

# Numeracy Development in Early Childhood Education: Experiences of Kindergarten Teachers in the Division of Davao Del Norte

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**Abstract:** This study takes a deep dive into how kindergarten teachers in Langilan District, Davao del Norte view the growth of numeracy skills in their young learners. Through meaningful conversations with ten public kindergarten teachers, I set out to gather their personal stories, their strategies for overcoming challenges, and the insights they've gleaned about teaching math effectively to little ones. During our chats, three major themes really stood out. First off, these dedicated teachers emphasized how crucial early intervention is for developing children's math abilities. They genuinely believe that beginning this journey at a young age can profoundly influence a child's educational path. Secondly, they highlighted the magic that happens when play is woven into their lessons. Making numeracy concepts fun not only helps kids grasp them more easily but also turns the learning process into an enjoyable adventure. The joy in their voices as they shared their playful teaching methods was truly inspiring—it's clear they see learning as a delightful journey. That said, the teachers did open up about the tough challenges they encounter, especially concerning limited resources. They spoke candidly about these obstacles, but rather than allowing discouragement to set in, they shared creative ways to make the best of what they have. Many talked about the importance of teamwork with their colleagues, exchanging materials and ideas, and they expressed their determination to advocate for more support and funding for their programs. Moreover, their experiences underscored the importance of customizing learning experiences to fit each child's unique needs. They recognized that blending numeracy into the curriculum and linking it to real-life situations could greatly enrich students' understanding and excitement about math.

**Keywords:** Numeracy Development, Kindergarten Teachers, Early Childhood Education, Qualitative-Phenomenology.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Helping young children develop their math skills is incredibly important for their future success. In Davao del Norte, Philippines, kindergarten teachers play a key role in guiding these little ones as they take their first steps into the world of numbers. These early years are so crucial for cognitive growth; when teachers provide engaging and effective math instruction, it can really boost children's confidence and abilities in math.

The goal of this study is to explore the experiences and insights of kindergarten teachers in the Langilan District as they work to nurture numeracy skills. By listening to their stories, we can gain a better understanding of the methods they use, the challenges they encounter, and the creative ways they make math fun and accessible for their young learners.

## II. METHODS

This study was driven by a genuine desire to understand the real-life experiences of kindergarten teachers. We approached this exploration through a qualitative-phenomenological lens, aiming to grasp their unique perspectives. To achieve this, we spoke with ten public kindergarten teachers from the Langilan District, carefully choosing individuals who brought diverse experiences and teaching contexts to the table. Each interview, lasting about 45 to 60 minutes, was guided by semi-structured questions that delved into important topics, including their teaching methods, the challenges they face, and their strategies for managing the demands of teaching numeracy.

With the consent of the participants, we recorded our conversations to ensure that every detail was captured in our analysis, later transcribing them word for word.

To make sense of the rich data we collected, we used thematic analysis based on the framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). We immersed ourselves in the transcripts, reading them multiple times to uncover recurring patterns and themes. Throughout this process, three significant themes came to light: the crucial role of early intervention, the power of effective engagement through play-based learning, and the challenges posed by limited resources. It was important to us to maintain high ethical standards during the study, ensuring that we obtained informed consent from the participants and safeguarded their confidentiality.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### A. The Critical Importance of Early Intervention

Teachers across the board recognized how vital it is to focus on numeracy skills right from early childhood. They unanimously shared that foundational skills, such as counting and number recognition, are crucial for children's future success in mathematics. It's not just about helping those who might struggle; it's about ensuring every child has a strong basis in numbers as part of a comprehensive education. They believe that when we invest in these early skills, we are setting up all children for a brighter academic future.

#### B. Learning Through Play

Many of the teachers expressed their passion for incorporating play into their lessons to make numeracy more enjoyable. By utilizing games, hands-on activities, and relatable real-life scenarios, they've created vibrant, interactive learning environments. This approach resonates with research that highlights the benefits of play in cognitive growth, and it allows children to seamlessly integrate math skills into their everyday lives. Teachers found that those playful moments not only engage students but also help them see the relevance of numeracy outside the classroom.

#### C. Confronting Resource Challenges

Despite their dedication and innovative spirit, teachers often face the tough reality of limited resources. It's disheartening for them to work with inadequate materials, which can make it challenging to implement their teaching ideas fully. However, there's an inspiring sense of resilience among these educators; they frequently collaborate and share resources with one another to overcome these obstacles. Many also voiced a desire for greater support from school administrations and the broader community. This reinforces findings from research that underscore how crucial resource availability is for effective teaching.

Overall, these insights shed light on the pressing need for ongoing professional development for kindergarten teachers, enabling them to refine their teaching methods. They also highlight the importance of enhancing institutional support and exploring innovative teaching strategies to improve early childhood numeracy outcomes.

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