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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Impact Of Face-To-Face Class Resumption on Early Childhood Development Competencies

Juneta Taneo[1], Kaitlin Marie Opingo[2], and Adrian Duite[s3]

[1]*Tingo Elementary School, Philippines*
[2,3]*Cebu Technological University, Philippines*
Corresponding Author: Juneta Taneo, **E-mail**: junetataneo@gamil.com

| ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of face-to-face class resumption on the Early Childhood Development (ECD) competencies of kindergarten learners. Using a descriptive-quantitative research design, the study assessed 86 participants comprising 2 teacher respondents and 84 kindergarten learners through the standardized Early Childhood Development (ECD) checklist issued by the Department of Education (DepEd). This tool measured learner progress across multiple domains: socio-emotional, gross motor, fine motor, self-help, receptive and expressive language, and cognitive development. Pre- and post-assessment results showed marked developmental improvements in all areas following the resumption of face-to-face classes. Regular school attendance further supported learner engagement and exposure to formal instruction. The use of paired samples t-test revealed statistically significant differences between pre- and post- assessment scores, affirming the positive impact of in-person learning modalities. To address residual developmental gaps and reinforce instructional effectiveness, an Enhancement Plan was developed. The plan featured targeted, phase-based interventions aligned with DepEd's quarterly framework. The study affirmed that structured early learning environments and consistent school attendance were critical in promoting holistic growth among young learners in the post-pandemic context.

| KEYWORDS

Face to Face Class, Early Childhood Development, Pre- and post-assessment results

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

The return to face-to-face classes following the COVID-19 pandemic represents a critical phase in the recovery, particularly in geographically and economically challenged areas such as Olango Island. The abrupt transition to remote learning during the pandemic disrupted conventional teaching approaches and posed significant challenges to the holistic development of young learners (Adi Badiozaman et al., 2020). Early childhood education thrives on interactive, play-based, and experiential learning, which was severely constrained in virtual or home-based learning setups (UNESCO, 2021). The lack of direct engagement and sensory-rich experiences limited children's opportunities to build essential cognitive, language, and motor skills. Recent studies have revealed that prolonged school closures and remote instruction resulted in marked learning losses, especially in literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional domains (Dorn et al., 2021; Engzell et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2022). These disruptions have been more profound among children from low-resource communities, where limited access to technology and parental support further widened educational disparities.

Following the disruption caused by the pandemic, research indicates that early childhood learners have continued to face significant developmental and learning challenges even after schools reopened. A systematic review by Uğraş (2023) found that school closures and remote learning contributed to measurable learning losses in foundational skills such as reading, numeracy, and school readiness among young children, with losses equivalent to several months of instruction and particularly

severe among vulnerable populations. Similarly, Zhao and Lee (2023) highlighted that post-pandemic recovery in early childhood education has been uneven, with children from low-resource contexts experiencing slower progress in academic and socio-emotional domains compared to their peers. Furthermore, Kuhfeld et al. (2022) and Kim (2024) emphasized that the prolonged absence of face-to-face interaction not only hindered cognitive growth but also adversely affected emotional regulation, peer relationships, and behavioral development, underscoring the lasting socio-emotional toll of remote instruction on young learners. These findings collectively demonstrate that the resumption of in-person learning requires targeted interventions to address both academic and psychosocial dimensions of recovery in early childhood education.

According to UNICEF (2022), young children who missed structured early education during the pandemic face long-term cognitive and social development challenges, making it essential to assess their progress upon returning to in-person learning. Given these concerns, understanding the impact of face-to-face class resumption on early childhood development (ECD) competencies is vital. Teachers play a crucial role in preparing learners to reintegrate into structured educational settings by providing structured instruction, targeted interventions, and socio-emotional support (Vygotsky, 1978; Pianta et al., 2021). At Tingo Elementary School, teachers have observed that many learners still rely on passive learning techniques and struggle with independent task completion. Furthermore, most learners have difficulties adjusting to classroom routines, following instructions, maintaining focus during lessons, and developing age-appropriate socio-emotional and motor skills. These challenges, which were less evident before the pandemic, indicate a need for a comprehensive evaluation of ECD competencies to determine the extent of the learning gap and the necessary interventions.

Additionally, the study will assess the level of early childhood development competencies of kindergarten learners before and after the school year, as perceived by teacher respondents, focusing on key domains such as health, well-being, and motor development; socio-emotional development; language, literacy, and communication; mathematics; and understanding of the physical and natural environment. Furthermore, it seeks to determine whether there is a significant difference between learners' ECD competencies before and after the school year, providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of face-to-face learning in recovering lost skills.

In light of these considerations, this study seeks to provide empirical insights into how the resumption of face-to-face classes has influenced the developmental competencies of kindergarten learners at Tingo Elementary School. By examining key domains of early childhood development namely health, well-being, and motor development; socio-emotional growth; language and literacy; mathematical understanding; and awareness of the physical and natural environment this research aims to capture a holistic picture of learners' progress following the transition from remote to in-person instruction. The findings are expected to inform evidence-based strategies for strengthening early childhood education delivery in the post-pandemic era. Ultimately, the results of this study will serve as the foundation for an enhancement plan that supports teachers, administrators, and policymakers in addressing learning gaps, fostering equitable development, and ensuring that young learners in Tingo Elementary School and similar underserved contexts are given the optimal conditions to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally in the renewed face-to-face learning environment.

Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted early childhood education (ECE) systems worldwide, altering teaching methods and children's learning environments. Early learning, which relies heavily on interactive, sensory, and play-based experiences, suffered due to the prolonged closure of schools and the sudden adoption of remote modalities (Kim, 2023; Marsh et al., 2022). Studies have shown that young learners experienced setbacks in foundational literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional development as a result of reduced teacher-student interaction and limited peer engagement (Andrew et al., 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2022). Furthermore, inadequate access to technology and parental capacity to support online learning amplified educational inequalities, particularly in developing and rural communities (Tiruchittampalam et al., 2023). These gaps not only delayed developmental milestones but also emphasized the importance of restoring in-person instruction to rebuild learners' academic and social skills.

Following the resumption of face-to-face classes, research has focused on the recovery trajectory of children's competencies and the role of schools in facilitating holistic development. Empirical findings indicate that reintegrating learners into physical classrooms enhances motivation, social adjustment, and cognitive growth through active participation and multisensory learning experiences (Donohue & Miller, 2022; Oktaviani & Retnawati, 2024). Face-to-face settings allow for real-time feedback, structured routines, and the reestablishment of social relationships that are vital for emotional regulation and cooperation (Basri et al., 2022). However, educators face ongoing challenges in addressing learning gaps caused by prolonged disruptions, particularly in language acquisition, fine motor skills, and problem-solving (Pérez et al., 2023). Thus, post-pandemic studies emphasize the need for targeted intervention programs and enhanced pedagogical strategies to strengthen early childhood education and promote equitable learning outcomes in the recovery phase.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to examine the impact of face-to-face class resumption on the early childhood development competencies of kindergarten learners. The descriptive component aimed to identify and describe the current developmental levels of learners across the different domains prescribed by the Department of Education (DepEd). According to Creswell (1994), descriptive research is appropriate when a phenomenon is insufficiently explored and seeks to provide an accurate account of existing conditions. In this study, it was used to assess learners' developmental competencies before and after the resumption of in-person classes. The comparative aspect of the design was utilized to analyze variations in learners' developmental progress across two time points the beginning and end of the school year allowing for the identification of significant improvements or persistent gaps in development. The respondents of the study consisted of 86 participants, comprising 2 kindergarten teachers and 84 kindergarten learners enrolled at Tingo Elementary School. Data were collected using the standardized Early Childhood Development (ECD) Checklist developed and implemented by DepEd. This instrument evaluates multiple developmental domains, including socio-emotional skills, gross and fine motor development, self-help abilities, receptive and expressive language, and cognitive competencies (DepEd, 2015). The checklist enabled teachers to systematically document each child's developmental progress and readiness for formal education. The collected data were analyzed to determine developmental changes and areas needing enhancement, providing a research-based foundation for the proposed improvement plan to strengthen early learning programs in the post-pandemic setting.

Results

Table 1. Age and Gender of the Learners

		Frequency	Percentage
A. Age [in years]			
5		84	100.00
	Mean: 5.00		
	StDev: 0.00		
B. Gender			
Female		41	48.81
Male		43	51.19

Table 1 presents the age and gender distribution of the kindergarten learners. All 84 respondents were five years old, with a mean age of 5.00 and a standard deviation of 0.00, indicating that the group was age-homogeneous and appropriately aligned with the standard age requirement for kindergarten as set by the Department of Education. In terms of gender, 43 learners (51.19%) were male, while 41 learners (48.81%) were female, showing a nearly balanced distribution between boys and girls. This balance suggests that both genders were equally represented in the study, allowing for unbiased assessment of developmental competencies across domains. The uniformity in age supports the validity of the developmental comparisons conducted within this research.

Table 2. Parent's Occupation and Combined Monthly Family Income

	Frequency	Percentage
C. Parent's Occupation		
Fisherman	30	35.71
Factory Worker	14	16.67
Vendor	9	10.71
Househelper	8	9.52
OFW	6	7.14
Driver	5	5.95
Laborer	5	5.95
Others	7	8.33
D. Combined Family Monthly Income		

Less than 9,100 (Poor)	21	25.10
9,100 - 18,200 (Lower Income)	52	63.10
18,200 - 36,400 (Lower Middle Class)	3	3.57
36,400 - 63,700 (Middle Class)	7	8.33

Table 2 presents the distribution of learners' parents according to occupation and combined monthly family income. The data reveal that most parents were fishermen (35.71%), reflecting the coastal livelihood characteristic of Olango Island. Other common occupations included factory workers (16.67%), vendors (10.71%), and househelpers (9.52%), indicating that a large portion of the families rely on low-income and informal employment sectors. In terms of household income, the majority of families (63.10%) fell within the lower-income bracket (₱9,100–₱18,200), while 25.10% were classified as poor, earning below ₱9,100 monthly. Only a small proportion (11.9%) belonged to the lower middle to middle-class categories. These figures highlight the community's predominantly low socioeconomic status, which may affect children's access to educational resources and developmental support at home.

Table 3. Level of ECD Assessment of the Kindergarten Learners (Before school year)

	Indicators	Mean	StDev	Interpretation
A.	Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development	1.99	0.61	Developing
B.	Socio-emotional Development	1.96	0.63	Developing
C.	Language, Literacy, and Communication	1.75	0.71	Developing
D.	Mathematics	1.66	0.72	Developing
E.	Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment	2.06	0.58	Developing
	Aggregated Mean:	1.88	0.65	Developing

Table 3 presents the Early Childhood Development (ECD) assessment results of kindergarten learners at Tingo Elementary School before the start of the school year. The overall aggregated mean of 1.88 (SD = 0.65) indicates that the learners were generally at the "Developing" stage across all assessed domains. Among the areas evaluated, Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment obtained the highest mean score (2.06), suggesting relatively better awareness of their surroundings. In contrast, Mathematics recorded the lowest mean (1.66), showing that learners exhibited limited readiness in basic numeracy skills. Likewise, competencies in Language, Literacy, and Communication (1.75) and Socio-emotional Development (1.96) were still emerging. Overall, these results imply that learners were still developing foundational skills expected at the start of kindergarten, likely influenced by prior disruptions in early learning experiences during remote education.

Table 4. Level of ECD Assessment of the Kindergarten Learners (Post- School Year)

	Indicators	Mean	StDev	Interpretation
A.	Health, Well-Being, and Motor Developmen t	2.38	0.51	Consistent
B.	Socio-emotional Development	2.37	0.52	Consistent
C.	Language, Literacy, and Communication	2.33	0.54	Developing
D.	Mathematics	2.24	0.58	Developing
E.	Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment	2.41	0.49	Consistent
	Aggregated Mean:	2.35	0.53	Consistent

Table 4 presents the post-school year Early Childhood Development (ECD) assessment results of kindergarten learners at Tingo Elementary School. The aggregated mean of 2.35 (SD = 0.53) indicates that the learners' overall developmental level improved to the "Consistent" category, signifying notable progress across most developmental domains after the resumption of face-to-face learning. The highest mean was observed in Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment (2.41), reflecting enhanced awareness and curiosity fostered by hands-on, experiential classroom activities. Similarly, Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development (2.38) and Socio-emotional Development (2.37) both reached the "Consistent" level, suggesting that physical play and peer interaction contributed to improved coordination and emotional regulation. Meanwhile, Language, Literacy, and Communication (2.33) and Mathematics (2.24) remained in the "Developing" stage, indicating steady but slower gains in

cognitive and linguistic skills. Overall, these results demonstrate that face-to-face instruction positively influenced the learners' holistic development, particularly in physical, emotional, and environmental awareness domains.

Table 5. Difference Between the ECD Assessment of the Kindergarten Learners Before and After the School Year

	Before and After	t-value	p-value	Significance	Result
a.	Health, Well-Being, and MotorD evelopment	-7.34	0.000	Significant	Ho rejected
b.	Socio-emotional Development	-7.42	0.000	Significant	Ho rejected
c.	Language, Literacy, and Comm unication	-10.98	0.000	Significant	Ho rejected
d.	Mathematics	-10.97	0.000	Significant	Ho rejected
e.	Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment	-6.83	0.000	Significant	Ho rejected
	Level of ECD Assessment	-9.35	0.000	Significant	Ho rejected

(alpha = 0.05)

Table 5 shows the comparison of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) assessment results of kindergarten learners before and after the school year using a paired sample *t*-test at a 0.05 level of significance. The results reveal that all developmental domains recorded p-values of 0.000, which are below the significance threshold, indicating statistically significant improvements in learners' performance across all areas after the resumption of face-to-face classes. The highest *t*-values were observed in Language, Literacy, and Communication (-10.98) and Mathematics (-10.97), suggesting substantial gains in cognitive and literacy-related competencies. Improvements were also significant in Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development (-7.34), Socio-emotional Development (-7.42), and Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment (-6.83). The overall *t*-value of -9.35 further confirms that learners demonstrated marked developmental progress throughout the school year. These findings affirm that the return to in-person learning had a positive and statistically significant impact on the holistic growth and skill acquisition of kindergarten learners.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a substantial improvement in the early childhood development (ECD) competencies of kindergarten learners at Tingo Elementary School following the resumption of face-to-face classes. The transition from a "Developing" level before the school year (M = 1.88, SD = 0.65) to a "Consistent" level after the school year (M = 2.35, SD = 0.53) underscores the positive impact of direct, in-person instruction on young children's growth. This improvement can be attributed to the return of interactive, play-based, and experiential learning opportunities that are essential in early childhood education (UNESCO, 2021). The strongest gains were observed in Health, Well-being, and Motor Development, and Socio-emotional Development, suggesting that physical activities, structured routines, and peer interactions during in-person learning significantly supported children's holistic development. These results align with global research indicating that the restoration of classroom environments fosters better emotional regulation, social connectedness, and psychomotor skills (Gromada et al., 2021; Donohue & Miller, 2020).

Furthermore, the study shows that Language, Literacy, and Communication and Mathematics exhibited statistically significant improvement but remained at the "Developing" stage, suggesting that cognitive recovery lags slightly behind social and physical domains. This outcome mirrors earlier studies highlighting that literacy and numeracy are the areas most affected by prolonged remote learning interruptions (Engzell et al., 2021). The significant *t*-values across all domains (p = 0.000) indicate that the resumption of face-to-face classes played a crucial role in mitigating learning loss and re-establishing foundational competencies. These findings imply that continued emphasis on active, engaging, and differentiated instruction can sustain developmental progress. Hence, there is a need for an enhancement plan focusing on literacy and numeracy enrichment, teacher training in developmental pedagogy, and community support programs to strengthen early learning continuity, particularly in underserved island communities like Olango.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the resumption of face-to-face classes significantly enhanced the early childhood development (ECD) competencies of kindergarten learners at Tingo Elementary School during the 2024–2025 school year. The learners demonstrated marked improvement across all five developmental domains—health, well-being, and motor development; socio-emotional development; language, literacy, and communication; mathematics; and understanding of the physical and natural

environment. Statistical analysis confirmed significant differences between pre- and post-assessment results, validating the positive impact of in-person instruction. The findings underscored the vital role of consistent attendance, teacher-facilitated learning, and structured classroom environments in supporting holistic child development. Despite socio-economic challenges, the study affirmed that face-to-face learning provided essential opportunities for hands-on, interactive, and socially enriched experiences that remote learning could not fully offer. Overall, the results emphasized the need to sustain and strengthen early childhood education programs through responsive teaching practices and targeted interventions, especially in underserved communities.

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