contribute substantially to learners' motivation and active participation in literacy instruction.

Community and ecological support systems also contribute to the effectiveness of literacy instruction. Dela Peña (2022) found that community-based literacy initiatives and localized literacy programs positively influence learners' literacy development by extending literacy learning opportunities beyond classroom instruction. Similarly, Gonzalez and Ramos (2021) emphasized that literacy achievement in bilingual classrooms is shaped by multiple environmental influences, including family support, peer interaction, school culture, and community engagement. These findings support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that literacy development is influenced by interconnected social and environmental systems. Furthermore, Chan and Leung (2023) and Harris and McNally (2023) emphasized that curriculum implementation becomes more effective when educational institutions establish strong collaboration among teachers, families, administrators, and communities, highlighting the importance of systemic and institutional support in sustaining successful literacy instruction.

Several instructional approaches and literacy programs further demonstrate the long-term benefits of high-quality early literacy education. Murray et al. (2018) revealed that the Incredible Years curriculum, which

integrates emotional literacy and social skills within literacy instruction, improved learners' academic performance while reducing behavioral issues. Smith (2021) highlighted the effectiveness of the Reggio Emilia approach in promoting creativity, critical thinking, and early reading skills by recognizing children as active co-constructors of knowledge. Likewise, findings from the Perry Preschool Project revealed that high-quality early literacy interventions positively influence not only academic performance but also long-term social and developmental outcomes (Olds, 2019).

Within the Philippine setting, Lindsay et al. (2018) found that Filipino learners who received strong parental support demonstrated significantly better reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. Healy et al. (2022) similarly reported that parent-led reading sessions at home improved learners' decoding and fluency abilities. Despite these positive findings, studies continue to identify persistent challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient instructional materials, and inadequate teacher preparation, all of which limit the effective implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in fostering early literacy development among Filipino learners.

Collectively, these theories, policies, and empirical studies provide a comprehensive framework for examining the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum in relation to early literacy instruction. Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and social interaction; Piaget advocates for developmentally appropriate practices; Bronfenbrenner situates literacy development within interconnected environmental systems; and Fullan highlights the critical role of teacher competence and institutional support in curriculum reform. Anchored on these theoretical and empirical foundations, the present study recognizes that successful implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum requires a combination of child-centered pedagogy, teacher preparedness, parental involvement, administrative support, and responsive educational policies. This integrated perspective serves as the foundation for assessing how the MATATAG Curriculum addresses the opportunities and challenges associated with early literacy development within the Philippine educational context.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine 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 aspect described the extent of curriculum implementation in terms of developmental readiness, instructional materials, and child-centered literacy instruction, while the correlational aspect examined the relationships among curriculum implementation, literacy outcomes, and implementation challenges. A quantitative approach using structured survey questionnaires was utilized to gather measurable data and analyze relationships among variables through appropriate statistical tools (Seeram, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants

The study involved thirty (30) early childhood education teachers from selected schools in Cebu City during the School Year 2025–2026. The respondents were purposively selected due to their direct involvement in implementing the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum and delivering early literacy instruction. Purposive sampling ensured that the participants possessed the necessary knowledge, experience, and engagement relevant to the objectives of the study.

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

Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
Alignment of Literacy Competencies with Learners’ Developmental Readiness		
Literacy tasks are developmentally appropriate for learners’ age and abilities.	4.47	Extensively Implemented

Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
Activities align with expected literacy milestones (e.g., phonemic awareness, vocabulary).	4.50	Extensively Implemented
Lessons build on learners' prior knowledge and readiness.	4.43	Extensively Implemented
Reading and writing tasks are progressively structured.	4.47	Extensively Implemented
Teachers adapt literacy instruction to suit diverse developmental needs.	4.50	Extensively Implemented
Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.47	Extensively Implemented
Standard Deviation	0.03	
Appropriateness of Instructional Materials for Early Literacy		
Instructional materials support early reading and writing skills.	4.50	Extensively Implemented
Learning resources are culturally relevant and language-appropriate.	4.37	Extensively Implemented
Supplementary literacy tools (e.g., big books, flashcards) are available.	4.30	Extensively Implemented
Materials reflect the use of Mother Tongue in literacy instruction.	4.13	Frequently Implemented
Print-rich materials are accessible and used regularly.	4.13	Frequently Implemented
Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.29	Extensively Implemented
Standard Deviation	0.16	
Integration of Child-Centered Literacy Instruction		
Learners engage in play-based literacy activities.	4.20	Frequently Implemented
Literacy tasks encourage learner autonomy and expression.	4.30	Extensively Implemented
Storytelling, role-play, and interactive reading are used in instruction.	4.40	Extensively Implemented
The classroom environment supports exploration and creativity in literacy.	4.30	Extensively Implemented
Children are given choices in their literacy tasks.	4.17	Frequently Implemented

Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.27	Extensively Implemented
Standard Deviation	0.09	

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 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 overall findings revealed that all three dimensions were rated as “Extensively Implemented,” indicating that early childhood teachers consistently integrate the principles and instructional expectations of the MATATAG Curriculum into classroom literacy practices.

Among the three dimensions, alignment of literacy competencies with learners’ developmental readiness obtained the highest aggregate weighted mean of 4.47 with a standard deviation of 0.03, verbally interpreted as “Extensively Implemented.” This indicates a highly consistent perception among respondents that literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum is appropriately aligned with the developmental needs and readiness of learners. Specifically, the indicators “Activities align with expected literacy milestones (e.g., phonemic awareness, vocabulary)” and “Teachers adapt literacy instruction to suit diverse developmental needs” both obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.50. This suggests that teachers strongly prioritize differentiated and developmentally responsive literacy instruction to ensure that learning experiences match learners’ cognitive and linguistic capacities. Likewise, “Literacy tasks are developmentally appropriate for learners’ age and abilities” and “Reading and writing tasks are progressively structured” both received high weighted means of 4.47, further indicating that literacy instruction is carefully sequenced to support gradual skill acquisition. Meanwhile, “Lessons build on learners’ prior knowledge and readiness” obtained the lowest weighted mean within the category at 4.43, although it remained within the “Extensively Implemented” range, suggesting that teachers still consistently consider learners’ previous experiences and readiness levels when delivering literacy instruction.

In terms of appropriateness of instructional materials for early literacy, the dimension obtained an aggregate weighted mean of 4.29 with a standard deviation of 0.16, verbally interpreted as “Extensively Implemented.” The findings indicate that teachers generally perceive instructional materials used in literacy instruction as relevant, supportive, and developmentally appropriate for early learners. The indicator “Instructional materials support early reading and writing skills” obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.50, implying that teachers strongly recognize the effectiveness of literacy materials in enhancing foundational literacy competencies. Similarly, “Learning resources are culturally relevant and language-appropriate” and “Supplementary literacy tools (e.g., big books, flashcards) are available” obtained weighted means of 4.37 and 4.30, respectively, both interpreted as “Extensively Implemented.” These findings suggest that teachers value contextualized instructional resources and supplementary literacy materials that enhance learners’ engagement and comprehension. However, the indicators “Materials reflect the use of Mother Tongue in literacy instruction” and “Print-rich materials are accessible and used

regularly” both received the lowest weighted mean of 4.13, verbally interpreted as “Frequently Implemented.” Although still positively rated, these findings may indicate existing limitations in the availability, accessibility, or consistent utilization of localized and print-rich literacy resources in classroom settings.

Meanwhile, the integration of child-centered literacy instruction obtained an aggregate weighted mean of 4.27 with a standard deviation of 0.09, verbally interpreted as “Extensively Implemented.” This indicates that teachers consistently employ learner-centered and interactive literacy practices aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum framework. Among the indicators, “Storytelling, role-play, and interactive reading are used in instruction” received the highest weighted mean of 4.40, suggesting that teachers actively integrate participatory and experiential literacy activities that encourage learner engagement and communication. “Literacy tasks encourage learner autonomy and expression” and “The classroom environment supports exploration and creativity in literacy” both obtained weighted means of 4.30, further indicating that teachers foster learning environments that promote creativity, independence, and active participation. Conversely, “Learners engage in play-based literacy activities” and “Children are given choices in their literacy tasks” obtained weighted means of 4.20 and 4.17, respectively, both verbally interpreted as “Frequently Implemented.” These findings suggest that although child-centered approaches are widely practiced, some learner-driven and play-based instructional strategies may not yet be fully maximized in all classroom settings.

The results demonstrate that the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum is being implemented extensively across all identified dimensions. The consistently high weighted means indicate that teachers generally perceive the curriculum as developmentally responsive, supportive of literacy development, and aligned with child-centered educational practices. The findings further suggest that teachers are making substantial efforts to translate curriculum standards into meaningful literacy instruction despite the contextual challenges associated with early childhood education.

Table 2

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

Indicators	WM Verbal Description
Oral Communication Skills	
Learners can express ideas clearly using age-appropriate vocabulary.	4.07 Agree
Learners participate actively in classroom discussions and storytelling.	4.30 Strongly Agree
Learners demonstrate improved listening and turn-taking skills.	4.20 Agree
Learners show confidence in speaking in front of peers.	4.17 Agree
Learners respond appropriately to questions and verbal prompts.	3.87 Agree
Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.12 Agree
Standard Deviation	0.16
Writing Skills	
Learners can write letters and words legibly.	3.93 Agree
Learners can compose simple sentences related to personal experiences.	3.47 Agree
Learners use punctuation and capitalization correctly at their level.	3.47 Agree

Indicators	WM Verbal Description
Learners show creativity in drawing and labeling their work.	3.83 Agree
Learners can copy and write dictated sentences with minimal assistance.	3.40 Neutral
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.62 Agree
Standard Deviation	0.24
Reading Skills	
Learners recognize and name letters of the alphabet.	4.30 Strongly Agree
Learners can read simple words and short sentences.	4.03 Agree
Learners demonstrate comprehension of read-aloud texts.	3.57 Agree
Learners can match pictures with printed words.	4.37 Strongly Agree
Learners can retell stories using their own words.	3.57 Agree
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.97 Agree
Standard Deviation	0.39

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 perceived impact of the MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction on learners in terms of oral communication, writing, and reading skills. The findings revealed that all three literacy dimensions were positively rated by the respondents, indicating that the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum contributes meaningfully to the development of foundational literacy competencies among early learners.

Among the three dimensions, oral communication skills obtained the highest aggregate weighted mean of 4.12 with a standard deviation of 0.16, verbally interpreted as “Agree.” This indicates that teachers generally perceive MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction as effective in strengthening learners’ oral language development and classroom communication skills. The indicator “Learners participate actively in classroom discussions and storytelling” received the highest weighted mean of 4.30, verbally described as “Strongly Agree.” This suggests that interactive literacy practices under the MATATAG Curriculum effectively encourage learners’ participation, verbal interaction, and engagement in collaborative classroom activities. Similarly, “Learners demonstrate improved listening and turn-taking skills” and “Learners show confidence in speaking in front of peers” obtained weighted means of 4.20 and 4.17, respectively, both interpreted as “Agree.” These findings imply that learners are gradually developing social communication competencies and confidence in expressing themselves within literacy-rich classroom environments. Meanwhile, “Learners respond appropriately to questions and verbal prompts” obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.87, although still interpreted positively as “Agree.” This may indicate that while learners demonstrate oral communication improvements, some still require additional guidance and scaffolding in responding critically and independently during verbal interactions.

In terms of writing skills, the dimension obtained an aggregate weighted mean of 3.62 with a standard deviation of 0.24, verbally interpreted as “Agree.” The findings indicate that teachers perceive MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction as moderately effective in supporting learners’ early writing development. The indicator “Learners can write letters and words legibly” received the highest weighted

mean of 3.93, suggesting that learners are developing basic handwriting and written expression skills appropriate to their level. Likewise, “Learners show creativity in drawing and labeling their work” obtained a weighted mean of 3.83, indicating that literacy activities encourage creativity and symbolic representation among learners. However, indicators related to sentence construction and writing conventions such as punctuation and capitalization both received weighted means of 3.47, interpreted as “Agree,” suggesting that these higher-order writing skills are still developing among learners. Notably, “Learners can copy and write dictated sentences with minimal assistance” received the lowest weighted mean of 3.40, verbally interpreted as “Neutral.” This finding may imply that learners continue to encounter difficulties in independent sentence writing and transcription tasks, possibly due to developmental differences, limited writing exposure, or insufficient practice opportunities.

Meanwhile, reading skills obtained an aggregate weighted mean of 3.97 with a standard deviation of 0.39, verbally interpreted as “Agree.” This indicates that MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction positively influences learners’ foundational reading development. The indicators “Learners can match pictures with printed words” and “Learners recognize and name letters of the alphabet” received the highest weighted means of 4.37 and 4.30, respectively, both verbally interpreted as “Strongly Agree.” These findings suggest that learners are effectively developing foundational decoding and symbol recognition skills, which are essential in early reading acquisition. Additionally, “Learners can read simple words and short sentences” obtained a weighted mean of 4.03, interpreted as “Agree,” indicating that learners are beginning to demonstrate basic independent reading abilities. However, “Learners demonstrate comprehension of read-aloud texts” and “Learners can retell stories using their own words” both obtained weighted means of 3.57, suggesting that while learners can engage with texts, comprehension and retelling skills may still require further enhancement and instructional support.

The findings indicate that MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction has a positive and meaningful impact on learners’ oral communication, writing, and reading development. The consistently positive ratings suggest that the curriculum supports the development of foundational literacy competencies, particularly in oral communication and basic reading skills. However, the comparatively lower ratings in higher-order writing and comprehension-related indicators imply the need for sustained instructional support, differentiated literacy activities, and enhanced opportunities for independent language use and critical literacy engagement.

Table 3

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

Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
Lack of developmentally appropriate learning materials	3.40	Neutral
Inadequate training or professional development related to MATATAG early literacy strategies	3.63	Agree
Insufficient time to focus on individualized literacy instruction	3.63	Agree
Limited parental involvement and support in literacy development	3.47	Agree
Difficulty addressing diverse literacy levels within one class	3.43	Agree

Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
Challenges in implementing MTB-MLE due to learners' varied language backgrounds	3.67	Agree
Lack of access to technology and literacy-enhancing resources	3.27	Neutral
Difficulty in assessing literacy progress due to limited tools	3.33	Neutral
Large class sizes affecting literacy instruction effectiveness	3.70	Agree
Lack of administrative or supervisory support for literacy-focused instruction	3.33	Neutral
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.49	Agree
Standard Deviation	0.16	

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 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 3.49 with a standard deviation of 0.16, verbally interpreted as “Agree.” This indicates that teachers generally experience considerable challenges in implementing literacy instruction aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum, although these challenges vary in intensity across different instructional and contextual factors.

Among the identified challenges, “Large class sizes affecting literacy instruction effectiveness” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.70, interpreted as “Agree.” This suggests that overcrowded classrooms significantly hinder teachers’ ability to deliver individualized and focused literacy instruction. Similarly, “Challenges in implementing MTB-MLE due to learners’ varied language backgrounds” received a weighted mean of 3.67, indicating that teachers encounter difficulties in addressing linguistic diversity within literacy instruction. The indicators “Inadequate training or professional development related to MATATAG early literacy strategies” and “Insufficient time to focus on individualized literacy instruction” both obtained weighted means of 3.63, further suggesting that teachers perceive professional preparedness and time constraints as major barriers in implementing effective literacy instruction.

Additionally, “Limited parental involvement and support in literacy development” and “Difficulty addressing diverse literacy levels within one class” received weighted means of 3.47 and 3.43, respectively, both interpreted as “Agree.” These findings imply that teachers face challenges not only within classroom instruction but also in securing family support and managing learners with varying literacy competencies and developmental readiness.

On the other hand, several indicators were interpreted as “Neutral,” suggesting that while the challenges are present, they may not be consistently experienced across all classroom settings. “Lack of developmentally appropriate learning materials” obtained a weighted mean of 3.40, while “Difficulty in assessing literacy progress due to limited tools” and “Lack of administrative or supervisory support for literacy-focused instruction” both obtained weighted means of 3.33. Meanwhile, “Lack of access to technology and literacy-enhancing resources” received the lowest weighted mean of 3.27. These findings

suggest that although instructional and administrative resources remain concerns, teachers may have developed adaptive strategies or alternative practices to mitigate their impact on literacy instruction. The results indicate that early childhood teachers encounter moderate to high levels of challenges in implementing MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction. The findings further imply that instructional demands, classroom realities, linguistic diversity, and limited professional support continue to influence the effectiveness of literacy instruction within early childhood education settings.

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 Correlation	of p-value	Decision	Remarks
MATATAG Curriculum Implementation and Early Literacy Outcomes	0.676	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 0.676, indicating a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The computed p-value of 0.000 was 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 MATATAG Curriculum implementation and the perceived impact of early literacy instruction on learners.

The strong positive correlation suggests that higher levels of curriculum implementation are associated with more positive literacy outcomes among learners. This implies that when teachers consistently implement developmentally appropriate literacy instruction, utilize relevant instructional materials, and integrate child-centered teaching strategies, learners demonstrate improved oral communication, writing, and reading skills. The findings further indicate that the effectiveness of early literacy instruction is closely linked to the quality and consistency of curriculum implementation within classroom settings.

Moreover, the results suggest that the principles embedded within the MATATAG Curriculum contribute significantly to strengthening foundational literacy competencies among early learners. The strong relationship between curriculum implementation and literacy outcomes highlights the importance of responsive instruction, differentiated teaching practices, and supportive literacy environments in promoting meaningful learner development.

Table 5
Test of Relationship between the Perceived Impact on Early Literacy Outcomes and the Level of Challenges Encountered

Variable	r-value	Strength Correlation	of p-value	Decision	Remarks
Level of Challenges and Oral Communication Skills	0.313	Moderate Positive	0.182	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant

Variable	r-value	Strength Correlation	of p-value	Decision	Remarks
Level of Challenges and Writing Skills	0.339	Moderate Positive	0.224	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Level of Challenges and Reading Skills	-0.135	Weak Negative	0.660	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 relationships existed between the level of challenges encountered and the perceived literacy outcomes in oral communication, writing, and reading skills. Consequently, the null hypothesis was not rejected in all three variables.

Specifically, the relationship between the level of challenges encountered and oral communication skills obtained an r-value of 0.313, indicating a moderate positive correlation, with a p-value of 0.182 interpreted as not significant. This suggests that although teachers experienced instructional and contextual challenges, these difficulties did not significantly affect the perceived development of learners' oral communication skills.

Similarly, the relationship between the level of challenges encountered and writing skills obtained an r-value of 0.339, also interpreted as a moderate positive correlation, with a p-value of 0.224, indicating no significant relationship. This finding implies that the challenges encountered by teachers were not strong enough to substantially influence the development of learners' writing skills.

Meanwhile, the relationship between the level of challenges encountered and reading skills yielded an r-value of -0.135, indicating a weak negative correlation, with a p-value of 0.660 interpreted as not significant. This result suggests that the challenges encountered by teachers had minimal and statistically insignificant influence on learners' reading development.

Overall, the findings indicate that although early childhood teachers encountered several instructional and implementation challenges under the MATATAG Curriculum, these challenges did not significantly hinder the perceived literacy outcomes of learners. The results imply that teachers may have developed adaptive instructional strategies and coping mechanisms that enabled them to sustain literacy instruction despite classroom and systemic difficulties.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study reveal that the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum is extensively implemented in early childhood classrooms, particularly in terms of aligning literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness. This indicates that teachers consistently recognize the importance of developmentally appropriate literacy instruction in fostering foundational language and communication skills among young learners. The high ratings obtained by indicators related to literacy milestones, differentiated instruction, and progressive structuring of reading and writing tasks suggest that teachers are consciously designing literacy experiences that correspond with learners' cognitive, linguistic, and developmental capacities. These findings strongly support Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, which

emphasizes that children learn most effectively when instruction is aligned with their developmental stage and readiness level. The results likewise reinforce the principles embedded within the MATATAG Curriculum and the Early Years Act of 2013 (RA 10410), both of which advocate for developmentally responsive and learner-centered instruction during the formative years of education. The extensive implementation of instructional materials for early literacy further demonstrates that teachers recognize the significant role of instructional resources in strengthening learners' literacy acquisition. The strong rating given to materials that support reading and writing skills suggests that teachers actively utilize literacy resources that enhance phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, comprehension, and early writing abilities. The positive findings regarding culturally relevant and language-appropriate resources also indicate efforts toward contextualized instruction that reflects learners' linguistic and cultural realities. This aligns with Republic Act No. 10533, which emphasizes localized, contextualized, and inclusive education. Moreover, the findings support the assertions of Smith and Brown (2023) and Garcia and Santos (2021), who emphasized that developmentally appropriate and context-sensitive instructional materials significantly contribute to literacy development and learner engagement. However, the comparatively lower ratings related to Mother Tongue materials and print-rich resources suggest that resource limitations remain evident in some classroom settings. While these indicators were still interpreted positively, their relatively lower weighted means may imply challenges in the accessibility, availability, and consistent utilization of localized literacy materials. This finding corroborates the studies of De Nobile et al. (2018) and Alvarado and Bautista (2024), who identified insufficient instructional resources and limited material support as persistent barriers to effective literacy instruction. In multilingual educational settings such as the Philippines, the availability of contextualized and Mother Tongue-based literacy resources remains essential in ensuring meaningful and inclusive literacy development among early learners. Similarly, the findings on the integration of child-centered literacy instruction indicate that teachers frequently employ interactive, participatory, and learner-centered strategies in literacy teaching. The strong implementation of storytelling, role-play, and interactive reading demonstrates teachers' commitment to creating engaging literacy environments that encourage communication, imagination, and active learner participation. These findings strongly align with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction, collaborative learning, and scaffolding in cognitive and literacy development. Through interactive literacy experiences, learners are provided opportunities to construct meaning, develop language skills, and engage in socially mediated learning processes. The findings also support the studies of Johnson and Lee (2023), Santos and Reyes (2022), and Liu and Zhang (2022), which found that collaborative and play-based literacy instruction significantly enhances learners' engagement, comprehension, and communication abilities. Despite these positive findings, the relatively lower ratings on play-based literacy activities and learner choice in literacy tasks suggest that some dimensions of child-centered instruction are not consistently maximized in all classroom settings. These results may reflect practical classroom realities such as limited instructional time, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources, or the pressure to meet curriculum competencies within structured schedules. While teachers recognize the value of learner autonomy and play-based instruction, actual implementation may still be constrained by systemic and contextual factors. This observation is consistent with Fullan's Curriculum Implementation Theory, which posits that successful curriculum reform depends not only on curriculum design but also on teacher readiness, institutional support, professional development, and resource availability. Without adequate support systems, even well-designed educational reforms may encounter implementation gaps at the classroom level. The findings suggest that

the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum has been positively embraced by early childhood teachers and is being translated into classroom practices that support literacy development, developmental responsiveness, and child-centered learning. The extensive implementation across all dimensions reflects teachers' commitment to fostering meaningful literacy experiences among young learners despite existing instructional challenges. Nevertheless, the findings also underscore the need for continuous professional development, strengthened administrative support, and improved access to localized and developmentally appropriate literacy resources to further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction. Ultimately, strengthening the implementation of the curriculum requires a collaborative and systems-based approach that bridges policy expectations with the practical realities of classroom instruction.

The findings of the study demonstrate that the MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction positively influences learners' oral communication, writing, and reading skills, indicating that the curriculum effectively supports foundational literacy development among early learners. The positive ratings across all dimensions suggest that teachers perceive the literacy practices embedded within the MATATAG Curriculum as developmentally appropriate, learner-centered, and supportive of children's cognitive and language growth. Among the literacy domains, oral communication skills obtained the highest overall rating, suggesting that MATATAG-aligned instruction is particularly effective in promoting verbal interaction, participation, and communication confidence among learners. The strong rating for classroom discussions and storytelling activities reflects the curriculum's emphasis on interactive and participatory literacy experiences. These findings strongly support Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that language development occurs through social interaction, collaborative learning, and guided participation. Storytelling, classroom discussions, and verbal exchanges provide learners with opportunities to construct meaning, develop vocabulary, and strengthen communication skills within socially engaging environments. The findings also align with the studies of Johnson and Lee (2023) and Santos and Reyes (2022), which revealed that interactive literacy instruction and collaborative classroom activities significantly improve learners' communication competence and classroom engagement. The findings on writing skills indicate that MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction contributes positively to learners' early writing development, particularly in handwriting, creativity, and basic written expression. Learners' ability to write letters and words legibly suggests that foundational writing skills are being established effectively during the early years of literacy instruction. Moreover, the positive rating on creativity in drawing and labeling reflects the curriculum's integration of expressive and developmentally appropriate literacy activities. These findings support Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, which emphasizes that young children learn through active exploration, symbolic representation, and meaningful interaction with their environment. Literacy activities that combine drawing, labeling, and simple writing tasks help learners gradually transition from symbolic thinking to more structured written communication. However, the comparatively lower ratings related to sentence writing, punctuation, capitalization, and dictated writing indicate that more advanced writing competencies remain challenging for many learners. Early writing development requires sustained scaffolding, repetitive practice, and individualized instructional support, particularly among learners with varying developmental readiness levels. These findings corroborate the observations of Garcia and Santos (2021), who emphasized that literacy instruction must be carefully differentiated to address learners' diverse cognitive and linguistic abilities. The results may also reflect the developmental nature of writing acquisition, where learners gradually progress from basic symbol recognition toward independent written expression. Similarly, the positive

findings on reading skills indicate that the MATATAG Curriculum effectively strengthens learners' foundational reading competencies, particularly letter recognition, picture-word association, and simple word reading. These findings demonstrate that learners are developing essential pre-reading and decoding skills necessary for literacy acquisition. The strong performance in picture-word matching and alphabet recognition aligns with early literacy frameworks emphasizing phonemic awareness, visual recognition, and symbol association as critical building blocks of reading development. Furthermore, the findings support the work of Piasta, Justice, and O'Connell (2020), who argued that early exposure to literacy-rich environments significantly enhances learners' reading readiness and language acquisition. Despite these positive outcomes, comprehension and story-retelling skills obtained comparatively lower ratings, indicating that higher-order literacy skills remain an area requiring continued instructional attention. While learners appear capable of recognizing words and participating in reading activities, deeper comprehension and interpretative skills may still be developing. This suggests that learners may require additional opportunities for guided reading, critical questioning, vocabulary enrichment, and interactive comprehension activities. The findings support the assertions of Neuman and Gambrell (2021), who emphasized that comprehension development requires meaningful interaction with texts, sustained oral language engagement, and active cognitive processing. The overall findings further reinforce Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Fullan's Curriculum Implementation Theory. Literacy development is influenced not only by classroom instruction but also by broader contextual factors such as home literacy exposure, teacher preparedness, instructional resources, and institutional support systems. The positive outcomes observed in the study suggest that teachers are making substantial efforts to implement the goals of the MATATAG Curriculum despite practical instructional challenges. However, the varying levels of literacy development across indicators also imply that continuous teacher training, improved literacy resources, and stronger support mechanisms remain necessary to maximize literacy outcomes among learners. The study highlights that the MATATAG-aligned early literacy instruction contributes positively to learners' literacy development, particularly in oral communication and foundational reading skills. The findings affirm the curriculum's emphasis on child-centered, developmentally responsive, and interactive literacy instruction. Nevertheless, the results also underscore the need for sustained literacy interventions, differentiated instructional strategies, and enhanced support systems to further strengthen learners' writing proficiency, reading comprehension, and higher-order literacy skills during the foundational years of education.

The findings of the study reveal that early childhood teachers experience significant challenges in implementing early literacy instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum. The overall rating of "Agree" indicates that although the curriculum is generally implemented positively, teachers continue to face instructional, contextual, and systemic barriers that affect the delivery of effective literacy instruction. These findings suggest that successful curriculum implementation requires not only curriculum alignment and instructional competence but also adequate institutional support, professional preparation, and manageable classroom conditions. Among the identified challenges, large class sizes emerged as the most prominent concern affecting literacy instruction effectiveness. This finding implies that overcrowded classrooms limit teachers' ability to provide individualized attention, monitor learners' literacy progress, and address diverse developmental and instructional needs. Early literacy instruction often requires close teacher guidance, frequent interaction, and differentiated support, particularly among learners with varying literacy readiness levels. The findings support the observations of De Nobile et al. (2018), who emphasized that classroom overcrowding negatively affects the quality of literacy instruction and learner

engagement. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains that immediate classroom conditions within the microsystem significantly shape learners' educational experiences and developmental outcomes. The findings also indicate that teachers encounter substantial difficulties in implementing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) due to learners' varied linguistic backgrounds. This suggests that language diversity within classrooms creates challenges in selecting instructional approaches, contextualizing literacy materials, and ensuring comprehension among learners. While the MATATAG Curriculum promotes inclusive and contextualized literacy instruction, teachers may struggle to effectively address multilingual realities within resource-constrained educational settings. These findings align with previous studies by Jaca and Lopez-Baroman (2021), which noted that teachers frequently experience difficulties implementing literacy reforms in linguistically diverse classrooms due to limited instructional preparation and inadequate localized resources. Furthermore, inadequate professional development and limited time for individualized instruction were also identified as major challenges. These findings suggest that teachers may require additional training and sustained professional support in implementing MATATAG-aligned literacy strategies effectively. Literacy instruction in early childhood education demands specialized pedagogical skills, differentiated instructional practices, and continuous assessment of learner progress. However, excessive workload, administrative responsibilities, and limited instructional time may reduce teachers' capacity to provide targeted literacy interventions. These findings strongly support Fullan's Curriculum Implementation Theory, which emphasizes that successful curriculum reform depends heavily on teacher readiness, institutional support, and ongoing professional development. Without sufficient training opportunities and administrative assistance, teachers may encounter difficulties translating curriculum expectations into effective classroom practice. The challenge related to limited parental involvement further highlights the importance of family participation in early literacy development. Literacy learning extends beyond classroom instruction and is significantly influenced by home literacy experiences, parental engagement, and learning support within the family environment. The findings corroborate the studies of Allay (2023) and Lindsay et al. (2018), which found that active parental involvement positively influences learners' reading fluency, vocabulary development, and literacy motivation. Conversely, limited family engagement may hinder learners' opportunities for continuous literacy exposure and reinforcement outside the classroom. Moreover, teachers also reported difficulties in addressing diverse literacy levels within one class, suggesting that learner heterogeneity remains a significant instructional concern. Early childhood classrooms often consist of learners with varying cognitive abilities, language proficiencies, developmental readiness, and literacy exposure. As a result, teachers are required to implement differentiated and flexible instructional approaches to accommodate learners' diverse needs. These findings support Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and guided support in addressing individual learning differences. The challenge of differentiation may become more complex in classrooms with limited resources, time constraints, and large learner populations. Interestingly, indicators related to instructional materials, assessment tools, technology access, and administrative support received relatively lower ratings and were interpreted as "Neutral." While these factors remain concerns, the findings may suggest that teachers have developed adaptive instructional practices and coping strategies to manage resource limitations. Nonetheless, the presence of these challenges still indicates the need for improved literacy resources, assessment mechanisms, and stronger supervisory support systems to ensure sustainable and effective curriculum implementation. The findings highlight that the implementation of MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction is influenced by multiple

interconnected factors involving classroom realities, teacher preparedness, learner diversity, family involvement, and institutional support. While teachers demonstrate commitment and adaptability in implementing the curriculum, the identified challenges underscore the importance of strengthening teacher training programs, improving literacy resources, reducing instructional burdens, and enhancing collaborative support among schools, families, and educational stakeholders. Addressing these challenges is essential in ensuring that the goals of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum are fully realized and translated into meaningful literacy outcomes for young learners.

The findings of the study revealed a significant strong positive relationship between the extent of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and the perceived impact on learners' early literacy outcomes. This indicates that effective and consistent implementation of the curriculum contributes substantially to the development of learners' oral communication, writing, and reading skills. The findings imply that the more extensively teachers implement the literacy-related components of the MATATAG Curriculum, the greater the likelihood that learners will demonstrate positive literacy development and improved classroom engagement. The strong positive correlation further emphasizes the critical role of developmentally appropriate and child-centered literacy instruction in enhancing foundational learning outcomes. The MATATAG Curriculum promotes literacy practices that are aligned with learners' developmental readiness, supported by contextualized instructional materials, and delivered through interactive and learner-centered strategies. The significant relationship found in the study suggests that these curriculum components work collectively in strengthening literacy acquisition among early learners. This finding supports Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, which emphasizes that learners develop cognitive and literacy skills more effectively when instruction matches their developmental stage and readiness level. Similarly, the findings strongly align with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the importance of social interaction, scaffolding, and collaborative learning in language and literacy development. Teachers who actively implement storytelling, interactive reading, classroom discussions, and play-based literacy activities create socially engaging learning environments that enhance learners' communication and comprehension skills. The positive literacy outcomes observed in the study suggest that learners benefit from opportunities to interact, express ideas, and participate actively in meaningful literacy experiences. The findings also reinforce Fullan's Curriculum Implementation Theory, which explains that curriculum reforms become effective only when they are implemented consistently and supported by competent and committed teachers. The strong relationship between curriculum implementation and literacy outcomes demonstrates that teachers play a central role in translating curriculum policies into meaningful instructional practices. Effective curriculum implementation requires not only adherence to curriculum standards but also instructional flexibility, differentiated teaching strategies, and responsiveness to learners' diverse literacy needs. The results therefore highlight the importance of teacher preparedness, continuous professional development, and institutional support in ensuring successful literacy instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum. Furthermore, the findings support previous studies emphasizing the influence of curriculum quality and instructional practices on literacy development. Studies by Johnson and Lee (2023), Santos and Reyes (2022), and Neuman and Gambrell (2021) consistently found that learner-centered and interactive literacy instruction significantly improves learners' language acquisition, reading engagement, and communication abilities. Likewise, Piasta, Justice, and O'Connell (2020) emphasized that strong early literacy instruction provides essential foundations for later academic achievement and lifelong learning success. The present findings therefore affirm that the MATATAG Curriculum serves as an effective framework for supporting foundational

literacy development when implemented effectively in classroom settings. The significant relationship between MATATAG Curriculum implementation and early literacy outcomes underscores the importance of sustaining high-quality curriculum delivery in early childhood education. The findings suggest that improving instructional implementation through enhanced teacher support, adequate literacy resources, and strengthened child-centered practices may further improve literacy outcomes among learners. Consequently, educational institutions and policymakers must continue investing in teacher training, curriculum monitoring, and instructional support systems to ensure that the goals of the MATATAG Curriculum are fully realized in promoting foundational literacy development among Filipino learners.

The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between the level of challenges encountered by early childhood teachers and the perceived impact on learners' oral communication, writing, and reading skills. Although teachers reported experiencing moderate levels of instructional and contextual challenges during the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, these challenges did not significantly affect the perceived literacy outcomes among learners. This suggests that teachers were generally able to maintain the effectiveness of literacy instruction despite the presence of implementation difficulties. The non-significant relationship between challenges encountered and oral communication skills indicates that learners continued to demonstrate improvements in participation, classroom interaction, storytelling, and verbal communication even when teachers faced issues related to workload, instructional resources, and classroom diversity. This finding may be attributed to the interactive and socially engaging nature of oral language instruction, which can still be effectively facilitated through classroom discussions, storytelling, peer interaction, and collaborative learning activities. The findings support Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that language development is strengthened through social interaction and guided communication experiences. Even in resource-constrained settings, teachers may still create meaningful verbal interaction opportunities that support learners' oral communication development. Similarly, the findings revealed no significant relationship between the challenges encountered and learners' writing skills. Although writing instruction requires individualized support, repetitive practice, and continuous monitoring, the moderate positive correlation suggests that teachers were still able to facilitate foundational writing development among learners despite instructional constraints. This may indicate teachers' adaptability and commitment to implementing literacy activities that support handwriting, sentence construction, and creative expression. The findings further imply that teachers may have utilized alternative instructional strategies and classroom management approaches to minimize the effects of time limitations, diverse learner needs, and insufficient resources on writing instruction. Meanwhile, the weak negative and non-significant relationship between challenges encountered and reading skills suggests that the identified challenges had minimal influence on learners' reading development. This finding implies that learners continued to develop basic reading competencies such as alphabet recognition, picture-word association, and simple word reading despite classroom and instructional difficulties. The result may reflect the effectiveness of foundational literacy strategies embedded within the MATATAG Curriculum, particularly those focused on interactive reading, phonemic awareness, and contextualized literacy instruction. The findings align with the studies of Piasta, Justice, and O'Connell (2020), who emphasized that consistent literacy exposure and teacher-guided reading activities significantly contribute to early reading acquisition even in challenging educational contexts. The absence of significant relationships across all literacy dimensions may also indicate the resilience, adaptability, and instructional commitment of early childhood teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Despite challenges such as large class sizes, limited instructional materials,

insufficient training, and varied learner readiness levels, teachers may have developed coping strategies that allowed them to sustain literacy instruction effectively. This observation supports Fullan's Curriculum Implementation Theory, which explains that successful curriculum implementation depends not only on the absence of challenges but also on teachers' capacity to adapt, innovate, and respond to classroom realities. Teachers who are committed and resourceful can still achieve meaningful learner outcomes despite systemic and contextual constraints. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the challenges encountered by teachers may not necessarily translate directly into poor literacy outcomes because literacy development is influenced by multiple interconnected factors beyond classroom difficulties alone. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains that literacy acquisition is shaped by interactions among various environmental systems, including home support, peer interaction, school culture, and broader educational policies. Consequently, learners may continue to develop literacy competencies through supportive classroom interactions, parental assistance, peer collaboration, and exposure to literacy-rich environments despite the challenges encountered within instruction. The findings indicate that while early childhood teachers encounter notable challenges in implementing MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction, these difficulties do not significantly diminish the perceived literacy development of learners. The results highlight the dedication and adaptability of teachers in sustaining literacy instruction under varying classroom conditions. Nevertheless, the absence of significant relationships should not diminish the importance of addressing the challenges identified in the study. Continuous professional development, strengthened administrative support, improved instructional resources, and enhanced collaboration among schools and families remain essential in ensuring the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of literacy instruction under the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum was extensively implemented in terms of alignment of literacy competencies with learners' developmental readiness, appropriateness of instructional materials, and integration of child-centered literacy instruction. Early childhood teachers consistently applied developmentally responsive and learner-centered literacy practices that positively contributed to learners' oral communication, writing, and reading development. The findings further revealed that MATATAG-aligned literacy instruction significantly influenced foundational literacy outcomes, particularly in strengthening learners' classroom participation, reading readiness, and early written expression. Although teachers encountered moderate challenges related to large class sizes, multilingual classroom contexts, insufficient professional development, diverse literacy levels, and limited instructional time, these challenges did not significantly hinder learners' literacy outcomes. This suggests that teachers remained adaptive, committed, and capable of sustaining literacy instruction despite instructional and contextual constraints. Moreover, the study established a significant strong positive relationship between the extent of MATATAG Curriculum implementation and learners' early literacy outcomes, indicating that effective and consistent curriculum implementation substantially enhances literacy development among early learners. The findings affirm that the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum serves as an effective and developmentally responsive framework for promoting foundational literacy skills among young learners. However, sustaining its effectiveness requires continuous instructional support, strengthened teacher preparation, improved literacy resources, and collaborative educational efforts that bridge curriculum goals with actual classroom realities.

In light of the findings, it is recommended that schools and educational institutions strengthen the implementation of the K to 3 MATATAG Curriculum through continuous and targeted professional development programs focusing on differentiated literacy instruction, child-centered strategies, multilingual literacy teaching, and developmentally appropriate assessment practices. Teachers should be provided with sustained instructional support, mentoring opportunities, and relevant training to further enhance their competence and confidence in delivering effective early literacy instruction.

Educational administrators and policymakers should also prioritize the provision of developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and print-rich literacy resources, including localized and Mother Tongue-based instructional materials that support meaningful and contextualized literacy learning. Likewise, efforts should be made to address classroom-related challenges such as overcrowding, limited instructional time, and inadequate literacy support systems by strengthening institutional assistance and improving teaching-learning conditions in early childhood classrooms.

Schools are further encouraged to strengthen collaboration among teachers, parents, and communities through literacy-focused programs and home-school partnerships that promote continuous literacy engagement beyond the classroom. Since literacy development is influenced by multiple ecological and social factors, stronger parental involvement and community participation may significantly reinforce learners' reading, writing, and oral communication skills.

Moreover, teachers should continue integrating interactive, collaborative, and play-based literacy activities that encourage learner participation, creativity, and communication confidence. Greater emphasis should also be placed on enhancing learners' writing proficiency, reading comprehension, and higher-order literacy skills through differentiated instruction, guided literacy interventions, and learner-centered classroom experiences.

Finally, future researchers may conduct similar studies involving larger populations, varied educational contexts, and additional variables related to literacy development, teacher readiness, instructional practices, and curriculum effectiveness to further validate and expand the findings of the present study.

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