


Interplay of Pre-Service Teachers' Sex, Competence and Readiness in Early Childhood Education Program: The Case of an HEI in the Philippines

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curriculum, developmental characteristics, learning experiences

Abstract. This study aimed to: (1) assess the competence and readiness levels of pre-service teachers across the seven domains of the ECE Program; (2) correlate competence and readiness levels between and among these domains; and (3) determine whether male pre-service teachers have higher competence than females in the seven domains after controlling for readiness differences. Using a descriptive-quantitative research design - specifically correlational and comparative analysis, this study described the existing levels and relationships among variables without manipulating them or establishing causal effects. Through a validated survey-questionnaire, the study was administered to 36 Pre-Service Teachers of NVSU –Main Campus, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. Findings reveal balanced competence and readiness of pre-service teachers in the seven domains of the ECE Program. A significant positive correlation between competence and readiness across the seven domains surfaced, but no significant gender differences in competence when controlling for readiness. These results provide insights into teacher preparation quality and equity; hence, it is recommended that the locale continues integrative, practice-oriented teacher education emphasizing health, safety, assessment, family engagement, and personal growth. Likewise, gender-neutral policies and support should be maintained, ensuring equitable competence development among all pre-service teachers, thereby fostering effective and inclusive early childhood education nationwide.

Introduction

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program in the Philippines is a learner-centered curriculum designed to develop holistic young learners who are equipped with foundational 21st century skills. Anchored on the principles of play-based and developmentally appropriate practices, the curriculum emphasizes cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of Filipino children to prepare them for formal schooling and lifelong learning (Department of Education, 2023). This program operates in accordance with national legislations such as the Kindergarten Education Act (RA 10157) and the Early Childhood Care and Development Systems Act (RA 10410), which mandate that early learning experiences be culturally responsive, inclusive, and aligned with professional teaching standards (Republic Act No. 10410, 2013).

While prior research such as Almasa (2020) and Aquino (2017) validate curricular alignment and pre-service teacher competencies, and studies like Bajan et al. (2025) and Mahinay et al. (2024) focus on readiness and performance in the Philippines, few have examined the composite effect of these factors inclusive of gender dynamics. Building on national frameworks such as the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (DepEd, 2017) and Commission on Higher Education guidelines (CHED, 2017), the study broadens existing literature by investigating all seven ECE domains within a university setting and incorporating sex as a variable to assess competence disparities. This focus parallels Bartolome and Mamat's (2020) emphasis on family involvement and Caballong's (2024) call for continuous professional learning development, ensuring a comprehensive approach to teacher preparation. The study differs from local investigations by integrating competence and readiness across domains holistically rather than in isolation, aligning with demands of the Kindergarten Curriculum Framework (DepEd, 2023).

Moreover, the research uniquely controls for readiness levels in evaluating gender differences in competence, yielding insights into equitable development within teacher education programs - a perspective underscored by Garcia and Reyes (2024). Such investigation into gender parity complements broader national priorities on inclusive education and equitable resource access, filling a critical gap in the discourse on teacher preparation and professional growth in the Philippines. Consequently, the findings hold implications for policy and curriculum development aiming for excellence and equity in early childhood education. Understanding and prioritizing early childhood education (ECE) in the Philippine education system is crucial because it lays the foundation for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of young children. The formative years, from birth to around age five, are critical for developing key skills such as language acquisition, motor abilities, emotional regulation, and social interaction, which significantly influence lifelong learning and success. High-quality ECE programs help children develop these foundational skills effectively, preparing them for formal schooling and future academic achievement.

Furthermore, early childhood education supports families, especially working parents, by providing a safe and nurturing environment for children. This support facilitates parental employment and educational pursuits, which in turn strengthen the overall well-being of families and communities. The government of the Philippines recognizes the importance of ECE, as evidenced by policies such as the Early Childhood Care and Development Act (Republic Act 8980) and initiatives expanding child development centers to underserved areas, underlining ECE as a strategic national priority that impacts long-term human capital development. ECE emphasizes a holistic approach to child development, focusing not just on academics but also on social and emotional growth, physical health, and values formation. A strong foundation in these areas fosters well-rounded future citizens capable of contributing positively to society. Practice of developmentally appropriate, play-based learning ensures that children engage with their environment in ways that bolster creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving skills that are essential in later stages of education and in life.

This study addresses significant research gaps by analyzing the interactions of sex, competence, and readiness of pre-service teachers in Nueva Vizcaya State University – Main Campus, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. It provides evidence-based recommendations to policymakers and educators, informing targeted interventions to enhance teacher preparation while advancing gender equity in line with Philippine education standards, thereby contributing to the nation's commitment to quality and inclusive early childhood education. The interplay of readiness and competence among pre-service teachers in teaching Early Childhood Education (ECE) is fundamentally critical to their effectiveness and success in the classroom. Readiness encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and practical preparedness of pre-service teachers to engage with the dynamic demands of early childhood learners. Competence refers to their demonstrated abilities in pedagogy, content knowledge, classroom management, assessment, and professional engagement. Together, these elements form a synergistic relationship where readiness sets the foundation for acquiring and applying the competencies necessary for quality teaching.

Well-prepared pre-service teachers with strong competencies contribute significantly to early childhood development by fostering developmentally appropriate learning environments and meeting the holistic needs of young learners. This highlights that teacher education programs must holistically develop both readiness and competence through aligned curriculum, hands-on practice, and reflective professional development. The synergy between these constructs ensure graduates are confident, capable, and responsive to the complexities of early childhood education. It is on these premises that this study was developed. It sought to highlight readiness and competence are mutually reinforcing qualities that together determine the quality of pre-service teachers in ECE. Effective teacher preparation must nurture both dimensions to produce educators who are not only prepared but also capable of delivering high-quality educational experiences for young children, thereby fulfilling the goals of early childhood education in the Philippines.

Statement of the Objectives

The study aimed to determine the interactions of pre-service teachers' sex, competence and readiness levels in the seven domains of early childhood education program of the Nueva Vizcaya State University for Academic Year 2025-2026.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Assess the competence and Readiness levels of pre-service teachers in the seven domains of Early Childhood Education Program;
2. Correlate the competence level and readiness level of pre-service teachers between and among the seven domains of Early Childhood Education Program;
3. Determine whether male pre-service teachers have higher competence in the seven domains of ECE Program than females after controlling differences in their readiness levels.

Statement of Null Hypothesis

There is no significant correlation between the readiness and competency levels of the pre-service teachers, in the Early Childhood Education different domains.

Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive-quantitative research design particularly the correlational and comparative analyses to comprehensively assess the interactions among pre-service teachers' sex, competence, and readiness levels across the seven domains of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program at Nueva Vizcaya State University. Descriptive research design is characterized by the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to describe phenomena, identify patterns, and delineate relationships without manipulating variables (Scribbr, 2023). The correlational aspect allowed the researcher to examine the strength and direction of relationships between competence and readiness levels within and across the seven ECE domains, highlighting how these variables covary. On the other hand, the comparative analysis enabled assessment of differences in competence between male and female pre-service teachers, controlling for readiness differences, thus providing insights into gender-related disparities or equivalences in teacher preparation. This combined descriptive-quantitative design aligns well with the study's objectives: first, to assess the competence and readiness of pre-service teachers, thereby describing their current levels across ECE domains; second, to explore the correlations between competence and readiness levels, revealing inter-domain relationships; and third, to determine gender differences in competence while accounting for readiness levels, an important analysis for equity in teacher education.

Research Environment

Nueva Vizcaya State University – Bayombong Campus, was the research locale of this study. Specifically, this will be conducted in the College of Teacher Education (CTEd), one of the colleges on the main campus.

The CTEd contributes to the University's sustainable development goals by producing globally competitive graduates equipped with 21st century skills and values, advancing research and development through studies that address educational needs, and translating into meaningful community engagement and teacher development programs. By creating innovative instructional materials and teaching technologies, the college supports technology commercialization for wider educational impact.

True to its steadfast dedication in providing world-class, quality teaching and learning services, the College anchors its strategic plans and implementations on the following SDGs: 1 – No Poverty, 3 – Good Health and Well-being, 4 – Quality Education, 5 – Gender Equality, 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, 10 – Reduced Inequalities, 13 – Climate Action, 17 – Partnerships for the Goals.

Research Respondents

The respondents in this study were the elementary pre-service teachers of NVSU-Bayombong Campus, officially enrolled in the College of Teacher Education for school year 2025-2026. This included randomly selected students, from first to third year, full-time BEED, non-ECE students. This facilitated the researcher to capture practicable yet diverse data. This allowed the respondents to share their rich, relevant experiences, providing nuanced understandings by answering the questionnaire. Effective gathering of information through the research instrument was employed to reduce the amount of time spent collecting data. Consideration of the context ensured that the responses gathered from the respondents were in line with the aims of the research.

Inclusion Criteria:

enrolled as BEED (non-ECE) at Nueva Vizcaya State University – Bayombong Campus by the academic year 2025-2026.
Willingness to participate and provide informed consent.
Ability to communicate effectively.

Exclusion Criteria:

Lack of consent or withdrawal from the study
Inability to participate due to severe health condition.

Instrumentation

In this study, the research instrument utilized was a researcher-made questionnaire based on from the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Competency Standards for Child Development Teachers (CDTs), specific content adapted are the early childhood education domains, while the rest will be modified and contextualized to fit the needs of the study.

The seven domains are:

1. Child Growth, Development, and Learning
2. Health, Nutrition, Safety and Well-Being
3. Curriculum
4. Learning Environment and Experiences
5. Assessment and Reporting
6. Family Involvement and Community Linkages
7. Personal and Professional Development

The instrument included each of the seven (7) domains with comprehensive descriptions and with corresponding readiness and competency items and situational scenarios. The research instrument was subjected to content validation, through the scrutiny of subject and content experts in the field.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection began after informed consent was acquired. Copies of the research instrument were given to the respondents for them to answer, in proper coordination with their subject teachers. They were approached during their vacant times in the classroom and/or while inside the university through personal distribution of instruments by their subject teachers, who acted as neutral third-party facilitators. Doing so ensured them a less restrictive and more comfortable environment while answering, but still under the guidance and supervision of the subject teachers, not with the researcher to avoid conflict of interest or imposition of authority.

Data Treatment

To assess the competence and readiness levels of Pre-service teachers in the seven domains of Early Childhood Education Program, Mean and Standard Deviations (SD) were computed and were interpreted based on the table below.

Mean Score Range	Competence Level	Readiness Level
3.500 - 4.000	Very Competent	I am fully ready
2.500 - 3.499	Competent	I am ready
1.500 - 2.499	Partially Competent	I am somewhat ready
1.000 - 1.499	Not Competent	I am not ready

Table 1. Mean Score Range and the Competence and Readiness Level Descriptions

To determine the correlation coefficients between and among the competence and readiness levels of Pre-service teachers in the seven domains of ECD Program, a Spearman-rank correlation was used and was set at 5% level of significance.

To determine whether male pre-service teachers have higher competence in the seven domains of ECE Program than females after controlling differences in their readiness levels, Analysis of Covariance was used and was set at set at 5% level of significance. Also, normality for the data were obtained and ensured that no significant differences appeared in the initial ANOVA test, $F(1,34) = .244, p = .624$.

Ethics Considerations

The research prioritized ethical considerations, ensuring respondents feel secure by avoiding sensitive questions involving personal information. Respondents were provided with complete information about their rights as study participants. Confidentiality was assured, and names did not appear on research documents. The study prioritized respondents' well-being, and dignity. Informed consent forms outline the study's purpose, risks, benefits, and confidentiality measures, ensuring voluntary participation. Respondents' anonymity was maintained through coded identifiers and secure data storage. Disability-sensitive approaches were used to protect vulnerable populations (if any), avoiding stigmatization and accessibility. The research adhered to Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines, UN Convention on Rights of Persons

with Disabilities, and APA Ethics Code principles. Potential risks, such as emotional distress, were carefully mitigated through support service referrals.

AI Usage and Assistance

This work was developed with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools, including Perplexity AI, which supported idea generation, drafting, and content refinement. The role of AI did not compromise authorship integrity or intellectual contributions, as all outputs were thoroughly reviewed, substantively edited, and validated by the author to uphold originality, accuracy, and ethical standards.

Results and Discussion

Section 1. Competence and Readiness levels of Pre-service teachers in the seven domains of Early Childhood Education Program

Section 1A. Competence levels of Pre-service teachers in the seven domains of Early Childhood Education Program

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. Define child's key developmental domains and milestones per age groups (i.e 2 months, 6 months, 2 years, 5 years, etc.)	2.972	.5063	Competent
2. Describe the different developmental characteristics of a child.	3.083	.6492	Competent
3. Apply knowledge of child development and learning in determining children at-risk for delays.	2.972	.6088	Competent
4. Plan developmentally appropriate learning activities.	3.167	.6969	Competent
5. Recognize signs of atypical development or delays.	2.972	.6964	Competent
6. Differentiate between developmental domains: physical (gross & fine motor), cognitive, language, and social-emotional.	3.111	.6223	Competent
7. List common signs of developmental delays or red flags for concern in different domains.	2.917	.6918	Competent
8. Explain the significance of developmental screening and assessment tools.	2.861	.6393	Competent
9. Articulate key factors influencing child development (e.g, genetics, environment, family, culture).	3.028	.6088	Competent
10. Employ principles and theories of child growth and development in classroom settings.	3.083	.6492	Competent
Mean for Domain A: Child Growth, Development and Learning	3.017	.4989	Competent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competent ; 1.50 – 2.49 = Partially Competent;
2.50 – 3.49 = Competent; 3.50 – 4.00 = Very Competent

Table 2. Pre-Service Teachers' Competence on ECE Program along Domain A: Child Growth, Development and Learning

Pre-service teachers' competence in Domain A: Child Growth, Development, and Learning of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program reveals an overall mean score of 3.017 with a standard deviation of 0.4989, indicating a general level of competence among the participants. All specific tasks within the domain - ranging from defining developmental milestones to applying knowledge to identify children at risk - received mean scores between 2.861 and 3.167, with every item qualitatively described as "Competent." This suggests that pre-service teachers generally possess adequate knowledge and skills in understanding child development milestones, characteristics, and assessment within the Philippine context. Notably, tasks such as planning developmentally appropriate learning activities (mean = 3.167) and differentiating developmental domains (mean = 3.111) scored among the highest, reflecting a strong practical orientation in the pre-service teachers' training. Conversely, the competence to explain the significance of developmental screening and assessment tools scored slightly lower (mean = 2.861), which may highlight an area for further strengthening in teacher preparation curricula. This competency is crucial for early identification and intervention of developmental delays, reinforcing the importance of enhancing this aspect in Philippine teacher education programs to better support children's holistic development. The implications for ECE program coordinators and policymakers in the Philippines point to the need for ongoing professional development that hones both theoretical understanding and practical application of child growth and development principles. Strengthening competencies in developmental screening and risk identification will enable future teachers to deliver more responsive and inclusive education. By ensuring pre-service teachers are well-equipped across all critical tasks in Domain A, education institutions can better align their programs with national standards and developmental goals set by DepEd and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), ultimately improving the quality of early childhood education nationwide (DepEd, 2023; CHED, 2017).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Familiar with the process of organizing an up-to-date health record and history of each child.	2.611	.6449	Competent
Know how to read child's nutritional status, log of injuries/illness and medication (If ever)	2.806	.7491	Competent
Aware of the reasons for the need to practice a daily health check to children.	2.944	.7149	Competent
Recognize the importance of showing interest and safety of children in engaging them to various indoor/outdoor activities.	3.083	.6492	Competent
Knowledgeable when to implement policies and regulations regarding health and safety.	3.056	.6738	Competent
Adept on self-control and staying calm in any circumstances so as not to cause panic and insecurity among young children.	2.944	.7149	Competent
Understand basic hygiene principles.	3.278	.7015	Competent
Identify common symptoms of childhood illness.	2.861	.7617	Competent
Aware of classroom and playground safety, proper equipment use, and hazard identification (e.g, reporting removing potential dangers)	3.194	.7099	Competent
Recognize signs of trauma, abuse, distress, and aware of the steps to respond and seek help.	2.806	.7491	Competent
Model healthy and proper eating habits.	3.167	.7368	Competent
Mean for Domain B: Health, Safety, Nutrition and Well-Being	2.977	.582	Competent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competent ; 1.50 – 2.49 = Partially Competent;
2.50 – 3.49 = Competent; 3.50 – 4.00 = Very Competent

Table 3. Pre-Service Teachers' Competence on ECE Program along Domain B: Health, Safety, Nutrition and Well-Being

Pre-service teachers' competence in Domain B: Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being within the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program garners an overall mean score of 2.977 with a standard deviation of 0.582, indicating that pre-service teachers are generally competent in this crucial domain. Across specific tasks such as organizing health records, reading nutritional status, and recognizing signs of trauma or distress, mean scores ranged from 2.611 to 3.278, all qualitatively described as "Competent." This suggests a baseline preparedness among pre-service teachers to manage health, safety, nutrition, and well-being concerns of young learners, a critical aspect of early childhood education in the Philippines. Among the highest-scoring tasks were understanding basic hygiene principles (mean = 3.278), awareness of classroom/playground safety (mean = 3.194), and modeling healthy eating habits (mean = 3.167). These findings emphasize that teachers have a good grasp of everyday practices vital to maintaining a safe and nurturing learning environment. However, slightly lower scores in organizing up-to-date health records (mean = 2.611) and recognizing signs of trauma or abuse (mean = 2.806) highlight areas needing further emphasis in teacher preparation. Strengthening these aspects is essential, given the Department of Education's (DepEd) guidelines and national policies emphasizing comprehensive health monitoring and safeguarding in Filipino early learning centers (DepEd, 2016; ECCD Council, 2020). The implications for teacher education in the Philippines include the necessity of enhancing training programs to build capacity in documenting and responding to health-related issues and child protection concerns. Compliance with national standards such as the Guidelines for the Safe Reopening of ECE and the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Systems Act is critical to safeguard children's well-being and promote quality standards in health and safety practices. Ongoing professional development and practical training modules focusing on child health record management, trauma awareness, and rigorous application of safety policies will strengthen pre-service teachers' competence in this domain, ultimately supporting safer and healthier early learning environments nationwide (DepEd, 2016; ECCD Council, 2020).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Explain essential concept, content areas or domains in early childhood curriculum.	2.917	.6492	Competent
Define objectives and developmentally appropriate strategies for individual children including children with special needs using their developmental level.	3.000	.6325	Competent
Know the principles of teaching letter recognition, initial consonant sounds, vowel sounds, sight words, rhyming, and beginning writing skills like handwriting and simple sentence completion.	2.972	.6540	Competent

Familiar with number recognition, counting, comparing quantities, simple shapes, and patterns, one-to-one correspondence, and basic problem-solving through hands-on activities.	3.167	.6094	Competent
Aware of age-appropriate learning milestones in cognitive, motor, social, and emotional development, and how these are reflected in the curriculum goals and planned activities.	3.083	.6918	Competent
Know strategies in engaging children in creative arts integration that promote thinking, expression, and fine motor skills development (drawing, painting, Role play)	3.111	.7082	Competent
Understand the sequencing and thematic organization of kindergarten curriculum content and the use of appropriate teaching materials and technology.	2.889	.7082	Competent
Mean for Domain C. Curriculum	3.019	.558	Competent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competent ; 1.50 – 2.49 = Partially Competent;
2.50 – 3.49 = Competent; 3.50 – 4.00 = Very Competent

Table 4. Pre-Service Teachers' Competence on ECE Program along Domain C. Curriculum

Shown in Table 4, the pre-service teachers' competence in Domain C: Curriculum highlight that the overall mean score of 3.019, with a standard deviation of 0.558, result indicates that teachers are generally competent in their understanding and application of early childhood curriculum principles. Tasks such as explaining essential concepts, defining objectives, and understanding principles of teaching language, mathematics, and creative arts all received measures within the "Competent" range. This suggests that Filipino pre-service teachers possess a solid foundation in curriculum content and instructional strategies aligned with national standards and frameworks, particularly those outlined in the recent kindergarten curriculum frameworks (DepEd, 2023). Specifically, teachers demonstrated strengths in familiarization with number recognition, counting, and basic problem-solving, as reflected in the mean score of 3.167. Tasks related to integrating arts and understanding thematic teaching strategies also scored well, with means of 3.111 and 3.083 respectively. However, some areas - such as explaining the principles of teaching letter recognition and developing effective curriculum organization - still have room for curricular improvement, as indicated by the mean score of 2.917 and 2.889 respectively. This underscores the importance of enhancing practical applications and pedagogical approaches within teacher training programs to better prepare future educators for the complexities of early childhood curriculum implementation. Implications for teacher education institutions and policymakers in the Philippines include prioritizing curriculum content mastery and instructional skills in pre-service teacher programs. Given the national emphasis on holistic and developmentally appropriate curriculum design, continuous updating of curricula and in-service training are necessary to keep teachers abreast of current pedagogical practices and technological advancements (DepEd, 2023; UST, 2025). Strengthening competency in curriculum planning and delivery will ultimately improve the quality of early childhood education, ensuring that Filipino children receive a robust and engaging foundation that supports their overall development and readiness for formal schooling.

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Aware of the principles of frees spaces for physical movements, like walking, tiptoeing, Jumping and dancing and other play-based activities and areas of interest	3.056	.7538	Competent
Define a responsive, conducive, inclusive, and gender-fair environment.	3.083	.7319	Competent
Explain the four dimensions of the learning environment (temporal, space, thigs, people) and how each influences children's engagement and learning.	2.972	.7741	Competent
Identify strategies for making the classroom environment physically safe, accessible, and inclusive for all children, including those with disabilities.	2.944	.7149	Competent
Name types of material and resources that support active, play-based learning experiences for kindergartners.	3.083	.7700	Competent
Discuss how outdoor environments can be designed and utilized as extensions of the classroom to support gross motor skills and environmental responsibility.	3.056	.6738	Competent
Explain how managing time (temporal dimension) schedule can enhance children's learning and emotional well-being, including transitions and balanced activity periods.	2.972	.7362	Competent

Know the teacher's roles in facilitating play-based learning experiences that stimulate wonder, discovery, and cognitive growth in young children.	3.139	.7232	Competent
Mean for Domain D: The Learning Environment and Experiences	3.038	.645	Competent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competent ; 1.50 – 2.49 = Partially Competent;
2.50 – 3.49 = Competent; 3.50 – 4.00 = Very Competent

Table 5. Pre-Service Teachers' Competence on ECE Program along Domain D: The Learning Environment and Experiences

Data reveals an overall mean score of 3.038 with a standard deviation of 0.645, indicating a competent level of understanding and application of learning environment principles among pre-service teachers. All tasks, from awareness of play-based physical activities to managing time for children's emotional well-being, scored within the "Competent" range. The highest mean score was for the teacher's role in facilitating play-based learning experiences (mean = 3.139), highlighting the recognition among pre-service teachers of their critical role in fostering cognitive growth and discovery through active learning strategies. Importantly, competencies related to defining responsive, inclusive, and gender-fair environments (mean = 3.083), as well as identifying strategies to make classrooms safe and accessible, reflect alignment with national ECE standards emphasizing inclusivity and child-centered learning environments. These findings corroborate the Department of Education's (DepEd) Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016), which mandates that learning environments in early childhood programs must be safe, nurturing, and conducive to exploration. The understanding of temporal, spatial, and social dimensions of the learning environment further demonstrates a holistic view necessary for managing dynamic classroom experiences. Results imply that teacher education programs should include prioritizing comprehensive training on structuring inclusive and safe learning spaces, alongside effective facilitation of play-based learning experiences. Ensuring that pre-service teachers are equipped not only with knowledge but with practical skills to implement these standards is vital. Continuous professional development aligned with policy frameworks such as the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) will enhance teacher readiness, ultimately supporting quality early childhood education that promotes equity, engagement, and holistic development for all young learners (DepEd, 2016; FEU Public Policy Center, 2021).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Know the principles in conducting/understanding developmental reports (i.e the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist	2.833	.6547	Competent
Identify different forms off assessment such as formative, summative, observational, portfolio, and performance-based assessment.	3.194	.7099	Competent
Describe the role of initial assessment (e.g., Early Childhood Development Checklist) in establishing individual learner profiles and guiding instruction.	3.000	.5345	Competent
Aware how to interpret and use assessment data result for decision-making and providing appropriate intervention.	3.028	.6088	Competent
Describe if a child is at-risk for developmental delay.	2.861	.5929	Competent
Distinguish if a child is gifted (gifted if the mental age is above the chronological age or has advanced developmental milestones).	2.917	.6918	Competent
Know the details of producing portfolio of every child that contains relevant assessment data.	3.111	.5746	Competent
Demonstrate sensitivity an objectivity as possible in giving the true picture of the growth and development of the whole child i.e. responsible assessment without discrimination and judgment.	2.944	.7149	Competent
Know when to report the information about the child's progress and developmental milestones to families and service providers.	3.028	.6964	Competent
Mean for Domain E: Assessment and Reporting	2.991	.526	Competent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competent ; 1.50 – 2.49 = Partially Competent;
2.50 – 3.49 = Competent; 3.50 – 4.00 = Very Competent

Table 6. Pre-Service Teachers' Competence on ECE Program along Domain E: Assessment and Reporting

Pre-service teachers' competence in Domain E: Assessment and Reporting show a mean score of 2.991 with a standard deviation of 0.526, reflecting a general competence in conducting developmental assessments and managing reports within the Early Childhood Education (ECE) framework. The tasks include understanding the principles of developmental reports, identifying various assessment forms, interpreting data for decision-making, and responsibly reporting children's progress.

Notably, identifying different forms of assessment (mean = 3.194) and producing child portfolios (mean = 3.111) scored relatively higher, emphasizing comfort with diverse and practical assessment methods. Competence was slightly lower in sensitive areas such as accurately describing developmental delays (mean = 2.861) and demonstrating objectivity and sensitivity in evaluation (mean = 2.944). These areas are critical, as assessments guide early interventions and require attention to avoid biases or misjudgments. The data underscores the need for pre-service teachers to cultivate not only technical assessment skills but also ethical dispositions in reporting to ensure holistic and fair evaluations of Filipino children's growth, aligned with DepEd's prescribed utilization of the Philippine Early Childhood Development (ECD) Checklist as a foundational tool in kindergarten assessment (DepEd, 2016). Such results highlight the importance of embedding rigorous training in assessment literacy, interpretation of developmental checklists, and ethical reporting practices. To comply with national policies such as the Department of Education Order No. 47 s. 2016, pre-service teacher programs must integrate comprehensive modules on formative and summative assessment techniques, alongside fostering professionalism in reporting to families and care providers. Strengthening these competencies will enhance early detection of developmental needs and promote informed instructional planning, supporting quality early childhood education nationwide (DepEd, 2016; FEU Public Policy Center, 2021).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Explain why meaningful family and community engagement positively impacts children's academic success and overall well-being.	3.139	.5426	Competent
Describe how teachers can build trusting, respectful relationships with families to foster authentic collaboration.	3.222	.6375	Competent
Name strategies to make the school and classroom environment welcoming and inclusive for culturally and linguistically diverse families.	2.944	.6738	Competent
List methods teachers can use to maintain regular, open, and two-way communication with families about their child's progress and needs.	2.889	.6667	Competent
Discuss how teachers and school staff can engage families by reaching out in community settings rather than relying solely on families visiting the school.	3.139	.5929	Competent
Describe how acknowledging and incorporating families' cultural backgrounds and traditions enrich the learning environment.	3.056	.6738	Competent
Identify best practice for organizing family events that accommodate diverse schedules and encourage broad participation.	2.944	.6738	Competent
Describe how schools can support families by linking them to community-based resources such as libraries, counseling, and mentoring programs.	2.917	.6036	Competent
Mean for Domain F: Family Involvement and Community Linkages	3.031	.531	Competent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competent ; 1.50 – 2.49 = Partially Competent;
2.50 – 3.49 = Competent; 3.50 – 4.00 = Very Competent

Table 7. Pre-Service Teachers' Competence on ECE Program along Domain F: Family Involvement and Community Linkages

Pre-service teachers' competence in Domain F: Family Involvement and Community Linkages reveals an overall mean score of 3.031 with a standard deviation of 0.531, indicating a competent level of understanding and skills in engaging families and communities effectively. Specific tasks such as building trusting relationships with families (mean = 3.222) and explaining the positive impact of family/community engagement on children's success (mean = 3.139) scored highest, highlighting teachers' awareness of the crucial role that partnerships play in promoting children's holistic development. Lower but still competent scores in areas like ways to maintain communication and organizing inclusive family events suggest room for enhanced practical strategies. Importantly, the general competence in linking schools with community resources and acknowledging families' cultural backgrounds (means ranging from 2.889 to 3.139) reflects alignment with the Philippine cultural context where family and community play a pivotal role in child-rearing and education.

Research from the Philippine Normal University emphasizes that parental involvement extends beyond school visits, requiring proactive school outreach and culturally sensitive approaches to truly foster authentic collaboration and inclusion (Bartolome & Mamat, 2020). This underscores the need for teacher programs to prepare educators capable of bridging school-family-community ecosystems effectively. Results imply a need for prioritizing curricula and training that cultivate skills for meaningful family engagement and community collaboration. Since Filipino families are central to children's social worlds and learning, programs must focus on strategies sensitive to diverse family backgrounds and community dynamics (Bartolome & Mamat, 2020; Department of Education, 2021). By strengthening these competencies, pre-service teachers will be better equipped to support children's academic success and well-being through sustained, inclusive partnerships, aligning with national goals for holistic early childhood development.

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Know the principles of being sensitive to the needs, interests and holistic development of children.	3.083	.6492	Competent
Creative, innovative, and resourceful.	3.028	.6088	Competent
Patient, flexible and adaptable to change.	3.111	.6667	Competent
Able to sing, dance, move and tell stories with emotions to promote communication, social, and aesthetic skills.	3.111	.6667	Competent
Communicate well in both oral and written using English and Filipino as well as Mother Tongue in the community center he/she serves.	3.139	.7617	Competent
Mean for Domain G. Personal Growth and Professional Development	3.087	.579	Competent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competent ; 1.50 – 2.49 = Partially Competent;
2.50 – 3.49 = Competent; 3.50 – 4.00 = Very Competent

Table 8. Pre-Service Teachers' Competence on ECE Program along Domain G: Personal Growth and Professional Development

Competence of pre-service teachers in Domain G: Personal Growth and Professional Development revealed an overall mean score of 3.087 with a standard deviation of 0.579, indicating that pre-service teachers are generally competent in self-development and professional readiness aspects essential for effective early childhood educators. Tasks reflecting qualities such as sensitivity to children's holistic needs, creativity, patience, adaptability, and communication skills across multiple languages show scores consistently within the competent range. This affirms the importance of personal attributes alongside pedagogical skills in early childhood education, consistent with Philippine educator standards emphasizing holistic teacher development (Almasa, 2020; DepEd, 2023). High competence scores in communication skills (mean = 3.139) and adaptability (mean = 3.111) underscore the recognition that early childhood educators must engage effectively with children, families, and communities while responding flexibly to diverse classroom dynamics. These competencies are pivotal in fostering inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments that promote children's growth and well-being. Furthermore, abilities in expressive arts (singing, storytelling) contributing to social and aesthetic development highlight multifaceted teaching skill sets aligned with national curriculum goals and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) (DepEd, 2023). Results imply a need for integrating modules that foster reflective practice, creativity, and emotional intelligence alongside technical teaching skills. Emphasizing ongoing professional growth ensures that pre-service teachers develop dispositions necessary to sustain motivation, resilience, and cultural competence in dynamic educational settings. Aligning personal growth competencies with curriculum design and classroom management will enable Filipino early childhood educators to meet holistic development needs of young learners, thereby strengthening the quality and impact of ECE programs nationwide (Almasa, 2020; DepEd, 2023).

Domains	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Domain A. Child Growth, Development and Learning	3.017	.498	Competent
Domain B. Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being	2.977	.582	Competent
Domain C. Curriculum	3.019	.558	Competent
Domain D. The Learning Environment and Experiences.	3.038	.644	Competent
Domain E. Assessment and Reporting.	2.990	.526	Competent
Domain F. Family Involvement and Community Linkages.	3.031	.531	Competent
Domain G. Personal Growth and professional Development.	3.087	.579	Competent
Overall Mean	3.023	.560	Competent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competent ; 1.50 – 2.49 = Partially Competent;
2.50 – 3.49 = Competent; 3.50 – 4.00 = Very Competent

Table 9. Summary Table of the Pre-Service Teachers' Competence on ECE Program

The summary of pre-service teachers' competence across the seven domains of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program reveals an overall competent level, with an average mean score of 3.023 and a standard deviation of 0.560. Each domain - ranging from Child Growth, Development and Learning (mean = 3.017) to Personal Growth and Professional Development (mean = 3.087) - was rated as competent. This reflects a balanced readiness and skill set among Filipino pre-service teachers in key areas essential for quality early childhood education, including curricular knowledge, health and safety, assessment, family engagement, and professional development. Key highlights across domains show consistent competence in creating conducive learning environments (mean = 3.038) and in family and community linkages (mean = 3.031), underscoring the holistic approach Filipino teacher education programs employ. These strengths align with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which emphasize multidimensional competencies in pedagogy, ethical practices, and collaborative engagement with families and communities (DepEd, 2023). Slight variations in domain

scores signify potential focal areas for enhancement such as improving deeper knowledge in health and safety or refining responsive assessment strategies to better support diverse learners. Results point to continued investment in comprehensive teacher education curricula that cultivate both pedagogical expertise and personal growth. Philippine education policymakers and institutions should leverage these findings to align pre-service training with nationally mandated competency frameworks like the PPST and Commission on Higher Education's policies for Bachelor of Early Childhood Education programs. Such alignment ensures that graduates are holistically prepared to deliver quality, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate early childhood education nationwide, contributing to improved educational outcomes for young Filipino learners (Almasa, 2020; DepEd, 2023).

Section 1B. Readiness levels of Pre-service teachers in the seven domains of Early Childhood Education Program

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
You notice some children in your class are excelling in language skills while others are still developing basic vocabulary.			
How ready are you in modifying your lesson plans and learning environment to meet the varied developmental needs of your would-be learners?	3.056	.6299	I am ready
Some children in your class have difficulty focusing, following multi-step instructions, and managing emotional responses.			
How ready are you to provide examples of specific daily routine activities or classroom practices to enhance the learners' executive functioning skills?	2.917	.6492	I am ready
Mean for Domain A. Child Growth, Development and Learning	2.986	.5792	I am ready

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = I am not ready; 1.50 – 2.49 = I am somewhat ready;
2.50 – 3.49 = I am ready; 3.50 – 4.00 = I am fully ready

Table 10. Pre-Service Teachers' Level of Readiness on ECE Program along Domain A. Child Growth, Development and Learning

Pre-service teachers' level of readiness in Domain A: Child Growth, Development, and Learning indicates that these future educators in the Philippines generally feel prepared to meet the diverse developmental needs of young learners, with an overall mean score of 2.986 and a standard deviation of 0.5792, signifying readiness. Specifically, the readiness to modify lesson plans and learning environments for varying language skill levels achieved a mean of 3.056, while readiness to support executive functioning skills scored slightly lower at 2.917. This reflects a good level of confidence among pre-service teachers in addressing developmental differences, although some areas, such as executive functioning support, may require additional training or resources (Mahinay et al., 2024; DepEd, 2023). Results suggest that readiness encompasses not only preparedness to adapt teaching strategies but also an understanding of the diverse and evolving needs of children's growth within Philippine early childhood settings. The data aligns with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which emphasize both pedagogical knowledge and adaptive teaching capabilities as critical for early childhood educators. Moreover, readiness in this domain promotes inclusivity and responsiveness, essential for fostering equitable learning environments that support all children's developmental trajectories (Mahinay et al., 2024; DepEd, 2017). This implies a need for strengthening and sustaining pre-service teacher readiness through enhanced curricular content and practicum experiences focused on developmental diversity and individualized instruction. Teacher education institutions should integrate evidence-based strategies and mentorship programs that build confidence and practical skills in lesson adaptation and executive function support. Coupled with policy support from the Department of Education and alignment with national standards, these initiatives will enhance teacher readiness to effectively nurture young Filipino learners' growth and learning in inclusive classrooms (Mahinay et al., 2024; DepEd, 2023).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
It's a regular day and your kindergarten classroom has been set up for an interactive session on safety and emergencies.			
How ready are you in demonstrating basic knowledge and skills in basic first aid and emergency preparedness for kindergarten learners?	2.750	.6918	I am ready
The learners are outside playing on the school playground during their outdoor activity. Suddenly, a child trips while running and falls on the pavement, scraping his knee.	2.917	.7319	I am ready
How ready are you in responding to the emergency using first aid kit and in informing appropriate contact-persons?			

The learners undergo regular health monitoring. Some learners are within the severely wasted and wasted categories.	2.778	.7601	I am ready
How ready are you in addressing the learners' health needs and in informing caregivers for proper intervention?			
Two children are fighting over a toy, and one pushes the other to take away the toy causing the other to cry.	3.028	.6964	I am ready
How ready are you in processing the situation to ensure safety and emotional well-being between the learners?			
Domain B: Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being	2.8681	.61087	I am ready

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = I am not ready; 1.50 – 2.49 = I am somewhat ready; 2.50 – 3.49 = I am ready; 3.50 – 4.00 = I am fully ready

Table 11. Pre-Service Teachers' Level of Readiness on ECE Program along Domain B: Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being

Pre-service teachers' level of readiness in Domain B: Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being shows that Filipino pre-service teachers generally feel ready to handle health and safety concerns in early childhood settings, with an overall mean score of 2.868 and a standard deviation of 0.611. Readiness scores varied slightly across tasks, from demonstrating basic first aid knowledge (mean = 2.750) to managing emergencies such as playground accidents (mean = 2.917) and ensuring emotional safety during conflicts (mean = 3.028). This indicates a moderate to strong confidence level but suggests areas, particularly practical first aid skills and health intervention responsiveness, where additional training could further enhance preparedness. These readiness findings mirror the Philippine Department of Education's guidelines and the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) system mandates, which emphasize comprehensive health, nutrition, and safety protocols within early childhood programs. The ECCD Council's Guidelines for Safe Reopening of ECE also highlight the critical role of teacher preparedness in emergency response and health monitoring to create nurturing and secure learning environments (DepEd, 2016; ECCD Council, 2020). Ensuring that pre-service teachers have both theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience in health and safety is vital for safeguarding young learners' well-being. Further, the results provide a clear recommendation for teacher education and policy development - pre-service programs must intensify focus on health, safety, and nutrition training, including simulation drills, first aid certification, and child health monitoring techniques. Aligning these initiatives with national standards and health protocols will enhance the capacity of future educators to respond effectively to emergencies and developmental health needs. Strengthened readiness in this domain ultimately supports the protection and holistic development of Filipino children in early learning settings, advancing the goals of quality and inclusive early childhood education nationwide (DepEd, 2016; ECCD Council, 2020).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
You notice some children disengage during structured lessons.			
How ready are you in integrating play-based activities that support curriculum goals for literacy or numeracy?	2.972	.6540	I am ready
A child manifests difficulty in following simple directions in class activities.			
How ready are you in identifying and applying strategies to support the learner?	2.917	.6492	I am ready
While doing numeracy activities, a few learners become restless and start to distract others in class.			
How ready are you in employing strategies to maintain a supportive environment while ensuring attainment of the learning objectives?	2.889	.6667	I am ready
Mean for Domain C. Curriculum	2.926	.558	I am ready

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = I am not ready; 1.50 – 2.49 = I am somewhat ready; 2.50 – 3.49 = I am ready; 3.50 – 4.00 = I am fully ready

Table 12. Pre-Service Teachers' Level of Readiness on ECE Program along Domain C. Curriculum

Pre-service teachers' level of readiness in Domain C: Curriculum illustrates that Filipino pre-service teachers generally feel ready to implement curriculum strategies that support diverse learner needs, with an overall mean score of 2.926 and a

standard deviation of 0.558. They reported readiness in integrating play-based activities that align with literacy and numeracy goals (mean = 2.972), identifying strategies to support learners with difficulties (mean = 2.917), and maintaining a supportive learning environment conducive to achieving objectives (mean = 2.889). This reflects a solid foundational confidence in applying curriculum adaptations in early childhood classrooms. Results further suggest sustained efforts are needed to deepen pre-service teachers' skills in curriculum differentiation and classroom management strategies that support varying learning paces and styles. Teacher training institutions should reinforce experiential learning opportunities that enable prospective educators to refine practical techniques in play integration and individualized support. Such preparation aligns with national guidelines and contributes toward an inclusive, high-quality early childhood education system that effectively nurtures young learners' holistic development (DepEd, 2023; Aquino, 2017).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
During free play, you notice that several children crowd around a single activity center, while others remain disengaged.	2.972	.6964	I am ready
How ready are you in rearranging the classroom spaces to promote equitable engagement and exploration?	2.972	.8447	I am ready
A child resists leaving a play-based sensory activity to join a structured circle time.	2.972	.8447	I am ready
How ready are you to facilitate a smooth transition that respects the child's needs but keeps the schedule on track?	2.972	.8447	I am ready
You notice some children do not engage in story time centered on a single cultural perspective.	3.083	.6492	I am ready
How ready are you in diversifying materials and learning environments to make learning culturally inclusive?	3.083	.6492	I am ready
Several children show anxiety during drop-off time and extremely clinging to their parents and/or guardians.	2.861	.6825	I am ready
How ready are you in organizing classroom routines and environment to help children feel secure and support smooth transitions from home to school setting?	2.861	.6825	I am ready
Mean for Domain D. The Learning Environment and Experiences	2.9722	.59695	I am ready

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = I am not ready; 1.50 – 2.49 = I am somewhat ready;
2.50 – 3.49 = I am ready; 3.50 – 4.00 = I am fully ready

Table 13. Pre-Service Teachers' Level of Readiness on ECE Program along Domain D. The Learning Environment and Experiences

Pre-service teachers' level of readiness in Domain D: The Learning Environment and Experiences indicates that Filipino pre-service teachers generally feel ready to adapt and manage classroom environments to support equitable engagement and smooth transitions for young learners. The overall mean score of 2.972 with a standard deviation of 0.597 reflects moderate to strong confidence in rearranging classroom spaces, facilitating transitions, diversifying learning materials for cultural inclusivity, and organizing routines to help children feel secure. These competencies are vital for creating responsive and supportive early learning environments that meet the diverse needs of Filipino children (DepEd, 2016). Highlights include a readiness to promote culturally inclusive environments through diversified materials (mean = 3.083) and to manage classroom transitions sensitively (mean = 2.972). Lower readiness scores related to supporting children during emotionally challenging moments like drop-off anxiety (mean = 2.861) suggest an area for further practical training.

These findings align with national ECE standards emphasizing safe, nurturing, and culturally responsive learning spaces, such as those articulated in Department of Education policies and the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Systems Act, which advocate for environments fostering holistic child development and emotional well-being (DepEd, 2016; ECCD Council, 2013). Results recommend strengthening pre-service training modules on environmental management, cultural responsiveness, and socio-emotional support strategies. Embedding hands-on practicum experiences and reflective practices can enhance teachers' ability to implement inclusive learning environments that respect each child's cultural identity and emotional needs. Such improvements support the broader national goal of quality and inclusive early childhood education, ensuring all children thrive in environments that prepare them for lifelong learning and success (DepEd, 2016; ECCD Council, 2013).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
During free play, you observe a child struggling to follow two-step directions in a group activity.	2.972	.6964	I am ready
How ready are you in documenting your observation using appropriate forms? After completing a classroom readiness assessment, a parent asks for detailed information about their child's challenges in social skills.	3.056	.7538	I am ready
How ready are you in preparing the report and explaining the results to the requesting party for appropriate intervention?			
You are handling a class of 28 learners. During the first quarter, baseline data are needed about the different developmental domains of the learners. How ready are you in planning and conducting the different assessments within the first month from the start of the school year to ensure meaningful data collection?	2.833	.7368	I am ready
Mean for Domain E. Assessment and Reporting	2.954	.633	I am ready

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = I am not ready; 1.50 – 2.49 = I am somewhat ready;
2.50 – 3.49 = I am ready; 3.50 – 4.00 = I am fully ready

Table 14. Pre-Service Teachers' Level of Readiness on ECE Program along Domain E. Assessment and Reporting

Pre-service teachers' level of readiness in Domain E: Assessment and Reporting show that Filipino pre-service teachers generally feel prepared to document observations, communicate assessment results to parents, and plan developmental assessments within the early months of the school year, with an overall mean score of 2.954 and standard deviation of 0.633. Scores between 2.833 and 3.056 indicate readiness to carry out documentation and reporting tasks that are essential for monitoring children's development and guiding instruction. This reflects a foundational confidence in applying assessment principles according to Philippine early childhood education standards (DepEd, 2016). A key highlight includes readiness to explain assessment results to parents for appropriate interventions, with a slightly higher score (mean = 3.056), underscoring the critical role of communication in early childhood education. Preparedness to document observations and plan assessments also shows pre-service teachers' growing competence in using tools like the Philippine Early Childhood Development (ECD) Checklist, which facilitates individual learner profiling and supports tailored teaching strategies (DepEd, 2016). This is vital for early identification and intervention of developmental delays. Results imply a need to strengthen pre-service teachers' skills in authentic assessment practices and effective parent engagement. Training programs should emphasize practical experience in administering developmental checklists, interpreting data, and responsible communication with families. These efforts will align with mandates from the Kindergarten Education Policy and the ECCD Systems Act, ensuring that early childhood educators are fully equipped to support the holistic growth and development of Filipino children through systematic assessment and reporting (DepEd, 2016; ECCD Council, 2013).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
A new family seems hesitant to share information about their child during initial meetings.	3.028	.7741	I am ready
How ready are you in employing strategies to build trust and create a welcoming space for open communication? Some families rarely attend school events or volunteer in class.	3.000	.7171	I am ready
How ready are you in actively encouraging the family to be involved while respecting their culture, beliefs, time and other circumstances? After having outdoor activities, the learners tend to mess with their clothes. Some parents express their concern about their children coming home with messy clothes and seem upset.	3.139	.5929	I am ready
How ready are you in attending to the parents' concerns while emphasizing the educational importance of the activities? Some children show anxiety during the transition to kindergarten.	3.057	.400	I am ready
How ready are you in establishing roles for family's engagement in easing the transitions?			

Mean for Domain F. Family Involvement and Community Linkages	3.056	.620	I am ready
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Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = I am not ready; 1.50 – 2.49 = I am somewhat ready;
2.50 – 3.49 = I am ready; 3.50 – 4.00 = I am fully ready

Table 15. Pre-Service Teachers' Level of Readiness on ECE Program along Domain F. Family Involvement and Community Linkages

Pre-service teachers' level of readiness in Domain F: Family Involvement and Community Linkages reveals that Filipino pre-service teachers generally feel prepared to engage families and communities actively and respectfully, with an overall mean score of 3.056 and a standard deviation of 0.620. Teachers feel ready to build trusting relationships with hesitant families (mean = 3.028), encourage family participation despite cultural and time constraints (mean = 3.000), address parental concerns empathetically (mean = 3.139), and facilitate family roles in easing children's school transitions (mean = 3.057). This reflects a strong awareness of the importance of authentic and culturally sensitive family engagement in Philippine early childhood education. Research in the Philippine context highlights the significance of parental involvement as a driver of children's academic success and holistic development. Studies indicate that family and community engagement improves school readiness, supports emotional well-being, and strengthens home-school partnerships (Bartolome & Mamat, 2020). However, challenges such as cultural differences, economic barriers, and varying parental availability necessitate flexible and culturally responsive engagement strategies. The Department of Education has underscored the role of parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and family outreach programs as key mechanisms to foster communication and collaboration with families (DepEd, 2021). These results on the teacher preparation emphasize the need to equip pre-service teachers with skills in cultural competence, communication, and collaborative problem-solving to optimize family and community linkages. Training should focus on strategies for building trust, respecting diverse family backgrounds, and creatively involving parents in the educational process amidst challenging contexts. By strengthening these competencies, Filipino teachers can foster more inclusive, supportive environments that enhance children's learning and well-being through meaningful family and community partnerships (Bartolome & Mamat, 2020; DepEd, 2021).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
You have observed that one learner who is usually cheerful and engaged has been unusually withdrawn, frequently tired and has started coming to school in unwashed clothes lately.	3.083	.5542	I am ready
How ready are you in handling potential child welfare issues while abiding by the professional and ethical standards?			
You have learners who show atypical behaviors and who require special attention. Likewise, there are also learners who are in difficult circumstances.	3.000	.6325	I am ready
How ready are you to engage with professional support to upskill in order to fulfill your role dutifully?			
You have noticed that some learners do not have clean and decent attire when coming to school. Upon further investigation, you have learned that their families are in difficult circumstances.	3.111	.5746	I am ready
How ready are you in addressing the situation with selfless love and care?			
At the end of the school year, you were asked to share your significant accomplishments as an early childhood educator.			
How ready are you in communicating these accomplishments and seeking their continuing support as you take pride in your chosen profession?	3.111	.6667	I am ready
Domain G. Personal Growth and Professional Development	3.076	.554	I am ready

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = I am not ready; 1.50 – 2.49 = I am somewhat ready;
2.50 – 3.49 = I am ready; 3.50 – 4.00 = I am fully ready

Table 16. Pre-Service Teachers' Level of Readiness on ECE Program along Domain G. Personal Growth and Professional Development

Pre-service teachers' readiness in Domain G: Personal Growth and Professional Development show an overall mean score of 3.076 with a standard deviation of 0.554, indicating that Filipino pre-service teachers feel ready to handle critical aspects of professional and personal development in early childhood education. They expressed readiness in

managing potential child welfare issues ethically (mean = 3.083), engaging with professional support to address diverse learner needs (mean = 3.000), showing care in difficult family situations (mean = 3.111), and effectively communicating their achievements while seeking ongoing support (mean = 3.111).

This reflects a well-rounded preparedness crucial for the demanding roles of early childhood educators in the Philippines. Table 16 underscores the significance of ethical sensitivity and collaboration with professional networks to support learners facing challenges. This aligns with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which emphasize continuous professional development (CPD) and reflective practice as key to teacher growth and effectiveness (DepEd, 2017). The readiness to communicate professional accomplishments also reflects confidence in advocacy and leadership roles within the education sector.

Research shows that Filipino teachers benefit from structured CPD programs sponsored by DepEd and the National Educators' Academy of the Philippines, which focus on enhancing teaching competencies, socio-emotional skills, and professional ethics (Caballong, 2024). These findings call for sustained investment in high-quality CPD programs tailored to early childhood educators' needs, focusing on child welfare, collaborative engagement, and communication skills. Integrating reflective practices into teacher training and supporting mentorship opportunities can further build resilience and professional identity, essential for the complex realities of Filipino classrooms. Such initiatives ensure that early childhood educators remain equipped to provide nurturing, inclusive, and ethically grounded education, contributing to the holistic development and well-being of Filipino children (DepEd, 2017; Caballong, 2024).

Tasks	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Domain A. Child Growth, Development, and Learning.	2.986	.579	I am ready
Domain B. Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being.	2.868	.611	I am ready
Domain C. Curriculum	2.926	.558	I am ready
Domain D. The Learning Environment and Experiences.	2.972	.597	I am ready
Domain E. Assessment and Reporting.	2.954	.633	I am ready
Domain F. Family Involvement and Community Linkages.	3.056	.620	I am ready
Domain G. Personal Growth and Professional Development.	3.076	.554	I am ready
Overall Mean	2.977	.593	I am ready

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 = I am not ready; 1.50 – 2.49 = I am somewhat ready;
 2.50 – 3.49 = I am ready; 3.50 – 4.00 = I am fully ready

Table 17. Summary Table of the Pre-Service Teachers' Level of Readiness on ECE Program

The summary data on pre-service teachers' level of readiness across seven domains of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program reveals that Filipino pre-service teachers generally feel prepared, with an overall mean readiness score of 2.977 and a standard deviation of 0.593, indicating a consensus around being "ready" across key areas. Each domain - ranging from Child Growth, Development, and Learning (mean = 2.986) to Personal Growth and Professional Development (mean = 3.076) - reflects a moderate to strong confidence level among future educators to address diverse aspects of early childhood education. These readiness levels align with the framework provided by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which offer comprehensive criteria to gauge preparedness in knowledge, skills, and disposition (Bajan et al., 2025).

A highlight of the findings are the slightly higher readiness scores in Family Involvement and Community Linkages (mean = 3.056) and Personal Growth and Professional Development (mean = 3.076), suggesting that pre-service teachers are ready in engaging stakeholders and committing to ongoing professional growth. Meanwhile, domains like Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being register relatively lower readiness levels (mean = 2.868), pointing to potential areas for curriculum strengthening. This trend corresponds with research emphasizing the need for practice-based experiences and skill-building opportunities during pre-service training to bridge the gap between theoretical proficiency and practical readiness (Bajan et al., 2025).

Further, these findings call for deliberate enhancements in teacher education programs in the Philippines, particularly in providing integrative, experience-rich training that emphasizes diverse learner needs, inclusive environments, and family-community partnerships. Aligning teacher preparation with the PPST domains enables targeted intervention and curriculum refinement to ensure that future educators are not only knowledgeable but also practically ready to handle real-world classroom situations. Continuous faculty development and supportive practicum experiences are recommended to further elevate the readiness of pre-service teachers, ultimately improving educational outcomes for Filipino children nationwide (Bajan et al., 2025; DepEd, 2017).

Section 2. Relationship between and among competence and readiness levels of Pre-service teachers in the seven domains of ECD Program

Paired Variables		Readiness Level							
		Domain A	Domain B	Domain C	Domain D	Domain E	Domain F	Domain G	
Competence Level	Domain A	Pearson Correlation	.441**	.300	.227	.275	.346*	.302	.383*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.075	.183	.104	.039	.074	.021
	Domain B	Pearson Correlation	.299	.630**	.546**	.545**	.431**	.478**	.513**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.076	.000	.001	.001	.009	.003	.001
	Domain C	Pearson Correlation	.298	.553**	.468**	.522**	.449**	.524**	.507**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.078	.000	.004	.001	.006	.001	.002
	Domain D	Pearson Correlation	.264	.491**	.520**	.562**	.541**	.471**	.502**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.119	.002	.001	.000	.001	.004	.002
	Domain E	Pearson Correlation	.322	.411*	.376*	.510**	.529**	.414*	.515**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	.013	.024	.002	.001	.012	.001
	Domain F	Pearson Correlation	.338*	.547**	.413*	.583**	.489**	.584**	.532**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	.001	.012	.000	.002	.000	.001
	Domain G	Pearson Correlation	.500**	.495**	.462**	.586**	.591**	.631**	.706**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.002	.005	.000	.000	.000	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Legend:

Domain A. Child Growth, Development, and Learning; Domain B. Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being; Domain C. Curriculum; Domain D. The Learning Environment and Experiences; Domain E. Assessment and Reporting; Domain F. Family Involvement and Community Linkages; Domain G. Personal Growth and Professional Development.

Table 18. Correlation Coefficients between and among the domains of competence and readiness levels of the ECD Program

The correlation analysis between competence and readiness levels of pre-service teachers in the seven domains of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Program reveals significant relationships that underscore the interconnectedness of readiness and competence in early childhood education. The data shows statistically significant positive correlations between readiness levels and competence particularly in Domain A (Child Growth, Development, and Learning) with a moderate correlation ($r = .441, p = .007$), and Domain G (Personal Growth and Professional Development) with a strong correlation ($r = .500, p = .002$). These results indicate that pre-service teachers who demonstrate higher readiness tend to exhibit greater competence, particularly in foundational domains critical for holistic child development (DepEd, 2023). Among the specific competence domains, strong and consistent positive correlations are apparent, especially between Domain B (Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being) and several other domains such as Domain C (Curriculum), Domain D (Learning Environment), and Domain G. For instance, Domain B and Domain C correlated at $r = .630$ ($p < .001$), signaling a close relationship between health and curriculum competence. This pattern suggests that mastery in one domain tends to reinforce competence in others, reflecting the comprehensive nature of early childhood education that requires integrated skills across health, curriculum, learning environment, and professional growth (CHED, 2017). The high inter-domain correlations affirm the multi-dimensional requirements of effective early childhood teaching, which pre-service programs need to address holistically.

The relatively weaker but still noteworthy correlations between readiness and some competence domains (Domain E: Assessment and Reporting, Domain F: Family Involvement and Community Linkages) point to areas requiring increased attention in teacher preparation programs. For example, readiness correlated moderately with Domain F ($r = .338, p = .044$), suggesting that while readiness somewhat predicts competence in engaging families and communities, these areas may need targeted development strategies to better prepare teachers for the social aspects of early childhood education (Republic Act No. 10968, 2018).

Additionally, the significant interrelationships among competence domains - such as between Domain D (Learning Environment and Experiences) and Domain F ($r = .583, p < .001$) - highlight the social and environmental components vital to teaching efficacy. These findings imply that strengthening competency in creating effective learning environments is closely tied to engaging families and communities, emphasizing a systems approach to teacher training that includes community linkages as essential elements of readiness and competence.

Results suggest that teacher education institutions in the Philippines, specifically the Nueva Vizcaya State University – College of Teacher Education, should continue fostering comprehensive readiness in their pre-service teachers, with an emphasis on integrated competence development that spans cognitive, health, environmental, and social domains. Readiness interventions should specifically enhance skills in assessment, reporting, and community engagement to close potential gaps in competence. Policies that support ongoing professional development and community collaboration are crucial to translating readiness into competent practice, ultimately improving early childhood education outcomes (DepEd, 2023; CHED, 2017).

Overall, the study supports the design of teacher preparation curricula that are multidimensional, aligning with Philippine educational standards and frameworks, to holistically develop competencies across all seven ECD domains. This approach will better equip future teachers to meet the diverse and complex needs of young learners and their families, thereby advancing quality early childhood education in the local context (Republic Act No. 10968, 2018; DepEd, 2023).

Section 3. Comparison of pre-service teachers' competence in the seven domains of ECE Program when grouped according to sex after controlling differences in their readiness levels

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4.069 ^a	3	1.356	8.110	.000	.432
Intercept	.428	1	.428	2.560	.119	.074
Sex	.248	1	.248	1.483	.232	.044
Competence	3.673	1	3.673	21.962	.000*	.407
Sex * Competence	.319	1	.319	1.910	.177	.056
Error	5.351	32	.167			
Total	340.512	36				
Corrected Total	9.420	35				

R Squared = .432 (Adjusted R Squared = .379)

F(1,34) = .244, p = .624

Table 19. Interactions of Competence Levels and Sex after Controlling Their Levels of Readiness in the Program

After controlling for differences in readiness levels, the data from Table 18 reveal significant findings regarding pre-service teachers' competence in seven domains of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program when grouped according to sex. The corrected model accounts for 43.2% of the variance in competence ($R^2 = 0.432$), suggesting that this combination of factors is moderately predictive of outcomes in this local context.

The competence variable itself significantly affects the pre-service teachers' performance, $F(1,35) = 21.962$, $p < .05$, with Partial Eta Squared = 0.407, confirming that itemized competence remains a strong determinant in ECE program success even after accounting for readiness differences among groups (DepEd, 2023; Santos et al., 2022).

Noticeably, sex, both as a main effect ($F = 1.483$, $p = 0.232$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.44) and in interaction with competence ($F = 1.910$, $p = 0.177$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.056), does not significantly influence the competence level of pre-service teachers in the seven ECE domains. This lack of significant effect suggests systemic parity in competency development across sexes within local teacher education programs in the Philippines (Garcia & Reyes, 2024). With an adjusted R^2 of 0.379, the model also demonstrates reasonable explanatory power for contextual educational analyses in the region.

Implications of these findings are substantial for policy and practice. Program designers and administrators within the Philippine education sector should focus on strengthening domain-specific competencies rather than tailoring interventions by sex, ensuring that readiness-building strategies remain universally targeted. This outcome affirms that fostering ECE teacher competence benefits from universal, readiness-sensitive approaches, supporting aspirations for equitable and effective pre-service training regardless of sex or background (Department of Education, 2023; Garcia & Reyes, 2024).

Synthesis

The study addressed critical research gaps related to the holistic preparation of pre-service teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE) within the Philippine context. Prior research has predominantly focused on isolated aspects such as curriculum alignment, teacher competencies, or readiness in specific areas, without integrating these dimensions across all seven ECE domains comprehensively. Additionally, existing literature, such as studies by Almasa (2020) and Aquino (2017), emphasize curricular and competency alignment but lacks investigation into how these factors collectively influence teacher preparedness and performance within a university setting. This study fills this gap by holistically examining readiness and competence across all domains, thereby providing a more integrated view of teacher education outcomes.

Another significant gap addressed is the limited exploration of gender differences in relation to teacher readiness and competence. Although gender is a known factor influencing professional development and identity in education, few studies have controlled for readiness levels when assessing competence disparities between male and female pre-service teachers. By incorporating sex as a moderating variable, this study offers novel insights into equitable development within teacher education programs, aligning with broader national goals of inclusive education and gender parity. This focus responds directly to calls in the literature for more nuanced understandings of how gender dynamics affect teacher preparation and professional growth in the Philippines.

Moreover, the study contributes to addressing practical challenges in ECE teacher preparation by linking readiness and competence with the demands of a learner-centered, developmentally appropriate curriculum supported by national legislation (RA 10157, RA 10410). Previous research notes barriers such as insufficient resources, lack of continuous professional development, and gaps in practical training that impede teacher performance.

This study's comprehensive approach - including control for readiness levels and integration of policy frameworks - provides actionable evidence to guide curriculum and policy enhancements aimed at elevating the quality of early childhood teacher education.

Finally, this research calls for a more systemic investigation by situating pre-service teacher preparation within both academic and socio-emotional development domains while also considering external influences like family involvement and continuous professional learning. This broader perspective contrasts with earlier work focusing on segmented aspects of teacher competence or readiness and advances knowledge on how these factors interact synergistically to support effective teaching in diverse classroom environments. This comprehensive framework supports the Philippines' commitment to equity, quality, and inclusivity in early childhood education, making the study particularly timely and relevant.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The following inferences were derived based on the findings of the study:

1. Pre-service teachers in Nueva Vizcaya State University demonstrated both competence and readiness across all seven domains of the Early Childhood Education Program, reflecting balanced preparedness to address key aspects of early childhood education. They showed high level of readiness in Family Involvement and Personal Growth domains, while relatively low readiness along Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being
2. There are significant positive correlations between competence and readiness levels among the seven domains, especially in foundational domains such as Child Growth and Personal Growth, indicating that greater readiness is associated with higher competence across interconnected domains.
3. After controlling for readiness differences, sex was not a significant factor in pre-service teachers' competence across the seven ECE domains, suggesting gender parity in competence development within Philippine teacher education programs.

In the light of the foregoing, these recommendations are suggested:

1. Teacher education programs in NVSU should continue providing integrative, experience-based training that reinforces practical skills particularly in health, safety, and nutrition, while maintaining strong focus on family engagement and professional growth to prepare well-rounded early childhood educators.
2. Teacher preparation curricula should adopt a holistic, systems approach, emphasizing integrated development of competence and readiness across multiple domains simultaneously, with special attention to assessment, reporting, and community engagement to strengthen overall teaching effectiveness.
3. Policy and program efforts should focus on strengthening competencies universally without gender differentiation, ensuring equitable access to resources and support that promotes competence for all pre-service teachers regardless of sex.

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Competing Interests Statement

The author declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.