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The Impact of Teachers' Social Emotional Competency and Reading Pedagogy on the Emergent Literacy of Children in Early Childhood Classrooms

Scholastica Turner-Moore

THE IMPACT OF TEACHERS' SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY AND READING PEDAGOGY ON THE EMERGENT LITERACY OF CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS

DISSERTATION

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Texas Southern University, 2022

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According to the study, teachers' beliefs significantly shape the instructional practices they choose to employ in the classroom. The study's overarching goal was to ascertain whether children's emergent literacy development (ages 3 and 4) is positively influenced by their early childhood teachers' social-emotional instruction, reading pedagogy, phonological awareness activities, and educational qualifications.

This study focuses on early childhood centers across the southeastern jurisdiction of the United States. The researcher selected participants from a comprehensive list of over 2,300 regional non-governmental financed early childhood programs that were publicly available through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), a state-managed database. One hundred seventy-four early childhood teachers participated in the research. Multiple regression statistics were utilized to investigate the predictability of the research hypotheses at the .05 level of significance, with a primary emphasis on four independent variables.

According to the findings of this study, early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices regarding phonological awareness, social-emotional learning, and reading pedagogy improved the emergent literacy development of prekindergarten children (ages 3 and 4) participating in non-government-sponsored childcare centers.

Keywords: Emergent Literacy Development, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Reading Pedagogy

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DEDICATION

My dissertation serves as a memory to my father, Walter Singleton, who reminded me of Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct my path."

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Lucille Singleton, who continues to sacrifice her life to ensure that my siblings, my daughter, my grandson, and I have the self-confidence, wisdom, and resilience to confront life's challenges with boldness.

This dissertation is for my husband, Andre Hawkins Moore, Sr., who has always supported my academic aspirations.

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful daughter Tiffany Monique Turner, who has remained by my side while I climb the academic ladder and is now forging her educational path, having earned bachelor's and master's degrees in Management Information Systems. I am so proud of you!

This dissertation is for my only brother, Roshell Singleton, who is a man of few words but always manages to tell me, "You're my little sister, and I love you."

This dissertation is for my middle sister, Stacy Singleton, who reminds me of encouraging Bible verses at the time of need.

I dedicate my dissertation, in particular, to my elder sister, Ramona Singleton, who has been that steady voice of reasoning. During my academic studies, your words have resonated in my mind, inspiring me to finish the race and to "*dress to the nines*" during the process. You have been my most ardent supporter and having a sister like you is a blessing!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Reading proficiency continues to generate fierce debate because it plays a critical role in the academic achievement of many American children (Fiester, 2010). There is an increasing body of research pointing to gaps in reading performance, with those disparities expanding disproportionately among children who do not have access to high-quality early childhood learning experiences. Early childhood teaching techniques like phonological awareness, social-emotional learning, and reading pedagogy are vital for developing children's emergent literacy skills (Van der Wilt & Van der Veen, 2022). However, studies of methods to improve foundational literacy education in non-government-funded early childhood programs are limited.

This study aims to describe and evaluate innovative techniques for promoting emergent literacy development in non-government-funded programs where subject knowledge experience is neither required, valued, nor rewarded. This chapter discusses the following topics: 1) the study's setting and background; 2) the research problem; 3) the research aims, purposes, questions, relevance, limits; and 4) relevant research.

Background and Context

In the United States, approximately six million preschoolers share a substantial amount of quality time with early childhood teachers, which impacts their acquisition of emergent literacy development and school readiness (Workman & Ullrich, 2017). Particularly, with the 2008 adoption of the Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines and the 2019 ratification of the Science of Teaching Reading (STR) standards, teachers in non-

government-funded early childhood programs have been expected to foster the emergent

literacy abilities of children (Johnson, 2019). According to a study by Clay (2001),

emergent literacy requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing instruction in

phonological awareness, motivation to read, phonemic awareness, rhymes, onsets and

rimes, print awareness, and interactive storybook reading. However, research over the last

two decades demonstrates that social-emotional skills are equally necessary for

developing early literacy skills (Mahoney et al., 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Research demonstrates that teachers' subject-matter knowledge and experience

are vital for supporting children's emergent literacy development (Aldridge, 2019).

Emergent literacy development involves identifying current or potential instructional

deficiencies in early childhood classrooms and providing prekindergarten teachers

with research-based instructional practices to fill these gaps. According to a recent

review of literature, there is a pressing need for additional research on the issue of

enhancing instruction for emergent literacy in non-government-funded early

childhood programs in which prekindergarten teachers' subject matter knowledge and

skill are neither mandated, recognized, nor compensated.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to establish and evaluate whether the social-emotional

competence, phonological awareness instructions, educational qualifications, and reading

pedagogy of early childhood teachers impacted the emerging literacy development of

children ages 3 and 4.

Significance of the Study

   The significance of this study lies in the fact that it will emphasize the importance of emerging literacy and illustrate the current situation with reading readiness. Secondly, this study will improve the public's knowledge of how the absence of emergent literacy development significantly impacts academic performance and lifetime learning. Thirdly, examining the impact of emergent literacy development in early childhood classrooms will assist preschool programs in comprehending implementation challenges and practical approaches. A research analysis will disclose fresh insights into the formation of emergent literacy and reveal additional perspectives that will be essential for future debate and a more in-depth investigation of emergent literacy development.

Research Questions

   The following questions will serve as the basis for this study's investigation:

RQ1: To what degree does a statistically significant relationship exist between teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development?

RQ2: To what degree does a statistically significant relationship exist between teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development?

RQ3: To what degree does a statistically significant relationship exist between teachers' educational attainment and students' emergent literacy development?

RQ4: To what degree does a statistically significant relationship exist between teachers' reading pedagogy and students' emergent literacy development?

Hypotheses

Within the scope of our investigation, we tested and examined the following four null hypotheses:

HO_1: There is no statistically significant relationship between the teacher's phonological awareness beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development.

HO_2: There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' social and emotional beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development.

HO_3: There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' educational attainment and students' emergent literacy development.

HO_4: There is no statistically significant relationship between the teacher's reading pedagogy and the students' emergent literacy development.

Assumptions

This empirical investigation encompasses the following assumptions:

1. The survey findings accurately represent the sincerity of respondents' opinions.

2. The sample is representative of the intended audience.

Delimitations

This investigation identified the subsequent delimitations:

1. The population of this research was restricted to Pre-K teachers located in the southeast region of Texas.

2. The objectives of the research focused on the impact of teachers' beliefs and practices regarding phonological awareness activities, social-emotional

learning, early childhood educational qualifications, and reading pedagogy on students' emergent literacy development.

3. The study focused on self-reported data provided by Pre-K teacher participants.

4. This study's Emergent Literacy Survey comprised 25 questions requiring a broadband connection, iPad, computer, or Smart Phone.

Limitations

The following limitations were observed in this investigation.

1. This study was undertaken following the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Participants submitted the survey during children's naptimes, lunch breaks, and staff meeting break sessions.

Definitions of Variables and Terms

The researcher operationally defined the following critical concepts for clarity and understanding in this study:

Alliteration. Repetition of the first consonant sounds of two or more nearby. For example, the same *b* sound in Billy, Blows, Bubbles or the *k* sound in Kaison is a kindhearted kid.

Early Childhood Teacher. Anyone is teaching children between the ages of 3 and 4 in non-government-funded programs.

Emergent Literacy Development. The period when children (ages 3 and 4) learn the foundational pre-reading skills that prepare them for more advanced reading activities presented in kindergarten.

Government Financed Prekindergarten Programs. Head Start, Early Head Start, and

Title I school district prekindergarten programs that receive federal or state

support to develop components of high-quality learning experiences.

Nongovernment Financed Prekindergarten Programs. Privately owned Early

Childhood Programs that the federal government does not sponsor.

Phonological Awareness Development. Individual names and sounds of the alphabet;

identification of rhyming words, differentiation between the onset and rimes of

terms, print awareness, and storytelling.

Print Awareness. Pictures that children easily identify in their daily surroundings, such

as street signs, the McDonald's logo, or their favorite box of cereal in a grocery

store.

Scaffolding. A way of teaching in which a teacher helps a child learn a new concept and

gradually allows the child to try a task independently.

Science of Teaching Reading (STR). All Pre-K through sixth-grade teachers must pass

the third independent certification exam, proving their understanding of reading

instruction.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). When children learn how to manage their feelings,

achieve personal goals, show empathy towards others, interact with teachers and

classmates, and show the willingness to work through challenging tasks.

Teachers' Education Attainment. The early childhood teacher achieves the highest

level of education.

Teachers' Social-Emotional Beliefs and Practices. Early childhood educators'

implementation of social-emotional instructional practices

Teachers' Reading Pedagogy Beliefs and Practices Early childhood educators believe in their reading instruction preparedness.

<u>Organization of the Study</u>

This empirical investigation has five key chapters. Chapter 1 identifies the rationale regarding the research and consists of 1) the introduction, 2) a statement of the problem, 3) the purpose of the study, 4) the significance of the study, 5) the research questions and hypotheses, 6) variable and keyword descriptions, and 7) the structure of the research. Chapter 2 reviews the professional literature on the variables under investigation. It includes 1) a comprehensive literature review of Vygotsky and Clay's (1978) Theoretical Framework, 2) early childhood education and emergent literacy, 3) emergent literacy key components, 4) social-emotional learning, 5) pedagogical content knowledge, 6) highly qualified early childhood teachers, 7) teachers' social-emotional competence beliefs and practices towards emergent literacy, 8) teacher reading pedagogy beliefs and practices towards emergent literacy, and 9) early childhood teacher education attainment on emergent literacy instructional practices. Chapter 3 examines the study design and methodology, including a description of the population, sampling strategies, the self-designed instrument, instrument validity and reliability, data collection process, research variables, hypotheses, statistical methods, research assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. Chapter 4 includes the statistical analysis, a discussion of the research outcomes, and tabular statistics. Chapter 5 summarizes the study results, the interpretation of findings, the study's conclusion, and proposals for further investigations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research investigates whether early childhood teachers' social-emotional competency and reading pedagogy influence prekindergarten students' emerging literacy development. Research acknowledges that the link between teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices and teachers' reading pedagogy beliefs and practices influences how they foster emergent literacy development. Historical studies indicated that children in prekindergarten classrooms should receive instruction in emerging literacy development (Betts, 1936; Brzeinski, 1967; Dolch, 1951; Durkin, 1964; Keliher, 1960; Kirk, 1940). Studies concluded that academic success and the pursuit of higher education are impossible without the aptitude to read, identify and regulate emotions, resolve conflict successfully, and develop meaningful connections interpersonally (Bodovski & Farkas, 2007; Claessens et al., 2009; Duncan et al., 2007; La Paro & Pianta, 2000; Porta & Ramirez, 2019). However, early childhood educators are not always familiar with research-driven instruction and do not know how to integrate it into classroom experiences. Because of this finding, researchers are now more interested in how teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices and reading pedagogy affect children's early literacy development (Herzfeld-Kamprath & Ullrich, 2016).

A recent study found that teachers with little to no professional experience teach more than 62% of the young students in high-poverty prekindergarten programs that the government does not fund (Herzfeld-Kamprath & Ullrich, 2016). Consequently, most children need access to instructional experiences that would allow them to foster emergent literacy skills and social-emotional abilities (U.S. Department of Education,

2011). Consistent evidence from this research shows that teachers' knowledge and abilities affect how well prekindergarten students learn to read. Nevertheless, more studies must examine how teachers' beliefs and practices impact beginning readers' literacy skills (Herzfeld-Kamprath & Ullrich, 2016). The four fundamental pillars that ground this research are Vygotsky's (1968) and Clay's (1966) theories of social interaction, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), knowing more than others (MKO), and emergent literacy strategies.

Vygotsky's Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky (1978) pioneered an overarching educational theoretical framework that gives a unique insight and practical application for fostering emergent literacy in children ages 3 to 5 through social interactions, as seen in the passage below. It is prudent to apply Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cognitive theory to grasp emergent literacy development. Vygotsky's (1968) theory takes into account the three primary aspects of emergent literacy development: 1) social exchanges between the learner and the teacher, 2) subject-matter knowledge possessed by the teacher, and 3) the developmental appropriateness of the learning experiences provided by the teacher.

Social-Cognitive Perspective in Emergent Literacy

According to Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cognitive theory approach, emergent literacy is acquired directly through social interactions. Vygotsky believed that learning occurs when children and teachers interact socially. Notably, Vygotsky (1978) claimed that engaging in conversation with teachers benefited children's intellectual growth. For instance, the teacher might act as a role model for the preschooler or offer explicit guidance to follow during a task. According to Vygotsky (1978), children increasingly

internalize the procedures they employ in social environments and learn to apply them independently as they mature throughout their academic experiences. Also, through internalization, children can adapt ideas and strategies into distinctive techniques on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, according to Vygotsky (1978), the interactions of adults, educators, and peers profoushapehaped the maturation of a preschooler's mental processes.

More Knowledge than Others in Emergent Literacy

The second essential premise of Vygotsky's theory is that some people have more knowledge than others (MKO) (McLeod, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky defines MKO as someone with more extraordinary ability than the learner in a particular activity, technique, or subject. Regarding emergent literacy development, the teacher should be more knowledgeable than the learner (Vygotsky, 1978). To illustrate, a preschooler may begin an activity with varying degrees of alphabet knowledge. As a direct result of the educator's extensive knowledge of the alphabet, including letter formation, letter sounds, and letters that create words, the student can acquire a deeper understanding of the comprehensive characteristics of letters (Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, when Vygotsky (1968) suggested that teachers should use MKO to increase the degree of competency of their students through the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in Emergent Literacy

The third essential component in Vygotsky's philosophy is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1968). Vygotsky defines ZPD as the range of abilities an individual has to perform a given task with the scaffolding or guidance of someone considered more knowledgeable but cannot yet execute the assignment independently

(Vygotsky, 1968). Scholars label such differences as the gap between current and ideal comprehension. The ZPD is the most challenging instructional approach (Sivan, 1986), given that strategies must be cognitively suitable and correlate to preschoolers' ability level to ensure that children complete tasks during social interactions (Vygotsky, 1968). Building on Vygotsky's (1968) theory, Marie Clay's (1991) emergent literacy theory focuses on the critical importance of teachers encouraging beginning readers while scaffolding.

Marie Clay's Emergent Literacy Theory

Building on Vygotsky's (1968) theory, Clay's (1991) emergent literacy theory emphasizes teachers' critical role in fostering students' literacy and language development through scaffolding. It affirms the need for a well-informed and highly qualified teacher who comprehends and appreciates the intricacies of emergent literacy instruction and can adapt to their student's individual learning needs. Furthermore, Clay (2001) found that the young students she observed frequently read their first books using minimal techniques, often referred to as high-quality prekindergarten dialogues. These low-level tactics include extending a child's response, introducing new words, engaging in activities that encourage retelling stories, explaining narratives in stories, and identifying opportunities to urge children to work through minor prereading challenges.

Additionally, according to Clay (2001), children rely extensively on their auditory memory while reciting phrases or narratives from which they can anticipate a particular consequence. Similarly, Clay (2001) discovered that children grasp concepts important to reading, such as the connections between text and illustration, which is the significance of rereading a child's favorite passage in a story. Prereading behaviors displayed by the

children indicated that they listened carefully to many elements of emergent literacy, including helping readers see what the words described (Clay, 2001). Clay (2001) suggests that preschool teachers can also help readers understand that a particular word can be different from any other words in the text by paying closer attention to the spaces between words and finding one or more words on request. This study will investigate the significance of implementing evidence-based emergent literacy instruction in the context of Vygotsky's (1968) and Clay's (2001) underlying theoretical framework.

Early Childhood Education and Emergent Literacy Development

Meyer (2013) and Spencer et al. (2015) have responded by advancing educational arguments supporting emergent literacy, claiming that many incoming kindergarteners lack critical literacy skills for foundational reading comprehension. Moats (2015) warns that children who are not taught emergent literacy skills during early childhood may face numerous challenges in the future, both academically and socially. Dassa (2016) maintained that reading comprehension exercises are more difficult for children who lack core emergent literacy skills when they enter kindergarten and that these difficulties worsen with time. Additionally, multiple studies (Ansari, 2018; Hogrebe, 2016; Hutton et al., 2021; Valentino, 2018) argued that the negative consequences of emergent literacy development extend beyond kindergarten and that the reading proficiency gap continues to plague the United States with far-reaching and long-lasting repercussions. Children who enter kindergarten without fundamental reading abilities are more likely to struggle and continue to lag behind their peers. A child's early childhood education is paramount for their pre-reading skills and kindergarten readiness (Costantino-Lane, 2019). Additionally, throughout this stage of learning, disparities in literacy and school readiness

are most prominent (Costantino-Lane, 2019). According to Costantino-Lane (2019), when children do not perform well on standardized kindergarten assessments, it is typically because of a lack of developmentally appropriate pre-reading experiences to prepare them for school.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (Snyder et al., 2019) reported that 26 % of fourth graders entitled to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) scored below average compared to those not receiving the NSLP. Remarkably, this performance gap was not significantly different from the 31 points in 1998 (McFarland et al., 2019). The same study shows that children who have problems understanding literature in the third and fourth grades experience an imminent risk of continuing high school (Snyder et al., 2019). Snyder et al. (2019) stated that these results would adversely affect children's future employment, income, and involvement in socioeconomic and political issues.

Despite a concerted effort to increase the difficulty of English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) academic standards, more than 30 % of third graders read below grade level (Gersten et al., 2020; Vaughn et al., 2020). Likewise, 36 % of the same group of fourth graders in the same research had minimum reading skills (White et al., 2021). More egregiously, just 30 % of eighth graders in America passed the National Assessment of Educational Progress (White et al., 2021). According to the same report, minority students from low-income families score considerably below the competency threshold. This trend has continued throughout high school, with just 18% of African American students in the fourth grade, less than 22 % of Latino students in the fourth grade, and less than 21% of students from disadvantaged families in the fourth-grade demonstrating reading proficiency (White et al., 2021). Evidence confirms emergent

literacy's influential role in short-term and long-term academic achievement. Therefore, school districts have attempted to support emergent literacy during early childhood.

Providing prekindergartners with learning opportunities is not enough. A sound theory should support early childhood educators' activities to engage their students (Center, 2020). According to Eden and Ackermann (2018), young children benefit from instructional practices rooted in theoretically grounded principles. Again, Whittingham and Hoffman (2020) report that early childhood teachers benefit from evidence-based theories because the results allow them to predict children's future performance based on this knowledge. In like manner, Rohloff et al. (2022) propose that early childhood teachers consider incorporating visual aids, rhymes, melodies, and stories to help build on the children's existing knowledge and expose them to new concepts. Lesson planning, developmentally appropriate techniques, and activities that support emergent literacy development are additional factors that early childhood teachers should consider (Koniget al., 2020). Another consideration for an early childhood teacher is the prior knowledge, current facts, and anticipated projected understanding of children (Hirsch, 2019). A connection between theoretical practices, school readiness, and academic achievement is also apparent and critical for kindergarten readiness.

Developing emerging literacy abilities is vital for kindergarten readiness (Justice et al., 2019; Herring et al., 2022), which is why multiple researchers expanded on Clay's (1966) work. They asserted that specific early literacy abilities, such as recognition of the alphabet, book concepts, awareness of the written language, and knowledge of letter sounds, are predictive of future reading abilities (Adams, 1991; Albright et al., 2009; Furnes & Samuelsson, 2009; Lonigan et al., 2000; Snow, 2017; Whitehurst & Lonigan,

2001; Xue & Meisels, 2004). Furthermore, Kosanovich and Foorman (2021) argued that arriving at kindergarten equipped to read is linked to preschool emergent literary skills. Kosanovich et al. (2020) highlight that the amount of literacy exposure that child had before arriving determines a child's likelihood of achievement in first grade. The lack of essential reading and writing proficiency profoundly impairs these children in a text-centered culture (Kosanovich et al., 2020). Moriarty (2002) explains that children who do not grow sufficiently in emergent literacy during their preschool years underperform throughout their academic years and lag behind their peers by two years. Research establishes this to be true for all children, especially students from poor communities, leading to attempts to "close the gap" in reading proficiency (Kosanovich et al., 2020). Despite significantly affecting students' progress in these areas, many early childhood teachers are severely unprepared to encourage young children's emerging literacy development.

To elaborate, as children develop their reading skills, they should progress according to typical patterns for their age. Before a child's admission into a formal school environment, it is beneficial to get a sense of where they are on various developmental measures to determine what kind of assistance they may require (Blackwell, 2015). According to Blackwell (2015), for children to succeed in an academic environment, they must have a strong foundation in the following areas: letter-sound comprehension, word recognition, descriptive storytelling, letter awareness, and penmanship. Furthermore, teachers should nurture their genuine interest and aptitude for literacy. The author emphasizes that before children enter kindergarten, educators must comprehend these needs, evaluate the areas where children may require assistance, and use the most

effective techniques to provide support (Blackwell, 2015). Given the criticality of emergent literacy development based on sound theory, kindergarten preparation, and subsequent educational achievement, understanding the key components that contribute to it is essential.

Emergent Literacy Key Components

Phonological Awareness. Phonological awareness is the earliest historical and essential component contributing to the emergence of literacy (Catts, 1999).

What exactly is meant by phonological awareness? Awareness of phonology involves more than just individual sounds or phonemes; it also encompasses syllables, rhyme, and onset/rime relationships (Pfost et al., 2019). How sounds and phonemes might operate to form the constituent parts of words accomplishes this. The term phonological knowledge is the ability to comprehend what others are communicating patterns in the English vernacular (Ciesielski & Creaghead, 2020), as well as the capacity to detect and change the proper form of speech (McBride-Chang et al., 1997; Wagner & Torgesen, 1987). Additionally, phonological awareness is characterized by omitting, adding, combining, flipping, and separating a word's syllables and phonemes. It is characterized by splitting its beginning, middle, or ending sounds or phonemes and even certain perceptions or the intricacy concerning rhymes (Zajacova, 2019).

Scholars (Brady, 2020; Wagner and Torgesen, 1987) suggested that phonological awareness develops throughout the early years as youngsters increasingly pay attention to the individual units of words, identifying syllables until the introduction of the onset or rhyme, and recognizing or managing individual phonemes among phrases. Monaghan and Fletcher (2019) expanded the hypothesis and revealed that phonological knowledge

comprises syllable patterns, rhyme patterns, and onset and rime patterns. Scholars (Lonigan et al., 1998; O'Brien et al., 2018) agree that phonological knowledge emphasizes different tiers of phonemes. Similarly, phonological recognition occurs when a child can differentiate as well as articulate specific sounds. Moreover, it relates to the theory that words and syllables are created by stringing together distinct sounds produced by the human voice.

The concept known as phonological awareness encompasses the abilities that include listening, disassembling phrases, disassembling syllables, disassembling onset-rime, disassembling phonemes, and reassembling them as disassembling, reassembling, and modifying phonemes (Choi & Shukla, 2021). Holm et al. (2022) agreed that this involves splitting each phoneme into parts to understand phonological awareness s with the sound /c/, which one may modify into numerous words by adding or removing phonemes (Holm et al., 2022). Bat, for example, is the consequence of converting the /c/ in cat to a /b/ (Holm et al., 2022). Recognizing and using phonological patterns emerges due to interconnected skills. Phonological awareness focuses on altering bigger units of sound, and as it progresses, it encompasses smaller units (Grofková & Máajová, 2021; Mihai et al., 2015). Notably, the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) identified six significant features that serve as the foundation of the continuum (2002). Researchers have studied the most effective methods for teaching literacy for years (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1967; Flesch, 1955; Marrow & Gambrell, 2011). Understanding how children acquire their phonological awareness is crucial since this is a significant indicator of future reading ability (Castles & Coltheart, 2004). However, studies on the development of phonemic recognition, or the ability to focus on and transform phonemes in speech,

notably during prekindergarten, have shown that this ability is not fully developed (Ehri et al., 2001).

Furthermore, according to Ciesielski and Creaghead (2020), phonological awareness encompasses the exact names and sounds of the alphabet, identification of rhyming words; differentiation between the onset and rimes of terms; print awareness; and storytelling. According to the National Institute for Literacy (2008), an increased level of phonological recognition is a strong indicator of future reading performance. According to a study, students in the United States lag behind their international classmates when it comes to reading comprehension (Jones et al., 2019). Multiple studies (Morrow and Gambrell, 2016; Pressley and Allington, 2014; Rachman, 2020) indicate that educators have substantially lowered illiteracy by ensuring that their lesson plans include all components of reading acquisition and phonological awareness. According to scholars (Reutzel, 2015; Snow et al., 1998), phonological awareness is the capacity to recognize, respond, and exercise control over the many speech patterns of the English language. According to Carson et al. (2013), phonological awareness is the foundation for one's ability to decode. To achieve a competitive advantage in reading and writing in the years to come, it is essential to develop emergent literacy skills such as phonological awareness (Kibbe et al., 2016; Neuman & Roskos, 1998).

Motivation to Read. The second essential component of emergent literacy development is the motivation to read (Erickson & Wharton-McDonald, 2019). Reading is a skill that requires a child to grasp the essential functions of a book thoroughly and comprehend its content, so the early childhood classroom should assess indicators of print knowledge (Curenton et al., 2013; Gardner-Nerblett & Iruka, 2015). According to

Gardner-Nerblett and Iruka (2015), evaluating children's understanding of print knowledge is to identify what young learners know about the structure of a printed text and its significance to their diverse skills, interests, experiences, and culture. Gardner-Nerblett and Iruka (2015) elaborate on the measures designed to determine whether or not a child can distinguish between the parts of a book, the directionality of text on a page, and the significance that print serves as a method of information sharing. Research indicates that a lack of knowledge of the fundamental principles behind print may cause children to struggle as readers (Jean & Fuchs, 2018). Thus, Curenton et al., 2013; Nevo and Gambrell, 2019), and Gardner-Nerblett & Iruka (2015) strongly encourage promoting and assessing print knowledge as central to the best techniques of strong early childhood teachers.

Phonemic Awareness. The third essential component that contributes to emergent literacy development is phonemic awareness. Campbell (2020) explains the third important component of emergent literacy development in her publication: phonology. Phonology aims to help young learners acquire a working knowledge of the methodological formularized correlation among the names and pronunciation of alphabets. The author defines the method and formularized correlation between the characteristics of the alphabet, which originates from the perspective that words are composed of alphabets (graphemes), representing the auditory cues of speech (phonemes). Furthermore, Campbell (2020) asserted that English is an alphabetic language, and the capacity to interpret it is critical for success in subsequent literacy.

Campbell (2020) suggests phonology is especially advantageous to preschoolers and is a significant determinant of reading comprehension and future reading

achievement. Additionally, Monaghan and Fletcher (2019) showed that blending letter perceptiveness (knowing alphabet properties and specifications of alphabets and sounds) and phonological awareness instruction may lead to early literacy advancement (Brady, 2020; Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013). Phonology awareness is especially advantageous for preschoolers and significantly predicts decoding and subsequent reading performance. Phonological awareness teaching may develop reading comprehension by combining phonological awareness instruction with letter awareness (learning primary names, features, and descriptions of letters and sounds) (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013; Zajacova, 2019).

Rhyming Words Knowledge. The fourth essential component that contributes to emergent literacy development is rhyme. In their study, Felt (2019) emphasized the fourth important component of emergent literacy development: the advantages of exposing young learners to rhyming words. Septiani and Syaodih (2021) maintained the style of meaningful poetry, a sing-along, or a humorous narrative about a little girl who walks to town upside-down; rhyming is a fundamental factor that increases emergent literacy knowledge. Long and Mustafa (2020) said that rhyming is a fun way to write that makes reading more exciting and fun. Meacham et al. (2019) stated that it also helps young children learn phonemic awareness and speaking skills. After preschoolers learn to rhyme, they can separate sentences into individual components, equivalent to jigsaw puzzles, and connect them, such as ice and cream (Meacham et al., 2019).

By further examination, Felt (2019) stated that children learn to partition words into phonemes as a potential contributing factor to rhyming in books, accelerating overall phonological awareness and comprehension capabilities. As an illustration, Felt (2019)

references Dr. Seuss as an author whose books are directly associated with a great deal of rhyme. Felt (2019) noted that Suess's unique style had persisted because children like reading tales that use rhythmic patterns and phonological material, such as syllables, stresses, and grouping words into phrases. "It's a pretty good zoo, said young Gerald McGrew, and the fellow who runs it seems proud of it, too," said Felt (2019), which aids young learners in comprehending and concentrating on language skills. Also, rhythmic patterns teach young people to notice small changes in intonation and rhythm, which are essential parts of reading aloud (Felt, 2019).

Lastly, Felt (2019) highlighted the impact of rhyming stories, such as Dr. Seuss, locally and worldwide to further understand the role of rhymes and reading comprehension. The author acknowledges that over the past 30 years, Dr. Suess' rhyming books have held fast to maintaining the core of rhyming and strengthening such an approach to branching out into other themes. For example, cultural diversity, individuality, class, and racial acceptance are addressed in books including Happy in Our Learning Skin by Fran Manushkin and This Jazz Man by Karen Ehrhardt. Similarly, Learning Liftoff (2015) re-emphasized that teaching young learners to rhyme is undoubtedly not a pointless activity. Several studies by Fitzroy and Breen (2020); Schachter and Justice (2020) have shown, for example, that phonological awareness and the interpretation of rhymes remain powerful indicators of students' reading comprehension (Fitzroy & Breen, 2020). Second, rhymes will give youngsters essential linguistic skills, such as repeating and tempo, to help them improve their language abilities. Rhyming is an integral part of early education, with many advantages over the long run (McKenzie, 2021).

Onset and Rime Knowledge. The study results show that children participating in programs of higher quality are better equipped for reading instruction because they understand the value of exposure to print (Invernizzi et al., 2010). In contrast, children who do not participate in a formal program throughout their formative years do not have this advantage (Invernizzi et al., 2010). For a traditional preschool program to be successful, the authors assert that teachers should provide their students with developmentally appropriate yet challenging speech development activities and literacy content.

Similarly, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) found that emergent literacy requires familiarity with printed materials. The authors refer to print knowledge as young learners' beginning comprehension of print's appearances, properties, and functions (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). In other words, it is a deeper awareness of the value and relevance of books, and print is also part of what is meant by the phrase print knowledge. This includes recognizing that printed words communicate meaning and that such printed words, stored in repositories such as books, are tools humans use for knowledge acquisition and entertainment (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

 Furthermore, Adams (1990) highlighted that the knowledge of print concepts indicates a child's growing understanding that print is systematic, has its own rules, and is separate from other visual features, such as images. The child's ability to read and write reflects this understanding (Adams, 1990). Thus, exposure to a range of printed materials provides children with the opportunity and experience to improve their reading abilities (Adams, 1990).

Lastly, the knowledge of print that children typically hold includes their capacity to comprehend how books function, their familiarity with how text is formatted inside a book, and their understanding of the various types of print that make up the pages of a book (Murdoch et al., 2021). Examining preschoolers' print knowledge as part of developmentally appropriate practice in the classroom is critical (Murdoch et al., 2021).

Interactive Storybook Reading. The eighth essential component of emergent literacy development is interactive read-aloud. One practice believed to develop emergent literacy is interactive read-aloud or interactive storybook reading (Massaro, 2016). Massaro (2016) suggested that in an interactive storybook reading, the teacher reads a tale aloud and discusses its leading ideas and vocabulary with students, incorporating general questions into the student response and teacher affirmation of student understanding. Furthermore, Pollard-Durodola et al. (2015) found that direct involvement in sharing and exploring stories, characters, occurrences, and jargon improved young people's knowledge of their society. According to Pollard-Durodola et al. (2015), engaging storytelling is a critical element of classroom emergent literacy practices directed at building emergent literacy and helping children develop the skills they need for successful kindergarten entry.

Also, during an interactive storybook reading, the teacher reads a tale aloud and discusses its leading ideas and terminology, incorporating as well as incorporating general questions in the process of response and affirmation. Pollard-Durodola et al. (2015) argued that identifying characters, recounting experiences, and acquiring new terminology are the most appropriate instructional methods for preschoolers about their culture. Furthermore, the authors highlighted the significance of engaging children in

storytelling during literacy instruction because it builds communication skills and print awareness (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2015). Similarly, Leech et al. (2013) stated that one should not overlook the influence of using specific words and phrases of language to tell a story. According to Leech et al. (2013), storytelling might be regarded as a "gateway to reading and writing" since it demands children to acquire language skills through decontextualized emergent literacy instruction. Researchers (Leech et al., 2013; Rhirsh-Pasek et al., 2005) agree that providing young learners with simple explanations, basic definitions of words, and predictive questions can aid in narrative development.

Secondly, according to Dickinson and McCabe (1991), literacy is based on specific requisite skills, such as summarizing a story by separating it into an opening passage, body, and conclusion. Students can apply this knowledge of the parts of a story as students create their narratives. This practice offers children the optimum circumstances for learning and enhancing communication skills. Miles and Chapman (2002) found that children who can successfully recount events in a story have more advanced emergent literacy comprehension than those who cannot. In addition, Peterson and McCabe (1997) contended that reading is more difficult for children whose stories do not include appropriate progression than for children whose descriptions have a logical progression. These studies point to the centrality of narrative development in emergent literacy.

Third, other scholars have examined ways to promote and assess storytelling development. According to Feagan (1982), the ability to repeat the logical sequence of a comprehensible story should be considered the first step in the learning-to-read process and is a strong indicator of academic achievement success in literacy proficiency. Burns

et al. (1999) and Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) demonstrated that recognizing logical sequences of events in stories is an essential component of reading proficiency. These studies point to the need for early childhood instructional practices centered around helping children sequence story events as part of broader practices to develop emergent literacy.

An assessment of storytelling is also crucial, and preschool teachers must evaluate young learners' storytelling abilities because they offer a large quantity of information concerning a youngster's capacity to engage during spoken language and to read and write (Chaney 1998; Paris & Paris 2003). More recently, Heppner (2014; 2016) noted that assessing the extent of children's storytelling comprehension can provide preschool teachers with relevant data that is directly applicable to their instruction. Statistical information can track and determine the emergence and advancement of a young learner's storytelling conceptual understanding. Heppner's (2016) storytelling interpretation may be a universal aspect of early literacy and broader intellectual abilities, a central skill for ongoing formative assessment. Over the last two decades, research produced evidence that social learning is related to academic achievement (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). Nonetheless, the COVID-19 epidemic has highlighted the necessity of including social-emotional development to enhance emergent literacy more than ever.

Social Emotional Learning

For over two decades, prekindergartners' social and emotional growth was and still is a central topic for early childhood practitioners and researchers. After years of investigation, research shows that self-consciousness, self-control, human empathy, people skills, and rational decision-making are among the most widely acknowledged

relational attributes contributing to social-emotional development (CASEL, 2020). Zins et al. (2004) and CASEL (2010) found that many complexities of human survival depend on these personal characteristics because they are the ideal qualities (Durlak et al., 2011) that promote psychological well-being. Additionally, developing social-emotional competency includes recognizing and responding to one's feelings, intellectual reasoning, behavioral response, physical development, expressive health, and academic achievement (CASEL, 2020). Multiple studies (Claessens et al., 2009; Clarke & Lovewell, 2021; La Paro & Pianta, 2000; Morgan et al., 2016; Trentacosta & Izard, 2007) have found a link between academic success and social-emotional skills. The research conducted by Jones et al. (2017), social-emotional competencies, such as behavior control, emotional control, the establishment of positive relationships with others, and social awareness skills, are significant predictors of academic achievement and future success, such as completing secondary school, obtaining a college degree, and securing meaningful employment,

Expanding on previous studies, Clarke and Lovewell (2021) explained that elementary school students must have self-confidence, tenacity, the ability to participate in dialogue and establish rapport with teachers and peers, and the emergent literacy proficiencies necessary before entering primary education. Likewise, Sheridan et al. (2009) suggest that early childhood educators' education attainment, key competencies, and teaching quality significantly impact young learners' elementary preparedness and future scholastic accomplishment throughout their primary years and beyond. Similarly, according to longitudinal data by Jones et al. (2017), social-emotional learning in early childhood is associated with improved adult emotional stability, health, associations, and professional gratification and a decreased likelihood of communal violence. Furthermore,

studies report that social-emotional learning is strongly related to future outcomes. Studies by O'Connor et al. (2018) and Shonkof (2010) showed that the intellectual and social-emotional skills children learn during their formative years are the building blocks for a successful and meaningful life. When social-emotional education is provided throughout the early stages of child development, Jones et al. (2015) discovered a connection between social-emotional growth, improved emotional stability, better health, satisfying friendships, career fulfillment, and decreased community violence.

Oyserman and Lewis, 2017; Pianta, 2016; Raver and Knitzer, 2002; Sawhill and Karpilow, 2014) have acted by expanding educational methods to social-emotional development. Children's development studies (Osher et al., 2017; Sorensen et al., 2016) also reveal that emergent literacy influences every facet of a child's intellectual and emotional progress (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). According to Jones and Kahn (2017), to experience academic learning and thrive in school, all children must learn to manage their emotions and cooperate with others. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016), social-emotional skills may be fostered by providing children with chances for dramatic play; children learn how to form constructive interactions with others, convey their feelings, and build rapport. Spencer et al. (2015) observed that although the vast majority of preschoolers acquire the building blocks of emergent literacy without difficulty, many young learners struggle to develop social-emotional skills attributable to reasons beyond their control. Learning to read may be incredibly challenging for students who struggle with social-emotional learning, such as comparing themselves with others, positive peer interactions, active listening, and perseverance when difficulties arise (Shala, 2013).

Furthermore, Gomez and Strasser (2021) concur that engaging in meaningful dialogues with young children is advantageous to their psychological and social development. According to the article's content, when children took turns talking, it accelerated their confidence to connect socially and emotionally with others (Gomez & Strasser, 2021). Additionally, Uyar et al. (2018) found that a lack of social-emotional abilities leads to an inability to deal with frustrations and fears, which could also hinder a child's learning capacity. In the existing literature, Denham (2018) found that a child's inability to demonstrate compassion may impede their ability to concentrate on schoolwork. Similarly, Spencer et al. (2015) revealed that a lack of expressive language skills limits a child's capacity to manage emotional reactions during parallel play, cooperative learning, and problem-solving. Preschoolers with social-emotional difficulties remain prioritized, averaging between 9 and 14 percent. Henceforth, one-third of preschoolers from lower socioeconomic households suffer from expressive (Bierman et al., 2008) along with behavioral conditions (Cooper et al., 2009; Kaiser et al., 2000. To achieve in school and prosper in life, every child must be able to govern their reactions and make ethical judgments, despite facing unfavorable circumstances. Therefore, educational scholars have reacted by enhancing the instructional approach to focus on the family.

Families and communities face adversities that affect social-emotional development. For instance, minority children and those disproportionately affected have a greater risk of behavioral difficulties than their white counterparts and thus need social-emotional learning opportunities. Suppose children are exposed to adult substance addiction (Bierman et al., 2008) and family abuse (Cooper et al., 2009), such as

maternal depression. In that case, they have a higher chance of experiencing social-emotional delays and temperamental problems (Kaiser et al., 2000). Furthermore, monetary insecurity, unpredictable living, and neighborhood violence pose enormous hurdles for children to create a stable academic trajectory and strong social interactions (Jones et al., 2015). Moreover, children exposed to overwhelming adversity without a supportive approach from a more experienced teacher may develop symptoms of emotional trauma (Frey et al., 2019). Their incapacitation to focus and avoidance of social interactions inhibits their potential to participate in school (Berman et al. 20,18). Nonetheless, Scott et al. (2014) indicated that homeless children in the state's foster care program are among the most vulnerable individuals and will face more scholastic difficulties. The National Conference of State Legislators (2022), roughly 80 % of kids in protective custody younger than six years have a substantial need for help with their mental and behavioral disorders compared to the typical child. Children of this age group must be provided with highly qualified teachers before kindergarten.

Attracting educated and competent teachers have traditionally proven problematic due to the restricted finances of privately owned preschool programs (Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1989). inadequate state-regulated program requirements, citing the wide disparities in kindergarten readiness afforded to children enrolled in non-government-funded programs. According to Feldman and Eidelman (2009), ensuring that all children may participate in preschool programs of the highest caliber minimizes socioeconomic disparities and benefits families and stakeholders. According to the National Academies Press (2000), preschool is essential for preparing for elementary, reading proficiency, and future scholastic success. Likewise, early childhood constitutes a crucial phase of

cognitive growth and development (Douglas et al., 2018). Multiple studies (Washington: Washington Center for Equitable Growth, 2016; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012; Shonkoff, 2016; Duncan et al., 2010; Duncan et al., 2020) concurred that missed opportunities of learning during preschool have life-long repercussions, such as an inability to read, develop social skills to self-regulate, and positively interact with others.

Realizing the promise of early childhood education is laden with obstacles (Osher, 2015). Unfortunately, many inner-city households are constrained financially and lack access to high-quality prekindergarten programs (Jessen-Howard et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2016; National Survey of Early Care and Education, 2016; Phillips & Adams, 2001). Approximately 10% of a family's total income is allocated toward the expense of childcare. Lower-income families, on the other hand, spend 30% more than those in middle-class households (Laughlin, 2013). And only a limited portion of households are eligible to participate in Head Start programs (Morrissey, 2020). Without highly qualified, competent, and knowledgeable early childhood teachers, this would be impossible.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Shulman's (1987) study regarding pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) asserts that well-qualified early childhood educators are effective teachers because they thoroughly comprehend the subject matter and can communicate it to their students. Shulman's (1987) philosophy on the subject is well-known as a framework for instructional strategies that effectively incorporate hands-on learning and enhance students' conceptual understanding. According to Shulman (1987), PCK is a unique combination of subject knowledge and instruction to which educators add their

personalized approach to engage students. In particular, as Shulman (1987) acknowledged, the relevance of PCK is the one quality that distinguishes a person with content knowledge from an educator who is prepared to assist students in grasping, discerning, and interpreting new information. The most exciting foundational underpinning of PCK is its capacity to teach knowledge to students. For example, to help children comprehend, teachers may employ various PCK instructional strategies to improve their explanations, such as creating classroom demonstrations and connecting to the students' experiences. Also, a teacher who understands the true purpose of PCK recognizes the difference between hands-on learning experiences and classroom lectures. Even more impressive is that PCK supports emergent literacy development.

Previous research (Lannin et al., 2013; Park et al., 2011; Yurdakal et al., 2012) has shown that PCK is a supremely efficient method for fostering preschoolers' emerging literacy skills. PCK depends on a teacher's topic expertise, instructional tactics, degree of classroom experience, and demographics of their students. Despite the rising recognition of the importance of early reading instruction for preschoolers, the evidence suggests that preschool teachers often lack the skills required to implement this fundamental literacy stage. One of the primary reasons is that early childhood educators often overestimate their abilities, which may be a barrier to developing new informational expertise. Experts in early childhood education recommend integrating emergent literacy professional development grounded in research with an explanation of its significance and practical classroom strategies throughout preschool.

The journey toward reading starts before children enter kindergarten and use crayons, notepads, and workbooks. Regrettably, disadvantaged preschoolers lack equal

access to pre-reading education throughout their formative stage of development.

Clingenpeel and Pianta, 2007; Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Hart and Risley, 1992;

Sénéchal and LeFevre, 2002) have found that the inability to acquire reading resources

might hinder young learners' vocabulary growth and social interactions in both the

classroom and the home. Locally, discrepancies exist regarding access to different

recreational and instructional reading opportunities. Specifically, the number of

bookstores and the kind of neighborhood images preschoolers encounter in their

respective communities (Constantino, 2005; Duke, 2000; Neuman & Celano, 2001).

Historical data from the National Research Council (2001) show a positive

correlation between reading pedagogy and kindergarten reading readiness (Scarborough,

1998). Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) conclude that research-based reading instruction

for young children is critical for preparing them for kindergarten and future academic

success. Vernon-Feagans et al. (2019) observed that children who do not make significant

development in emergent literacy throughout their preschool years do poorly throughout

their academic years and are two years behind their classmates, thereby marginalizing

them in a literate society. While early childhood teachers may significantly influence

their students' literacy development, many lack the training necessary (Handover, 2016).

The overall objective of emergent is to instill in preschoolers the habit of reading (Moats,

2019). Because it influences a child's overall academic success and links to their

intellectual, emotional, and physical well-being, reading is the most studied component of

human cognition (Moats, 2019). The scientific community has reached a consensus on

reducing the number of children having difficulty reading by addressing the following

questions: 1) when do children have problems reading, and why? 2) what makes reading

instruction more successful and why, and 3) how to decrease the prevalence of children experiencing reading challenges. Moat (2019) asserts that after twenty years and hundreds of studies, efforts to raise reading levels, especially among underprivileged youth, have been strengthened and solidified. However, Moats (2019) has reservations regarding the preparedness of prekindergarten teachers. The absence of prekindergarten professional development, empirically driven prekindergarten curriculum and teacher educational attainment in a significant portion of the research is most disturbing to Moats (2019). Thus, it is unsurprising that practices in early childhood classrooms differ from what most credible sources propose. As a result, low-income children do not acquire emergent literacy or kindergarten-ready abilities and experience future academic hurdles (Moats, 2019).

According to the 2015 ACT College and Career Preparation Assessment, approximately 26% of U.S. high school seniors domestically have the aptitude, knowledge, and proficiency in English, reading, mathematics, and science required for college success. Additionally, one out of every three students did not reach any of the requirements, accounting for 34% of those who did not meet any of the standards (Dashboard, 2016), nor did they possess essential social-emotional skills. According to the same study, despite the increased need for educators to promote emergent literacy, social-emotional development is another ability that should be developed throughout preschool because it influences students' success both in and out of the classroom. According to Austin et al. (2019), early childhood instructors must acquire knowledge and abilities to prepare preschoolers for 21st-century learning, such as emergent literacy development and social-emotional learning.

Highly Qualified Early Childhood Teachers

According to Austin et al. (2019), it is easy to underestimate the significance of a preschool educator's qualifications regarding the knowledge and abilities required to increase children's socio-emotional and emerging literacy skills, which are necessary to address 21st-century societal challenges. Every year, roughly 62% of prekindergarten children eligible for prekindergarten attend some form of a preschool program (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The research conducted by Manning et al. (2017) noted that children from underprivileged households are rarely ready for kindergarten if their teachers lack the appropriate qualifications to educate young children. Also, the U.S. Department of Education said in 2011 that teachers at these schools often do not have access to essential teaching materials that could help them support their students' emerging literacy and social-emotional learning outcomes. Thus, early childhood educators may have a detrimental influence on the emergent literacy abilities of their students. Nevertheless, most of them need more skills to adequately execute this task (Manning et al., 2017).

In America, however, the quality and standards of prekindergarten preparation differ when comparing the credentialing of teachers employed in nongovernment-sponsored childcare programs to those teaching in school districts. Specifically, the National Accreditation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is the maximum requirement in educational standards (NBPTS, 2022). Also, the NBPTS has campaigned for quality education for more than 30 years. To get certification to teach pupils in pre-school through third grade, an individual must demonstrate that they have met all of the standards by the NBPTS (2022).

1. Have a degree earned in a four-year degree from a college or university.

2. Pass the state-mandated TExES #292 Early Childhood: PK-3 test.

3. Pass the state-mandated TExES #293 Science of Teaching Reading exam.

4. Pass the state-mandated TExES #160 Pedagogy and Professional

 Responsibilities (PPR) exam or the edTPA: Early Childhood Education exam.

In contrast to school districts, the Child Development Associate (CDA) qualification is the only recommendation for non-district early childhood teachers. Child Development Associate (CDA) is the sole certification recommended for non-district early childhood educators (Texas Education Agency, 2019). The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is the only notable entry-level certificate that serves as a crucial stepping stone for beginning a career in early childhood.

The Council for Professional Recognition (CFPR) is a forerunner in ensuring that early childhood teachers meet the minimum suggested requirements. Obtaining a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate is the most convenient and least expensive method to improve preschool learning and support. A CDA may be helpful in Texas if someone desires to work as a lead childcare teacher or establish their own registered childcare business. To obtain a CDA, candidates must: 1) complete 480 hours of age-related employment and 120 hours of CDA professional development sessions; 2) pass the Pearson VUE Child Development Associate Certificate exam at a designated testing location; 3) complete their classroom demonstration; and 4) collect the required CDA professional portfolio documents (Council for Professional Recognition, 2022). According to the Council for Professional Recognition (2022), the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential has a foundational set of six competence criteria that help

early childhood educators become competent teachers of young children. The six competency requirements are:

1. Creating and sustaining a secure community of learners,

2. Increasing motor and cognitive skills,

3. Promoting health and well-being and offering positive guidance,

4. Delivering constructive feedback,

5. Developing pleasant and fruitful interactions with families, and

6. To continue to provide ethical and moral standards.

Despite the issuance of roughly 800,000 CDA credentials over the past 45 years, the preparation of prekindergarten educators has yet to improve. According to Palmer (2019), the lack of improvement may be due to the apparent lack of state-mandated certification requirements for non-government-funded early childhood educators, despite evidence indicating that prekindergarten teachers are expected to establish preschoolers' pre-reading development and social-emotional learning.

Additionally, the Bureau of the Census (2011) also focused on the qualifications of early childhood educators and how children were prepared for kindergarten. There are a projected 2.3 million preschoolers in Texas between birth and age six, with 60% of their parents needing their children to attend an early childhood program (Bureau of the Census, American Fact Finder, 2016). Still, experts (Piaste et al., 2020) have found that about 60% of all preschoolers are taught by teachers who are not qualified. Piaste et al. (2020) found in their ground-breaking study that two-thirds of children who begin kindergarten without basic reading skills struggle to read by the fourth grade.

Preschoolers' early reading abilities are one of the most significant indicators of their readiness for kindergarten and future academic success (Piaste et al., 2020).

Generally, highly qualified early childhood educators have more education than less qualified instructors. These educators often have postgraduate degrees in early childhood development and, as a result, have a deeper grasp of developmentally appropriate educational approaches for preschoolers. Researchers and politicians have expressed concerns about the vast range of educational services offered to preschoolers since the academic readiness of preschoolers is closely related to their teachers' level of education and competence. Child Care Aware of America (2013) contended that access to exceptional teacher preparedness is essential for enhancing several critical early childhood education outcomes. This high quality ensures that teachers are well-equipped to perform their crucial instructional duties. Secondly, this quality entails improving the reputation of the prekindergarten teaching profession in Texas by providing that all teachers have the qualifications required to prepare Texas' youngest students for kindergarten. Third, high quality gives teachers more valuable skills for teaching young children in the 21st century.

Although Texas obligates teachers in school districts to obtain a prekindergarten certification and acquire supplemental credentials (Texas Education Agency, 2019), this is not the case for childcare teachers. Inconsistent training and licensing criteria for early childhood teachers in privately financed childcare centers contribute to preschoolers' lack of reading readiness and social-emotional skills. The teachers' educational attainment, total years working with preschoolers, and content knowledge vary significantly depending on childcare centers' geographic location and social-economic class (Child

Care Aware of America, 2013). The Center for American Progress (2016) argues that all children, especially low-income minority children, benefit considerably from having teachers with advanced degrees, particularly in pre-reading and social-emotional development (Piasta et al., 2020). Moreover, Burchinal et al. (2016) suggest reviving attempts to enhance the qualifying status of privately owned preschool centers because it is challenging to compensate highly qualified early childhood teachers (Whitebook, McLean, & Austin, 2016).

Prekindergarten Funding

Implementing early learning programs and services is impacted by state, federal, and municipal financial sources (see Figure 1). Slutzky and DeBruin-Parecki (2019) recognize the need for more early childhood education funding. District prekindergarten qualifies for federal funds under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the National School Lunch Program, and the National School Breakfast Program relative to other programs (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019). In addition, the Foundation School Programs, State Compensatory Education Funds, and Early Education Allotment provide state financing for public district prekindergarten programs (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019). On the other hand, the federal government finances Head Start through programs such as Federal Head Start Grants, the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. However, they receive no governmental assistance. In contrast, nongovernment Child Care programs receive only Child Care and Development Block Grants and no state financing (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019).

District preschool programs and privately owned childcare providers at the institution level have distinct program distinctions. First, according to Slutzky and DeBruin-Parecki (2019), a bachelor's degree is necessary for teaching positions in public preschool and Head Start programs, but not privately owned childcare facilities. Second, the staff of privately funded organizations is not subject to the same level of oversight and evaluation as their government-funded counterparts (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019). Third, while curriculum planning and integrating learning experiences are critical educational components, it is necessary to examine the differences across facilities (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019). In comparison, prekindergarten programs are required to employ the State Board of Education-approved curriculum, Head Start programs are expected to follow a curriculum centered on empirical research, and privately-owned childcare preschools are encouraged to provide an activity plan. Fourthly, administrative positions in public preschools need a master's degree and accreditation as a principal. Employees of the Head Start program must have a bachelor's degree (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019). However, the educational and professional credentials of childcare facilities vary considerably. In addition, a certificate in child development is necessary to serve as an assistant or aide in public preschools and Head Start. However, there are no criteria for employment in childcare facilities. Annual continuing education requirements are 15 hours for public preschool teachers, 15 hours for Head Start teachers, and 24 hours for childcare teachers.

Public preschool programs and private childcare providers vary in various ways. First, according to Slutzky and DeBruin-Parecki (2019), a bachelor's degree is

needed for teaching in public preschool and Head Start programs, but not for privately operated childcare instructors. Second, personnel of privately supported organizations are not scrutinized and assessed to the same degree as those of publicly sponsored organizations (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019). Third, while designing and organizing learning experiences, it is essential to consider variations. However, privately-owned childcare providers are urged to include an exercise plan (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019). The fourth requirement for administrative employment in public preschools is a master's degree and principal certification. Head Start program employees must have a bachelor's degree (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019). The educational and professional qualifications of childcare administrators, however, vary greatly. A CDA certificate and professional development courses are required to serve as a teaching assistant in public preschools and Head Start. Unfortunately, there are no work requirements for daycare centers. Finally, the annual requirements for continuing education for public preschool instructors, Head Start teachers, and childcare teachers are 15 hours, 24 hours, and 24 hours, respectively.

Figure 1

Prekindergarten Funding Comparison Chart

Prekindergarten Comparison Chart	Head Start	Public Prekindergarten	Child Care (Licensing)
Bachelor's Degree Required for Teacher	Yes	Yes	No
Teacher Observation/ Evaluation Process	Yes	Yes	No

Educator Lesson Preparation Required	No	Yes	No
Principal or Director Credentials	Four Year Degree	Master's degree + Texas Education Agency Principal Certification	Diversified Education and Experience requirements
Aide/Assistant Qualification	Child Development Associate (CDA)	No	No
Curriculum	Research-Based Curriculum	Texas Education Agency approved Curriculum	Daily Activity Plans
Fiscal Professional Development	15 hours annually	150 hours every five years	24 hours annually

Teachers' Social-Emotional Competency Beliefs and Practices towards Emergent Literacy

Teachers' beliefs and practices toward social-emotional competence are how: 1) individuals develop the abilities and expertise needed to comprehend and regulate their reactions, 2) control their feelings, 3) take actions to achieve meaningful goals, 4) recognize and express compassion for those who are different from themselves, 5) form and sustain positive relationships, and 6) make fair and honest decisions (CASEL, 2020; Kamei & Harriott, 2021; Khazanchi et al., 2021; Rahmawati, 2020). Despite the consistency of descriptive phrases in the literature, such as social competence, emotional control, emotional literacy, emotional intelligence, and mental wellness, experts disagree

on teachers' ideas, methods, and attitudes toward social-emotional education (Barblett & Maloney, 2010). Several identities, however, are often used in education to refer to comparable qualities of teachers' beliefs, practices, and attitudes about students' social and emotional competency. Although psychologists may dispute the specific terminology, they all agree that nurturing a child's social and emotional abilities is a top priority. According to Brackett et al. (2019), early childhood educators should demonstrate five essential beliefs, actions, and attitudes concerning social-emotional competence, including self-identification, mindfulness, social awareness, people skills, and the capacity to make fair judgments. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), integrating theories, perceptions, and actions helps one cope with the challenges of daily life and extends into instructional techniques. Similarly, Brackett et al. (2019) argued that it is an indispensable factor in teachers' social-emotional competency toward behaviors and attitudes.

The first fundamental principle of teachers' beliefs and practices of social-emotional expertise is self-consciousness, which is the potential for comprehending personal sentiments, ideas, and principles and their impact on individual actions (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). As a result, teachers might have a positive outlook, a growth-oriented mindset, and a more secure sense of themselves (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). When teachers are in touch with their feelings, they can use those feelings to encourage themselves and their students to learn.

The second fundamental principle of teachers' beliefs and practices of social-emotional competence is controlling one's self, which is the capacity to adjust personal ideas, feelings, and actions in a manner that is appropriate to the circumstances and

setting. Beliefs and practices include stress management, behavior modification, and task accomplishment (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers who can accurately assess their personal qualities and vulnerabilities, build self-awareness, and believe in their abilities tend to be optimistic, self-assured, and growth-oriented. Teachers who are in touch with their emotions can inspire both themselves and their pupils (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The third fundamental principle of teachers' beliefs and practices is social awareness (Hukkelberg et al., 2019). Components of a well-developed social understanding include viewing the world through the eyes of others (Franco et al., 2017), empathizing with them, valuing their unique perspectives, and treating them with dignity and respect. As a result, teachers can manage challenging behaviors, establish positive classroom environments, enact healthy limitations while promoting self-reliance among their learners, and maintain their mental health (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Relationship skills are the fourth essential principle of teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices (Józss et al., 2017). Social bonds are the capacity to establish and sustain good relationships with a variety of persons and groups through clear communication, a spirit of teamwork, a strong sense of integrity, a creative approach to problem-solving, conflict resolution, and respectfully requesting or offering support when needed (Mahoney et al., 2020). Teachers with practical interpersonal skills can effectively communicate, form meaningful connections, promote cultural competence, and manage unexpected disputes (Mahoney et al., 2020).

The final fundamental principle of teachers' beliefs, practices, and attitudes towards social-emotional competence is appropriate judgment capabilities.

Accountability in judgment is advantageous and profitable (Mahoney et al., 2020). One aspect of responsible decision-making is having a firm grasp of ethical and cultural norms and the wherewithal to take personal responsibility for one's choices and consequences (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers who are reliable and able to make practical recommendations can identify issues, examine the facts, formulate viable solutions, assess the outcomes, and reflect on their practices (Mahoney et al., 2020).

In most nations, at least 50 % of all educators devote more instructional time to introducing new content because of the disorderly actions of students (Greenberg et al., 2013). Regrettably, students' disruptive behavior causes teachers to lose 40 % of instructional time (Greenberg et al., 2013). Classroom management is directly influenced by how students conduct themselves at school (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Multiple studies indicate that social-emotional competencies are essential for emergent literacy achievement because they help students cultivate self-assurance, tenacity, and the readiness to take part in dialogue and build rapport with the teacher and peers (Claessens et al., 2009; La Paro & Pianta, 2000; Morgan et al., 2016; Trentacosta & Izard, 2007). Furthermore, Throndsen et al. (2019) noted that the main reason why some kindergarten students are more academically literate than others is because of what they learned in preschool. Likewise, Sanchez et al. (2018) found that incorporating psychological well-being programs into the prekindergarten classroom significantly impacts student success.

However, according to research by Humphries et al. (2018), many prekindergarten instructors are unqualified to foster preschoolers' social-emotional growth. Approximately 37 million children in America attend early childhood programs, and inept teachers teach them (Board, 2019). One must consider teachers' beliefs,

practices, and attitudes toward social-emotional competence and reading pedagogy (Board, 2019). There is substantial evidence demonstrating that the importance of young learners' subsequent reading achievement is directly associated with their emergent literacy development. Reading success depends on and may be predicted by whether or not a child can learn code-focused abilities; for example, alphabet understanding, phonological awareness, meaning-focused proficiencies, and spoken language may demonstrate a wide variation between prekindergarten centers (Burchinal et al., 2016; Pelatti et al., 2014). The profession must still address the importance of providing prekindergartners with language and literacy-learning environments that foster early development (Board, 2019). Continuous demand for language and literacy development exists in the sector. Curriculum, student demographics, teaching load, available resources, and government mandates are all potential causes of this diversity. Variations in early childhood educators' educational qualifications and the variety of teacher-training programs may also contribute to this phenomenon.

Teachers' Reading Pedagogy Beliefs and Practices towards Emergent Literacy

Based on their study results, Klieme et al. (2006) identified three essential characteristics of teachers' reading pedagogy concerning developing emergent literacy. As an approach, teachers' reading pedagogy for emerging literacy promotes all domains of education and growth by facilitating the acquisition and utilization of effective practices. Teachers' reading pedagogy should be introduced to children during the early childhood stages of development and well before they reach formal school. According to Lerner and Lonigan (2016), reading pedagogy that supports emergent literacy incorporates early childhood teaching strategies through interactions, conversations,

experiences, and peer relationships. Many factors influence pedagogical approaches to reading, such as phonological awareness practices, social-emotional competency, education qualifications, and content knowledge. Fundamental concepts of a teacher's reading pedagogy include print knowledge (Lerner & Lonigan, 2016), phonological awareness, vocabulary concepts, and oral language (Kosanovich et al., (2020).

      The subject of this investigation is the beliefs and practices of pre-K teachers toward their students' emerging literacy skills through the lens of their reading pedagogy. Anders and Evans (2019) include the implementation of explicit emergent literacy activities, the adoption of effective practices, and the support of all domains of learning and development. The reading pedagogy of teachers regarding their students' emerging literacy is centered on four fundamental tenets exemplifying strategies that are effective in helping children grow in these capacities (Anders & Evans, 2019). Additionally, Anders and Evans (2019) asserted that teachers' reading pedagogy in emergent literacy aims to equip children with the core reading skills they need to become proficient readers. Teachers' reading pedagogy is essential for setting the stage for kindergarten readiness and future academic achievement (Anders & Evans, 2019). Subsequently, it is a teaching approach that reduces disruptive social-emotional behaviors among young learners and facilitates academic preparedness. Gerde et al. (2018) found that disruptive social-emotional behaviors may hinder some children from developing motivational attitudes toward reading; thus, the problem will persist. Hence, the reading pedagogy framework considers teachers' and students' emergent literacy knowledge (Gerde et al., 2018).

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to examine and evaluate the following self-reported predictability relationships:

1. The beliefs and practices of early childhood teachers about phonological awareness involving the emergent literacy development of their students.

2. The relationship between the social-emotional beliefs and practices of early childhood teachers and the emergent literacy development of their students.

3. The contribution of each early childhood teacher's level of education to the improvement of their students' emergent literacy development.

4. The reading pedagogy of teachers in connection to the emergent literacy development of their students.

Similarly, this research will evaluate the influence of early childhood teachers' age, gender, and years of experience on preschoolers' emerging literacy growth. In addition, this research aims to contribute empirically based instructional practices of early childhood educators to the existing literature.

This chapter features six essential sections: 1) participants, 2) research design, 3) instrumentation, 4) sampling methodology, 5) method of data collecting, 6) data analysis, and 7) limitations and delimitations.

Participants

This study focuses on nongovernmental-supported early childhood programs in the Southeastern region of the United States. The researchers selected participants from a comprehensive list of approximately 2,300 regional nongovernmental-funded early

childhood programs maintained by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), a state-managed public database. Participants must also be 18 years old, have previously or presently worked in a preschool classroom (children ages 3 and 4), and have engaged children in emergent literacy activities.

Research Design

According to Kumar (1999), a study design is strategy investigators use to obtain information in a dependable, accurate, efficient, and credible manner. The researcher has adopted the multiple regression methodology (Gay et al., 2012) for this study (see Figure 1). Inferential statistics is a specialized branch of applied statistics that includes regression analysis, considers the values of the available multiple independent variables, and predicts the value of one dependent variable. Researchers use multiple regression statistics to estimate the quantity of a dependent variable established by two or more independent or predictor variables. Multiple regression permits the researcher to verify the model's overall fit (variance shown) and the comparative involvement of each predictor to the total variance determined during the regression analysis, which also involves using coefficients and probability values (P-values). Calculating p-values allows the researcher to test whether the associations they discover in their sample represent the population as a whole. In a hypothesis test, researchers use the p-value for an independent variable to determine whether or not that variable is associated with the dependent variable (Mertler & Vannatta 2016). There is no association between two variables if one variable is changed while the other remains constant. That is, there is not enough information at the population level for the researcher to make any definitive conclusion.

On the other hand, the sign of a regression coefficient reveals the direction of the association between the independent and dependent variables (Mertler & Vannatta, 2016). If the coefficient is positive, for instance, an increase in the independent variable usually results in a rise in the dependent variable's mean (Mertler & Vannatta, 2016). Any decline in the dependent variable in response to an increase in the independent variable (a negative coefficient) suggests that the correlation between the two variables is causative. Finally, utilizing this multiple regression methodology, the researcher obtains insight into the complex real-world relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices and teachers' reading pedagogy on students' emergent literacy.

Figure 2

Multiple Regression Chart
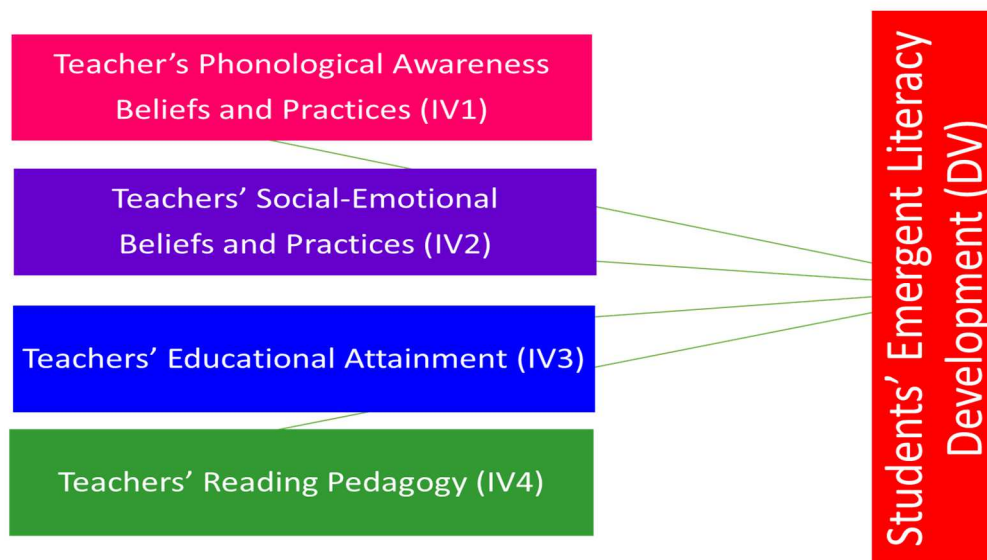
Instrumentation

The Emergent Literacy Survey (ELS) is a self-designed Google Forms-based data collection instrument employed to gather data. The instrument consists of 25 parts,

divided into four critical components. Demographic Information (Part 1) consists of seven questions asking respondents about their age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of education, and total years of experience working with preschoolers. Part II, "Teacher Beliefs and Practices Regarding Students' Emerging Literacy Development," has eleven essential questions about how to help children improve their spoken language skills, such as rhyming, syllabication, alliteration, and onsets and rimes. In addition, one question asks participants to estimate the extent of the emergent literacy development of their students. Part III: Teacher Beliefs and Practices towards Students' Social-Emotional Learning encompasses six questions on the instructor's practices and beliefs in developing emotional identification, decision-making skills, impulse control, understanding diverse perspectives, and forming and maintaining relationships. Part IV: Teacher's Beliefs surrounding their Reading Pedagogy contains one question asking respondents to what extent they believe they are competent reading teachers.

The Likert Scale is used to measure the scores of the questions in Parts II, III, and IV. The scale explicitly asks the respondent to rank each question item as follows: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The researcher's responses were statistically analyzed and quantified to reveal the perceptions of early childhood teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices and teachers' reading pedagogy beliefs and practices on children's emergent literacy development in early childhood classrooms.

Instrument Validity

Kerlinger and Lee (2012) described how a measurement instrument precisely assesses what it evaluates. It tests how well the instrument measures what it is designed

to determine. The researcher conducted a pilot study (N = 20), which assisted in identifying items in the research instruments that may cause complications while acquiring the necessary knowledge. The researcher requested that experts in early childhood higher education rank the relevance of each topic on a scale of one to five. The researcher sought opinions from numerous early childhood higher education experts on the content validity of the Emergent Literacy Survey (ELS) instruments. The experts rated the instrument's content components on a scale of 0 to 2. A score of 0 indicates that the content item does not assess the desired content area. A score of one indicates that the content item is not apparent. A two-score shows that the content item measures the desired content area. By doing so, the researcher corrected any elements, addressing the factors that may cause an incorrect response and correcting any factors that may affect the researcher's interpretation, including researcher biases. The researcher used SPSS software to run a Pearson product-moment correlation code to verify the validity of the questionnaire by relating each item's questionnaire score with the total score. All the items were tested with a 95% confidence level to determine if there was enough statistical evidence to conclude that the research instrument was valid.

Instrument Reliability

The researcher calculated the internal consistency reliability coefficient alpha as part of their reliability evaluation. Cronbach's alpha was employed to estimate whether or not the survey's data collection and analysis methods could produce the same results if used again or by another researcher. The alpha coefficient is the most commonly used statistic to evaluate measurement reliability. According to Cronbach et al. (1954), researchers value the alpha coefficient for two reasons: 1) the internal consistency

reliability approach is the simplest to measure and gives researchers confidence that the items presented are appropriately defined; 2) the consistency of responses to the researcher's questions determines the survey's reliability; hence, the survey was revised until an alpha coefficient fell between 0.7 and 1.

Table 1 below provides the actual value for Cronbach's alpha, which is 0.781. This reveals the degree of internal consistency between our scale and this particular population; hence, our instrument was highly reliable.

Table 1

Reliability Statistics Table

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	**N of Items**
.781	25

Table 2 illustrates the results of all 25 items in the Emergent Literacy Survey instrument.

Table 2

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
	Valid	174	100.0
Cases	Excluded	0	.0
	Total	174	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

According to the data shown in Table 3 (Item-Total Statistics), six of the items had a value less than.30, indicating a positive correlation between the variables listed in

the Corrected Item-Total Correlation column. Despite this, the researcher did not delete

items from the questionnaire since the Emergent Literacy Survey instrument's Cronbach's

alpha remained stable at 0.781% throughout the testing.

Table 3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Item1	104.87	95.202	.303	.	.759
Item2	104.97	93.305	.417	.	.752
Item3	105.00	93.896	.302	.	.755
Item4	105.02	92.242	.425	.	.849
Item5	105.22	93.073	.300	.	.755
Item6	105.22	89.490	.411	.	.842
Item7	105.26	90.751	.333	.	.848
Item8	104.98	93.884	.302	.	.755
Item9	105.00	95.260	.169	.	.761
Item10	104.99	93.590	.305	.	.755
Item11	105.36	94.279	.156	.	.761
Item12	104.85	95.677	.312	.	.761
Item13	104.87	95.348	.308	.	.760
Item14	105.22	92.877	.381	.	.754
Item15	104.86	95.299	.364	.	.759
Item16	104.82	95.315	.382	.	.759
Item17	105.07	95.267	.160	.	.761
Item18	105.00	95.260	.169	.	.761
Item19	105.39	71.984	.463	.	.821
Item20	106.14	82.790	.303	.	.848
Item21	106.64	91.955	.123	.	.767
Item22	106.64	91.955	.123	.	.767
Item23	106.14	82.790	.303	.	.848
Item24	105.39	71.984	.463	.	.821
Item25	106.20	93.222	.000	.	.796

Pilot Study

A pilot study helped to approximate the reliability of the Emergent Literacy Survey (ELS). The researcher recruited 20 early childhood experts from similar early childhood programs for the pilot study. The researcher used specific recommendations and critical analysis to assess the pilot study. The instrument was then modified depending primarily on the pilot study's outcomes and administered to participants.

Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, is deliberate and allows the researcher to access a specified population subset that closely matches the characteristics of the study's targeted population using prior knowledge. According to Kerlinger and Lee (2000), purposive sampling is the most suitable technique for this study since it allows the researcher to pick a sample that accurately represents the sample derived from a population. The researcher randomly selected early childhood teachers employed in nongovernment-funded childcare centers in the Southeast province of the United States from a comprehensive database. The inclusion criteria for the sample include participants who must be: 1) at least 18 years old, 2) currently employed in a childcare program, and 3) teaching preschoolers (children between the ages of 3 and 4) throughout the spring and summer of 2022.

Data Collection Procedures

To recruit survey participants for the study, a letter (see Appendix A), a recruitment flyer (see Appendix B), and a copy of the Emergent Literacy Survey (see Appendix C) were distributed through the Google Forms website to administrators of the selected early childhood programs. The letter emphasizes the research's importance and

relevance. Furthermore, the researcher notified the childcare program administrators that a copy of the findings would be available upon request. The researcher asked administrators to distribute the survey to instructors in the program who are currently teaching in preschool classrooms with children aged three and four years. Once distributed to the designated early childhood programs, the surveys remained open on the Google Forms platform for 45 days to gather responses. Despite the need for standardized survey distribution techniques, the researcher reminded respondents of the importance of answering each question. Google Forms tabulated the responses using the quadratic method. However, after downloading the data from Google Forms, the researcher coded the replies and entered them into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a computerized analysis system, for further quantitative evaluation to determine the findings from the statistical results.

Statistical Analysis

The researcher used multiple regression analysis to analyze the data in this study; the statistical technique determined the relationship or correlation between the dependent and independent variables. Four predictor variables evaluated the population: a) social-emotional learning, b) student emergent literacy development, c) the teacher's educational attainment, and d) the teacher's early childhood years of experience. First, the predictor variables' characteristics make theoretical sense since they influence student emergent literacy skills development. Second, the multiple regression model is the most successful methodology because it allows the researcher to assess early childhood teachers' individual and combined teaching strategies. Standard regression analysis, in particular, enabled the researcher to analyze the effect of individual predictor factors on the

dependent variable. The regression analysis also allowed the researcher to investigate the impact of the four combined predictor variables on the dependent variable. The researchers also presented a regression model incorporating beta coefficients, showing the quantitative degree of association between predictor variables and the dependent variable. Beta coefficients are the magnitude of their influence on the dependent variable (Warner, 2012).

Essentially, the multiple regression model provides the following benefits: (1) it offers both non-standard and conventional estimations of the relationships between factors, (2) goodness-of-fit analysis is used to determine how closely the actual value corresponds to the predicted value, and (3) the scientific formula that illustrates the effect of each independent factor on the one dependent factor (Warner, 2012).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The objective of this investigation was to determine the predictive power of teachers' beliefs and practices surrounding social-emotional learning, teachers' beliefs and practices surrounding reading pedagogy, education attainment, and teachers' early childhood experience increase children's emergent literacy development in early childhood classrooms.

This study focused on nongovernmental-funded preschool centers in the Southeastern province of the United States. It featured prekindergarten teachers at least 18 years old, assigned to a preschool classroom (children ages 3 and 4), who engaged children in emergent literacy activities. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) provided a sample of approximately 2,300 licensed home-based, center-based, urban, suburban, and rural childcare services from their comprehensive, state-managed public database (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2022).

As displayed in this chapter, the analysis results are divided into two key sections: 1) the frequency distribution of the demographic information of early childhood teachers, and 2) the results of testing four null hypotheses developed during the investigation.

Demographic Data Analysis of the Study's Subjects

Gender. Table 4 illustrates the sample distribution by gender. According to the statistics in this sample, women are overwhelmingly responsible for the education of children under the age of five (Whitebook et al., 2018).

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Participation by Gender

Gender	F	%
Male	12	6.9
Female	162	93.1

Note. N=174

Cultural/Ethnic Background. As illustrated in Table 5, the cultural/ethnic backgrounds of the participants. The sample included 94 teachers, representing 54% of the sampled population, indicating their cultural/ethnic status as Black or African American. 42, representing 24.1% of the sampled population, identified their cultural/ethnic background as Hispanic or Latino. In addition, 19 or 10.9% of the early childhood teachers revealed that their cultural/ethnic identity was White. Likewise, 11 individuals, representing 6.3%, stated they had two or more races. Lastly, 8 of the teachers, or 4.6%, expressed their cultural/ethnic background as Asian.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Participation by Cultural/Ethnic Background

	F	%
Black or African American	94	54.0
Hispanic or Latino	42	24.1
White	19	10.9
Two or more races	11	6.3
Asian	8	4.6
Total	174	100

Age. As illustrated in Table 6, the age of the participants. Notably, 22.8% of the total sample was at least 50 years old, while 20.1% were between 18 and 25. 15.5% were between 26 and 30 years old, 14.4% were between 31 and 35 years old, 12.1% were between 36 and 40 years old, and 16.1% were between 41 and 45 years old.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Participation by Age

Age group	F	%
18-25 years	35	20.1
26-30 years	27	15.5
31-35 years	25	14.4
36-40 years	21	12.1
41-45 years	28	16.1
50 + years	38	21.8
Total	**174**	**100**

Education Attainment. Table 7 illustrates the sample distribution by educational attainment. Notably, 35 teachers, or 20.1%, reported they had a bachelor's degree, while only one teacher, or 0.6%, had at least some high school education.

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Participants by Teachers' Education Attainment

	F	%
Some High School	1	.6
GED (General Equivalence Diploma)	4	2.3
High Diploma	18	10.3
Some College	55	31.6
Associate Degree	34	19.5
Bachelor's Degree	35	20.1
Master's Degree	23	13.2
Doctorate Degree	4	2.3

Total	174	100

Total Years of Early Childhood Experience. Table 8 illustrates the sample

distribution by total years of early childhood experience. Notably, 22.8% of participants

were at least 50 years or older, while 20.1% were between the ages of 18 and 25, 15.5%

were between the ages of 26 and 30, 14.4% were between the ages of 31 and 35, 12.1%

were between the ages of 36 and 40, and 16.1% were between the ages of 41 and 45.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Participants by Total Years in the Early Childhood Feld

Age group	F	%	
None	22	12.6	
Less than one year	23	13.2	
1-2 years	30	17.2	
11+ years	46	26.4	
3-4 years	21	12.1	
5-7 years	25	14.4	
8-10 years	7	4.0	
Total	**174**	**100**	

Standard Multiple Regression Results

A linear model based on the standard multiple regression analysis was used to

predict the impact of the four independent variables (teachers' beliefs and practices

surrounding social-emotional learning, teachers' beliefs and practices surrounding

phonological awareness development, teachers' education attainment, and teachers' years

of early childhood experience) on the one dependent variable (teachers' beliefs about their

students' level of emergent literacy development).

Multiple Regression Model Summary

As illustrated in Table 9, the multiple regression model summary is shown. The analyses of R = multiple correlations value (the R column) report the relationship between the four independent variables (teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices surrounding emergent literacy development of their students, teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices surrounding emergent literacy development of their students, teachers' educational attainment and its influence on the emergent literacy development of their students, and teachers' reading pedagogy surrounding emergent literacy development of their students) and the dependent variable (students' emergent literacy development). When the coefficient value lies between + 0.50 and + 1, it is considered a moderate positive relationship between variables. Hence, the R coefficient value is .609, indicating a moderate correlation.

The R^2 (the R Square column), also known as the coefficient of determination value, represents the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable (students' emergent literacy development) that can be predicted by the independent variables (teachers' beliefs and practices relating to social learning, teachers' beliefs and practices relating phonological awareness development, teachers' education attainment, and teachers' years of early childhood experience). In this study, the sample's independent variables can predict 37.1% of the variance (emerging literacy development of students). The adjusted R^2 (Adjusted R-squared row) is also an estimate of the effect size, which, according to Cohen (1988), indicates a medium effect size of .356 or 35.60%. The

Adjusted R^2 (Adjusted R-squared row) is an overall measure of the strength of association. However, it does not reflect the extent to which each independent variable is

associated with the dependent variable. In other words, as independent variables (teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices, teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices, teachers' educational attainment, and teachers' reading pedagogy) are added to the model, the Adjusted R-square explains that some of the increased in the variance in the dependent variable (students' emergent literacy development) is due to chance. Moreover, the Adjusted R-square corrects positive bias and estimates the effect size (Cohen, 1988). The effect size is .345, or 35.6%, indicating that the independent variables yielded a medium effect. Furthermore, the degrees of freedom include four independent variables and 169 participants in the study (4, 169).

Last, the F score reports how well the regression model is a good fit. The Significant F Change ("Sig. F Change" row) associated p-value shows the statistical significance of the regression model. The F score reports how well the regression equation fits the data and how well the hypothesis (independent variables) predicts the dependent variable (children's emergent literacy development). In this case, F = 24.904, at the significance level of 0.05). Thus, there is enough statistical evidence to conclude that the regression model is statistically significant in predicting the outcome variable and reject the null hypothesis.

In summary, the overall regression model indicates that the four independent variables (teachers' beliefs and practices, teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices, teachers' educational attainment, and teachers' reading pedagogy) can predict the dependent variable (students' emergent literacy development) with statistical significance.

Result for Research Question One

      This study addresses the first of four research questions as follows: To what degree does a statistically significant relationship exist between teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development? In addressing this research question, the study tested the null hypothesis: No statistically significant relationship exists between teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development. Table 9 presents the results obtained when the collected data were analyzed using the standard multiple regression techniques.

Table 9

Model Summary of Standard Multiple Regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square	F	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.609	.371	.356	.455	.371	24.904	4	169	.000

Note. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher's Educational Attainment, Teacher's Years of Experience, Phonological Awareness Development, and Social-Emotional Development

Dependent Variable: Teachers' beliefs and practices of students' emergent literacy development.

      As illustrated in Table 10, the multiple regression analysis was used to test if teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices predicted their beliefs regarding children's emergent literacy development. The regression findings suggested that teachers' beliefs and practices related to phonological awareness (IV) accounted for 28.9% of the variation ($R^2 = .285$, $F(1,172) = 69.977$, P 0.05). Additionally, it was shown

that teachers' beliefs and practices involving phonological awareness (IV) significantly

predicted the model (t (172) = 5.920, P <0.05).

Furthermore, the regression equation predicted teachers' perceptions of children's

emergent literacy development as 0.592 +/- 0.842 x teachers' phonological awareness

beliefs and practices. Furthermore, teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices

significantly change their perceived students' emergent literacy development since their

significant value is 0.000, less than the acceptable value of 0.05. With a 1% increase in

teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices, student emergent literacy development

will increase by 0.842% (B value). As a result, there was a statistically significant

association between teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices and students'

emergent literacy development, rejecting the null hypothesis HO_1.

Table 10

Standard Multiple Regression

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.577	.377		4.187	.000***
Teachers' Phonological Awareness Beliefs and Practices	.661	.079	.538	8.365	.000***

R= .538; R^2 = .289; Adjusted R^2= .285; *F* = 69.977; df=1,172; P=.0***
***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
Note. Dependent Variable: Teachers' beliefs and practices of students' Emergent Literacy Development.

Result for Research Question Two

The following is the second of four research questions addressed by this study:

To what degree does a statistically significant relationship exist between teachers' social-

emotional beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development? In

addressing this research question, the study tested the null hypothesis: There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development. Table 11 presents the results obtained when the collected data were analyzed using the standard multiple regression techniques.

As illustrated in Table 11, the multiple regression analysis was used to test if teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices predicted their beliefs regarding children's emergent literacy development. The regression results indicated that teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices (IV) accounted for 16.9 % of the variance (R^2=.164, (F (1,172) = 35.045, P <.05). The model was strongly predicted by the social-emotional beliefs and behaviors of teachers (t (172) = 5.920, P 0.05). The regression equation predicted teachers' perceived children's emergent literacy development as 0.592 +/- 0.842 x teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices (IV).

Moreover, since the significant value is 0.000, less than the acceptable value of 0.05, teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices substantially influence their perceptions of their students' emergent literacy development. In addition, a 1% increase in teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices leads to an 0.842% (B value) increase in students' emerging literacy development. Therefore, the null hypothesis HO_2 is rejected since there is a statistically significant link between instructors' social-emotional beliefs and behaviors and students' emerging literacy development.

Table 11

Standard Multiple Regression

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.

	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.592	.697		.850	.397
Teachers' Social-Emotional Beliefs and Practices	.842	.142	.411	5.920	.000***

R= .411; R^2 = .169; Adjusted R^2= .164; F = 35.045; df =1,172; P=.0***
*** Relationship is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)
Note. Dependent Variable: Teachers' beliefs and practices on Students' Emergent Literacy Development.

Results for Research Question Three

The following is the third of four research questions addressed by this study: The following is the third of four research questions addressed by this study: To what degree does a statistically significant relationship exist between teachers' educational attainment and students' emergent literacy development? In addressing this research question, the study tested the null hypothesis: No statistically significant relationship exists between teachers' educational attainment and students' emergent literacy development. Table 11 presents the results obtained when the collected data were analyzed using the standard multiple regression techniques.

As illustrated in Table 12, the multiple regression analysis was used to test if teachers' educational attainment predicted their beliefs regarding children's emergent literacy development. The standard multiple regression analysis indicates that the teacher's educational attainment has a weak correlation of 0.110. The teacher's educational attainment depicts a smaller percentage of R^2 at 1.2% and Adjusted R^2 = -0.6%. The significance value is 0.14831, which is greater than the acceptable limit of 0.05 alpha level. Likewise, the relationship between the teacher's educational attainment and their perceived students' emergent literacy development yielded (F (1,172) = 2.108, P > 0.05). In this case, there is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that a significant

change in the perceived emergent literacy development is due to the teacher's level of

education. Consequently, we fail to reject null hypothesis HO₃.

Table 12

Standard Multiple Regression

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.822	.087		55.596	.000***
Teachers' Education Attainment	-.025	.017	-.110	-1.452	.148

R=0.110; R^2 =0.012; Adjusted R^2= -0.006; F = 2.108; df=1,172; P=.148
***Relationship is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
Note. Dependent Variable: Teachers' beliefs and practices on Students' Emergent Literacy Development.

Result for Research Question Four

The following is the fourth of four research questions addressed by this study: To

what degree does a statistically significant relationship exist between teachers' reading

pedagogy beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development? In

addressing this research question, the study tested the null hypothesis: No statistically

significant relationship exists between teachers' reading pedagogy beliefs and practices

and the students' emergent literacy development. Table 12 presents the results obtained

when the collected data were analyzed using the standard multiple regression techniques.

As illustrated in Table 13, the multiple regression analysis was used to test if

teachers' reading pedagogy predicted their beliefs regarding children's emergent literacy

development. The standard multiple regression analysis indicates that the teacher's reading

pedagogy has a weak correlation of 17.3 %. The teacher's reading pedagogy depicts a

smaller percentage of $R^2 = 30$ % and Adjusted $R^2 = 24$ %.

 The significance value is 0.23, which is less than the acceptable limit of 0.05 alpha level.

Furthermore, the relationship between the teacher's educational attainment and their

perceived students' emergent literacy development yielded ($F (1,172) = 5.291$, P 0.05.

For this reason, there is statistical evidence to conclude that a significant change in the

perceived emergent literacy development is due to the teacher's reading pedagogy.

Therefore, we reject null hypothesis HO_4.

Table 13

Standard Multiple Regression

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.891	.088		55.312	.000***
Teachers' Reading Pedagogy Beliefs and Practices	-.050	.022	-.173	-2.300	.023*

R= .173; R^2 = .030; Adjusted R^2= .024; F = 5.291; df=1,172; P=.023*
*** Relationship is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed); * Relationship is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Note. Dependent Variable: Teachers' beliefs and practices on students' Emergent Literacy Development.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>**Summary**</u>

This study aimed to identify and evaluate whether early childhood classroom teachers' social-emotional competency and reading pedagogy influence young children's emerging literacy. To what extent does a statistically significant relationship exist between teachers' phonological awareness instructional practices, teachers' social-emotional beliefs, and practices, teachers' reading pedagogy beliefs and practices, and teachers' education attainment and the perceived emergent literacy development of children in early childhood classrooms?

The researcher used a multiple regression design in this study. One hundred seventy-four (174) early childhood teachers were chosen to participate in the research. The researcher developed and employed the Emergent Literacy Survey to collect the data in this study. A committee of early childhood education professionals determined the validity of the content of this instrument. The instrument's alpha coefficient was determined to be 0.781.

<u>**Conclusions**</u>

The following is the first conclusion of the study regarding research question 1. There was a statistically significant association between teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development, rejecting the null hypothesis $H0_1$.

The following is the first conclusion of the study regarding research question 1.

There was a statistically significant association between teachers' phonological awareness beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development, rejecting the null hypothesis H01.

Regarding the second conclusion of the study, research question 2. There was a statistically significant association between teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices and students' emergent literacy development, rejecting the null hypothesis H02. The third conclusion was drawn regarding research question 3. There needs to be more statistical evidence to conclude that a significant change in the perceived emergent literacy development is due to the teacher's level of education. Consequently, we fail to reject null hypothesis H03. Based on research question 4, the results indicated there is a statistically significant association between teachers' reading pedagogy and students' emergent literacy development. Therefore, we reject null hypothesis H04.

Discussions

Consistent with previous studies, in the literature review, the initial finding of this study found that teachers' beliefs and practices regarding phonological awareness had a significant impact on the emerging literacy development of children (aged 3 to 4) enrolled in non-government-sponsored early childhood programs. Thus, endorsing Catt's (1999) claim that phonological awareness is the most crucial factor in becoming a successful reader. This study's findings also confirm the National Institute for Literacy's (2008) conclusion that increasing instructional practices in phonological awareness is a positive step toward future increases in reading ability. In addition, this study's findings corroborate several studies (Pressley & Allington, 2015; Morrow & Gambrell, 2020; Rachmani, 2020) that have reported that early childhood teachers incorporate

phonological awareness into their lesson plans to promote the development of emergent literacy. Furthermore, the findings of this study concur with researchers (Reutzel, 2015; Snow et al., 1998) who argue that the development of phonological awareness enables preschoolers to pay attention to and exercise control over the sounds that are crucial to the English language.

The following evidence from the literature review, the second result of this study was that teachers' social-emotional beliefs and practices significantly influence the emerging literacy development of young children (aged 3 to 4) who participated in non-government-sponsored early childhood programs. Consequently, this reinforces CASEL's (2020) claim that self-awareness, self-control, human empathy, people skills, and rational decision-making are among the most widely acknowledged relational traits contributing to social-emotional development.

Also, the result of this research validates the findings of Zins et al. (2004) and CASEL (2010), indicating that emergent literacy plays a significant role in the life of a child's cognitive and social development (Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Osher et al., 2017; Sorensen et al., 2016). Jones and Kahn (2017) concluded that children need to learn to control their emotions and collaborate well with others to thrive in school. The findings of this study are consistent with empirical research conducted by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016), which concluded that social and emotional development adds value to the maturation of pretending or make-believe, establishing a healthy rapport with others, governing and communicating their emotions and cultivating emotional bonds, and fostering relationships with others. Furthermore, the outcome of this research substantiates the assertion made by (Shala, 2013) that emergent

literacy may be complex for children who struggle with social and emotional abilities such as compassion for themselves and others, healthy peer relationships, practical communication skills, and execution engagement.

According to the third outcome of this research, teachers' reading pedagogy beliefs and practices substantially impact students' emergent literacy development. This verifies the argument of Lerner and Lonigan (2016), who underlined the relevance of print knowledge and phonological awareness in teachers' reading pedagogy, and the research by Kosanovich et al. (2020). They suggested incorporating vocabulary ideas and spoken language into early literacy instruction. The outcomes of this research reflect what Anders and Evans (2019) stated: that teachers' reading pedagogy should incorporate explicit emergent literacy activities and effective practices and expand all learning areas that impact emergent literacy development. This study's results are consistent with those of Gerde et al. (2018). They discovered that reading pedagogy provides the building blocks that, in later grades, would give children the foundation to prevent disruptive social-emotional behaviors among early learners and enhance academic readiness. In addition, the findings of this study lend credence to the claim made by Klieme et al. (2006), namely that initiatives taken by teachers in the area of reading pedagogy facilitate the acquisition and application of skills through the application of effective practices that support all aspects of learning and development.

In contrast, a noteworthy and unexpected conclusion of this research was the absence of a correlation between teachers' educational attainment and children's emergent literacy development. Specifically, the sample did not include enough evidence to indicate a statistically significant impact on the .05 alpha (confidence) level. Notably, this

does not suggest a deficiency in the evidence provided by the study; nevertheless, there may be alternative explanations for this conclusion.

The first plausible explanation is that the research's sample size (population) was insufficient for detecting the statistical impact. The second probable explanation is that the response (variability) differences were too significant to see a statistical effect. Thirdly, there is a plausible argument that a statistically significant impact existed, but confounding factors during the questionnaire distribution diminished it. Among the probable extraneous factors include teachers completing the survey at a busy time of the day, within a classroom environment, or using a mobile-friendly app that may have minimized the view of all questions on the screen. The fourth possible explanation involves overestimating the teacher's knowledge and skills (Shulman, 1989).

Implications

Among the implications of this research are the following:

For those interested in phonological awareness instructional practices and emergent literacy development in early childhood classrooms.

1. Early childhood teachers can strengthen prekindergarten children's

2. (ages 3 and 4) emergent literacy skills by incorporating motivational reading experiences (Erickson & Wharton-McDonald, 2019).

3. Motivating students to read means teaching them their names and how to spell them, as well as the names of things in the classroom, discussing the daily schedule, how to use classroom materials, explaining the student helper's responsibilities, and appropriate behavior at school.

4. Motivating students to read by reading aloud their favorite stories and having copies of their favorite books available in the library to peruse anytime they desire.

For those interested in phonological awareness instructional practices and emergent literacy development in early childhood classrooms.

1. Early childhood teachers can strengthen prekindergarten children's emergent literacy skills by incorporating motivational reading experiences (Erickson & Wharton-McDonald, 2019). Reading motivation involves teaching students to recognize and spell their names, learn the names of objects, adhere to a daily pictorial schedule, how to utilize classroom supplies, classroom responsibilities, and proper school conduct.

2. Primarily, early childhood teachers may improve prekindergarten children's emergent literacy skills by *modeling* speaking *phrases* and *matching letter pronunciation* (phonemes) with *alphabet transcription*.

3. Encourage prekindergarten children to sing rhymes such *as I am a Little Tea Pot*, Down by the Bay, and *Five Green and Spotted Frogs* to improve their emergent literacy development.

4. Teachers of prekindergarten children can assist prekindergarten children in the acquisition of emergent literacy by implementing *wordplay* activities that emphasize *rhyming words* with *rhythmic patterns* such as *jig*, *rig*, *wig*, and *twig* and then scaffolding children's attempts to replace the missing portion with a new rhyming word.

5. Early childhood teachers may support prekindergarten children's emergent literacy learning by presenting images that aid them in grasping unfamiliar vocabulary (Septiani and Syaodih, 2021).

6. Early childhood teachers may include syllabication in daily routines. In syllabication, prekindergarten children may imitate clapping, stomping, or tapping hands or feet to represent *individual sounds* of *letters* within a *word*. Then, encourage them to execute the pattern independently.

7. By using alphabet-based learning, early childhood teachers may strengthen the emergent literacy development of prekindergarten children by including alphabet-based education. Alphabet knowledge includes exercises such as matching the capital letter *A* with the lowercase *a* and differentiating between letters with *straight* and *curved* lines. The task is then expanded to include writing the first letter heard in the word *sun*.

8. Activities promoting phonemic awareness may be beneficial for prekindergarten children. Phonemic awareness includes reading behaviors exhibited by early childhood educators, such as identifying the *front cover*, *back cover*, and *spine of a book*, demonstrating how to t*rack words from left to right*, *top to bottom*, *turning the page after reading* the last word on a page, and *emphasizing* that the *author writes the words*. The *illustrator draws the images,* or *the photographer takes the pictures with a camera*.

9. Print awareness exercises may enhance prekindergarten children's emergent literacy development. Print awareness may be included when early childhood teachers relate the student's real-world experiences to an event in a read-aloud,

such as by asking the children to recall a moment when they visited the local supermarket during a read-aloud about a supermarket. In addition, print awareness includes using different speech tones, facial emotions, and body language to stress grammatical mechanics such as a period, question mark, or exclamation point.

10. Early childhood teachers may incorporate songs with rhyming words, such as *Five Little Monkeys Swinging in a Tree* or *Open Shut Them*, to accelerate prekindergarten children's emergent literacy development.

11. Early childhood teachers may model speaking phrases and match letter pronunciations (phonemes) with alphabet transcriptions, to be the most important for prekindergarten children.

For those interested in social-emotional instructional practices and emergent literacy development in early childhood classrooms.

1. Early childhood teachers may embed social-emotional learning to advance prekindergarten children's emergent literacy development. Social-emotional teaching approaches encompass self-consciousness, self-control, human empathy, people skills, and rational decision-making (CASEL, 2020).

2. Early childhood teachers may foster prekindergarten children's emergent literacy development by providing opportunities to roleplay how to recognize and relate to their feelings (CASEL, 2020).

3. By incorporating rules and routines into the day's framework, early childhood educators may foster the emergent literacy development of prekindergarten children.

4. Prekindergarten children's emergent literacy development may be improved when early childhood teachers engage prekindergarten children in articulating feelings that provoke anger or frustration.

For those interested in educational attainment and emergent literacy development in early childhood classrooms.

1. The educational attainment of early childhood teachers is critical for children's reading readiness and future academic achievement (Child Care Aware of America, 2013). Therefore, an extensive experimental study with a large sample must establish statistical significance.

For those interested in reading pedagogy and emergent literacy development in early childhood classrooms.

1. Early childhood teachers should employ research-based reading pedagogy to support the emerging literacy development of prekindergarten children.

Recommendations for Future Study

To expand the conclusions of this research further, I suggest the following:

1. Further research on preschool teachers' educational attainment and students' emergent literacy development with a more robust sample size.

2. Further research comprises pretest and posttest analysis of preschool teachers' knowledge and abilities in emergent literacy development.

3. A study should investigate the teachers' and students' emergent literacy knowledge.

4. Further research to evaluate children's emergent literacy development differences in district prekindergarten programs, Head Start, and private childcare settings.

APPENDIX

LETTER TO ADMINISTRATORS

Scholastica Turner-Moore
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
College of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Scholastica.Moore@tsu.edu
713-313-7496

"The Impact of Teachers' Social-Emotional Competency and Reading Pedagogy on the Emergent Literacy Development of Children in Early Childhood Classrooms"

INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to participate in a research study by Scholastica Turner-Moore from Texas Southern University.

Study Purpose/Description: This study seeks to determine and evaluate whether early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices regarding social-emotional learning, reading pedagogy, teachers' educational attainment, and years of early childhood experience enhance children's emerging literacy development in early childhood classrooms. This study focuses on non-governmental early childcare initiatives in the Southeastern United States. It will concentrate on non-government-funded childcare services with prekindergarten teachers who are at least 18 years old, assigned to a preschool classroom (children ages 3 and 4), and have engaged children in emergent literacy activities. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) offers a sample of about 2,300 licensed home-based, center-based, urban, suburban, and rural childcare services from their state-managed, comprehensive public database (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2022). The survey will be taken online through Google Forms, and completion time is predicted to be between five and seven minutes.

Risk: The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: You are not expected to receive direct use due to the research.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate at all or cease participation in the study before its completion. You will not be penalized for not participating in the study.

Anonymity: Your identity will not be attached to the data (you will remain anonymous). Should you need to identify yourself, you will be provided advance notification. However, you will not be identified unless you grant permission.

Confidentiality: Your information will be maintained in the strictest terms of confidentiality, including, but not limited to, secured access, whether physical or electronic security.

Records (Physical): Completed survey instruments will be stored in a locked file cabinet on the campus of Texas Southern University, within the Curriculum and Instruction Department's secured file room.

Records (Electronic): Electronic data records will be password protected, and only the investigator (and co-investigators) will have password access.

Records (Public): Records used in this study are made available and accessible to the general public.

This study has been explained to me. I have had an opportunity to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. Suppose I have questions about my rights as a research participant. In that case, I can call the Texas Southern University Office of Research at 713-313-4301 or visit the Texas Southern University website (http://www.tsu.edu/research).

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Should you have questions or need to contact me about the research, I may be reached at the e-mail address on the front of this Informed Consent document. You may also contact my advisor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Jacqueline Smith, at 713-313-7496.

My signature affirms that I have read, agreed to, and understand this Informed Consent form, my rights as a participant, and the research in which I agree to participate.

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

RECRUITMENT FLYER

TSU
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

College of Education
Curriculum and Instruction Department

We are seeking early childhood teachers

What is the study about?

The Emergent Literacy Survey (ELS) aims to compile a profile of instructional beliefs and practices to increase kindergarten readiness and future academic success.

How long is the survey?

The survey will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete.

What subjects are covered in the survey?

It covers phonological awareness and social-emotional instructional beliefs and practices.

Who can participate?

  ▪ Adults over the age of 18.

  ▪ Early childhood teachers.

How can you submit your survey?

The survey can be taken from your mobile devices, desktops, or laptop computers.

Confidentiality

The survey is confidential, and all responses and comments are completely anonymous.

Thank you in advance for your participation,

Sincerely,

Scholastica Turner-Moore

Scholastica Turner-Moore, M.Ed.
Scholastica.Moore@tsu.edu
203.282.4088

Apply now by filling out the **Emergent Literacy Survey (ELS)** at
https://forms.gle/JBWKUYsZJimsmYHR6

APPENDIX C

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

TSU
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Emergent Literacy Survey (ELS)

Thank you for completing the **Emergent Literacy Survey (ELS)**. The survey should take approximately 5-7 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip questions or discontinue at any time without any penalty.

Part I: Teacher's Demographic Information   This section will be asking you questions relating to your local-level grouping in which you work and your immediate supervisor.

1. My gender is
- o Male
- o Female

2. My cultural/ethnic background is (check all that apply).

- o White
- o Hispanic or Latino
- o Black or African American
- o Asian
- o American Indian and Alaska Native
- o Two or more races

3. My age group is

- o 18-25 years
- o 26-30 years
- o 31-35
- o 36-40
- o 41-45
- o 46-49
- o Over 50 years

4. My education level is
- o Some High School
- o GED
- o High School Diploma
- o Some College Courses
- o Associate degree
- o Bachelor's Degree
- o Master's Degree
- o Doctorate Degree

5. Prekindergarten (ages 3 and 4) Knowledge
- o Childcare Teacher Experience
- o Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential
- o Some early childhood college courses
- o Early Childhood Associates Degree
- o Early Childhood Bachelor's Degree

o   Early Childhood Master's degree
    o   Early Childhood Doctorate Degree
 	
6. My total years teaching early childhood is
    o   None
    o   I am a child development student
    o   Less than one year
    o   1-2 years
    o   3-4 years
    o   5-7 years
    o   8-10 years
    o 11+ years					

Part II: Emergent Literacy Beliefs and Practices

Directions: Please rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

       (1) Strongly Disagree   (2) Disagree   (3) Neutral   (4) Agree   (5) Strongly Agree

Phonological Awareness

For this section, we ask you to think about the **phonological awareness instruction** that occurs before learning to read.

7. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to include environmental print (e.g., student's names, a visual diagram that illustrates the sequence of daily activities, item descriptions, helper duties, and school conduct)?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to demonstrate matching letter sounds to the letters being written? *	1	2	3	4	5
9. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to incorporate songs that include rhyming words (e.g., "5 Little Monkeys Swinging in a Tree"; "Open Shut Them")? *	1	2	3	4	5

Motivation to Read

For this section, we are asking you to think about the instruction that **motivates children to read** that occurs before learning to read.

5. Motivation to read includes helping students understand and comprehend common signs and symbols in seen in neighborhoods, student name recognition, sequence of activities, classroom material descriptions, helper duties, and acceptable school conduct.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Motivation to read includes reading favorite books my students engage in and interact with.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Motivation to read includes placing my students' favorite books in the book center so they can read/look at them whenever they want.	1	2	3	4	5

Phonemic Awareness

For this section, we ask you to think about the instruction that introduces sounds (phonemes) that occur before learning to read.

Phonemes **8. Phonemes** include model speaking phrases and pairing alphabet pronunciation (phoneme) with the alphabet documented (scribed).	1	2	3	4	5
Rhyming **7. Rhyming** includes supporting children in singing songs that have rhyming words (e.g., "I'm a Little Tea Pot,"; "Down by the Bay,"; "Five Green and Speckled Frogs").	1	2	3	4	5
Onset rime **6. Onset and rime** include wordplay activities to highlight rhyming words (e.g., singing along a rhythm or movements: "Teacher speak 'fig,' you say [jig, rig, wig, twig." Student attempts to replace the missing portion with a rhyming word; photos are incorporated to assist with unfamiliar terms).	1	2	3	4	5

	1	2	3	4	5
Syllabication **7. Syllabication** includes modeling putting hands together one time to represent individual sounds in students' names, followed by asking students to repeat the pattern.	1	2	3	4	5
Blending **8. Blending** includes using blocks or photos to illustrate combining individual words to form new words (compound word) (e.g., "foot" photo of one foot and a photo of a "ball," arranged separately and then placed together to show compound structure "football").	1	2	3	4	5
Segmenting **9. Segmenting** includes using blocks or photos to illustrate separating compound words to form individual words (word segmenting) (e.g., "football" one image of football, then gently slide the picture of the "foot" from the "ball" photo to show segmenting structure "foot" and "ball"); demonstrate the gradual separation during the introduction phase.	1	2	3	4	5
Alphabet Knowledge For this section, we ask you to think about the instruction that **introduces letters** that occurs before learning to read.					
10. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to incorporate alphabet knowledge activities (e.g., "match the uppercase letter "A" with the lowercase letter "a")? *	1	2	3	4	5
11. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to include alphabet knowledge activities (e.g., "sort all of the letters with straight lines from the letters with curved lines)? *	1	2	3	4	5
12. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to include alphabet knowledge activities (e.g., "write the first letter you hear in the word "sun")? *	1	2	3	4	5
Read-Aloud Skills For this section, we are asking you to think about the instruction that **introduces reading** behaviors that occurs before learning to read.					
13. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to demonstrate read-aloud activities (e.g., identifying parts of a book, "front cover," "back cover," "the spine" of the book)? *	1	2	3	4	5
14. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to demonstrate read-aloud activities (e.g., identifying, "tracking words from left to right," "tracking words from top to bottom" and " "turning page after reading last word" of the previous page)? *	1	2	3	4	5
15. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to model read-aloud activities (e.g., identifying "the author writes the words, and "the illustrator draws the pictures")? *	1	2	3	4	5
Print Concepts For this section, we are asking you to think about the instruction that **introduces print concepts** that occur before learning to read.					
16. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to connect the student's real-life experiences to an occurrence in a read-aloud (e.g., linking a visit to the supermarket during or after a supermarket story has been shared)? *	1	2	3	4	5
17. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to utilize different voice tones, facial emotions, and body language to show grammar mechanics such as a period, question mark, or exclamation mark? *	1	2	3	4	5
Emergent Literacy Beliefs and Practices For this section, we ask you to think about the instruction that **includes your beliefs and practices involving your student's current emergent literacy** skills.					
	1	2	3	4	5

18. In your opinion, how prepared do you believe your students' overall emergent literacy development (e.g., motivation to read, phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, read-aloud skills, print concepts, and social-emotional learning?*				
Part III: Social-Emotional For this section, we ask you to consider the instruction introducing social-emotional skills before entering kindergarten.				
19. Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to incorporate rules and routines during the structure of the day? *				
Behavior Control **20.** Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to help children describe their feelings (e.g., In notice you were shouting when you ask to play with the toy; are you feeling angry; I noticed you did not wait for your turn in line; are you concerned that we will not have a toy for you to play with?).*	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional Control **21.** Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to encourage them to finish the project they have started before starting a new one? *	1	2	3	4	5
Control of Attention **22.** Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to set a schedule, area in the classroom, and items for individual and collaborative tasks? *	1	2	3	4	5
Relationship with Others **23.** Of all the learning activities you use with your students, how important is it to offer opportunities to develop a value for diversity (e.g., ethnicity, background, individual preferences, and dialect?) *	1	2	3	4	5
Social Awareness **24.** In your opinion, how prepared are you to prove social-emotional learning? *	1	2	3	4	5
Part IV. Reading Pedagogy For this section, we ask you to think about the instruction that **introduces reading instruction** that occurs before kindergarten.				
25. In your opinion, early reading instruction encompasses a range of teaching practices that place the primary role on the teacher. *	1	2	3	4	5

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