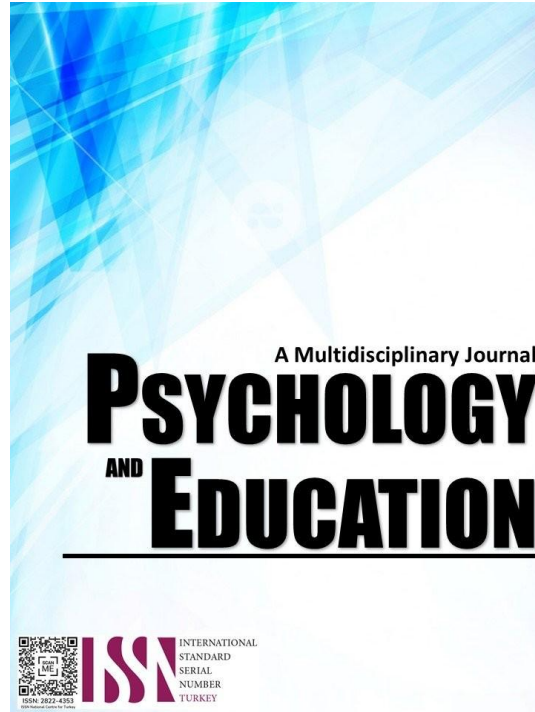


COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS IN IDENTIFYING SIGNS OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AMONG KINDERGARTEN PUPILS



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Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties Among Kindergarten Pupils

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Abstract

Thirty-two (32) Kindergarten Teachers from Asingan Districts I and II, Pangasinan Schools Division II, DepEd Region I, participated as respondents in this study during SY 2025-2026. In five domains—physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, and academic—the study assessed the respondents' proficiency in spotting indicators of learning challenges in kindergarten students. It also tested hypotheses on differences in competence across profile variables, and on relationships between competence and profile variables. The study used a descriptive-correlational research design. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire checklist and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. It is determined that the respondent teachers are typical yet well qualified to teach kindergarten; they are mostly middle-aged, female, hold a Master of Arts in Education degree, and have 10 or more years of teaching experience. With a grand overall weighted mean (GOWM) of 4.581 for the composite competence across all domains of learning challenges, the respondent-teachers' level of competence in recognizing symptoms of learning difficulties is "Very Competent." In the "physical learning difficulties domain," the respondent-teachers received the highest rating, equivalent to "very competent." In contrast, in the "psychological learning difficulties domain," they received the lowest rating, still similar to "very competent." No notable differences were observed in the competency levels of respondent-teachers in identifying learning difficulty indicators across profile characteristics. Across the variable categories, respondent-teachers consistently demonstrated "very competent" proficiency in recognizing learning difficulties among their kindergarten students. An exception was observed in the psychological domain of learning difficulties at the highest level of educational achievement. No correlation was identified between the competency levels of respondent teachers and any profile characteristics, indicating no association between competence and the variables examined in this study. Kindergarten teachers are advised to enhance their educational credentials by pursuing graduate programs at accredited institutions. Respondent-teachers are strongly advised to maintain their "very competent" status by actively participating in District School Learning Action Cell (D/SLAC) sessions focused on identifying learning issues. Furthermore, it is advisable to undertake additional research to identify learning challenges, examine variables not addressed in this study, and apply these findings to broader contexts, all under the supervision of approved graduate universities. Implementation of the suggested Professional Development for Kindergarten Teachers in Recognizing Signs of Learning Difficulties is recommended.

Keywords: *competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties, academic difficulties, psychological, intellectual learning difficulties*

Introduction

Learning difficulties are defined as observable challenges that impede a child's capability to acquire, process, and demonstrate age-appropriate skills. Such difficulties manifest in early childhood as delays or inconsistencies in language development, motor coordination, attention, and foundational academic abilities. Within early education contexts, these challenges are conceptualized as developmental and learning concerns warranting systematic observation and instructional support rather than as medical conditions.

The first years of life, especially kindergarten, are an important stage for detecting learning difficulties. At this stage of development, a child is supposed to acquire basic reading, numeracy, motor coordination, and social interaction skills. Snowling and Hulme (2012) suggest that early detection of learning difficulties is important as it can be targeted and avoided in future learning. If these challenges are not identified early, cumulative academic delays may occur, negatively impacting future academic performance. The early years of childhood, particularly kindergarten, are a crucial phase for identifying learning issues. At this stage of development, a child is expected to learn fundamental reading, numeracy, motor coordination, and social interaction skills. Snowling and Hulme (2012) argue that early discovery of learning difficulties is vital as it can be targeted and prevented in future learning. If issues are not identified early, they can lead to cumulative academic delays that can significantly affect future academic performance.

Teachers' capacity to identify learning difficulties is influenced by factors such as professional training, teaching experience, and levels of exposure to varied educational contexts. According to McLeskey et al. (2017), more years in the classroom often translate into more sophisticated observational abilities, which can help teachers identify subtle indicators of learning difficulties. Similarly, Spear-Swerling (2016) identifies teachers' expertise in early childhood development as a critical component of early diagnosis of reading and numeracy problems.

Teachers' attitudes are crucial in recognizing learning difficulties. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) assert that teachers who acknowledge learner diversity demonstrate increased awareness of individual differences in the classroom. Teachers who exhibit confidence and

attentiveness to instructional diversity are more likely to recognize early signs of learning difficulties and adjust their teaching methods accordingly.

In the Philippine educational system, inclusive education policies have placed a tremendous obligation on instructors to respond to students' various needs in regular classrooms. However, empirical research shows that teachers continue to face obstacles in accurately detecting learning issues, often due to poor training and large class sizes. Francisco and Celon (2020) found that Filipino teachers accept the idea of inclusive education but are not well-trained to detect early symptoms of learning difficulties. Similarly, Ebol (2020) indicated that identification accuracy could be influenced by casual observation rather than systematic assessment.

Local educational obstacles, such as insufficient instructional resources and excessive workloads, hinder teachers' ability to track individual students' progress rigorously. Ramos (2021) contends that professional development programs in the Philippines often lack focused instruction on the early detection of learning issues, particularly at the kindergarten level. This shortcoming highlights the need for improved capacity-building programs to enhance teachers' competence in early identification.

This study investigates teacher competence in identifying learning difficulties across five developmental domains commonly observed among kindergarten pupils.

The term "physical difficulty" describes observable deficits in the development and coordination of motor skills, including deficiencies in large-motor skills such as balance and coordination, as well as fine-motor skills such as writing, drawing, and cutting. According to Case-Smith (2013), a child's ability to participate in class activities and finish necessary academic tasks might be severely impeded by delays in motor development.

Persistent difficulties with emotional regulation and expression define emotional distress. Manifestations may encompass recurrent frustration, increased anxiety, social disengagement, or challenges in acclimating to the organized academic setting. Raver (2002) emphasizes the need for emotional control for school readiness and effective classroom participation.

Intellectual difficulties denote discernible challenges in comprehension, reasoning, memory, and adherence to instructions. Children demonstrating such challenges may indicate delayed acquisition of ideas, sluggish information processing, or compromised problem-solving abilities. Piaget's cognitive development hypothesis (1972) posits that early childhood is crucial for cognitive development; thus, deficits during this period can negatively affect learning readiness.

In the context of this study, psychological difficulty refers to observable behaviors associated with motivation, self-regulation, and attention, such as impulsivity, distractibility, inattention, and trouble maintaining focus throughout activities. Barkley (2015) demonstrates how executive functioning is essential for sustaining focus and performing well in the classroom.

Academic difficulty is a term used to describe observable difficulties in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. These obstacles include trouble with letter recognition, deciphering simple words, counting, and understanding basic math concepts. Duncan et al. (2007) showed that competency in early academic skills is a robust predictor of future academic performance.

Despite the significance of early identification, a gap persists in understanding kindergarten teachers' proficiency in recognizing these five domains of learning. Most current research focuses on broad classroom practices or teacher attitudes, with little attention to specific, observable indicators across multiple developmental domains. It underscores the necessity for a more concentrated inquiry into teachers' proficiency in recognizing early signs of learning challenges in kindergarten pupils.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to evaluate teachers' proficiency in recognizing indicators of learning challenges in kindergarten students in five domains: academic, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and physical. It is anticipated that the results of this study will provide insight into how to increase early identification procedures in early childhood education, improve classroom observation techniques, and enhance teacher training programs.

Research Questions

This study determined the level of teachers' competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils in Asingan Districts I and II, Pangasinan Division II, DepEd Region I, during the academic year 2025-2026. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following problems:

1. What is the profile of the respondents across the following:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. sex;
 - 1.3. highest educational attainment; and
 - 1.4. length of service in teaching kindergarten?
2. What is the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils in the following domains:
 - 2.1. physical difficulties;
 - 2.2. psychological difficulties;
 - 2.3. emotional difficulties;

- 2.4. intellectual difficulties; and
- 2.5. academic difficulties?
3. Are there significant mean differences in the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils across the profile variables?
4. Are there significant relationships between the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils and the profile variables?
5. What training for enhancing the competence of Teachers in “identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils” can be developed and proposed?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed an ex post facto, one-shot case study to evaluate kindergarten teachers' competence in identifying learning issues among kindergarten pupils. It facilitated the systematic collection and analysis of quantitative data to identify patterns, trends, and levels of teacher proficiency across multiple areas. This approach yielded a definitive and quantifiable evaluation of teachers' efficacy in identifying and addressing early signs of learning difficulties in young learners.

Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire, which was divided into two sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including age, gender, educational attainment, and years of teaching experience. The second section measured teacher competence in identifying learning difficulties using a Likert scale. The responses range from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

Physical indicators, emotional indicators, psychological indicators, intellectual indicators, and academic indicators were the five domains into which these things were divided. The teacher's capacity to monitor motor skills, attentiveness, and physical development was the main focus of the Physical Indicators domain. The capacity to identify symptoms of anxiety, frustration, or emotional distress was evaluated using emotional indicators.

Psychological Indicators measured the teacher's skill in observing memory, problem-solving, and other cognitive processes, while Intellectual Indicators evaluated the teacher's capacity to identify challenges in early literacy, numeracy, and reasoning. Statistical analysis was conducted to determine teacher competence in each domain. The weighted mean was calculated by multiplying each frequency by its corresponding scale value, then dividing by the total number of responses. The domain-weighted mean was computed as the average of the weighted means across all items. The overall score indicated the level of competence of teachers in identifying learning difficulties among their pupils.

Respondents

The study population comprised all kindergarten teachers actively instructing in the designated districts during the 2025–2026 academic year. The overall population consisted of 32 teachers. All individuals within the demographic were deemed eligible respondents due to their firsthand experience in monitoring and evaluating their pupils' learning challenges.

The study used complete enumeration, or census sampling, in which all members of the population were included as respondents. Total enumeration was selected to guarantee representation of every kindergarten teacher's competency, hence enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the findings within the designated districts. The researcher initially obtained an official record of all kindergarten teachers from the school administrations of Asingan Districts 1 and 2, including their contact details and teaching responsibilities, for total enumeration. Participants included teachers actively instructing kindergarten classes who consented to participate, whereas those on leave or lacking direct kindergarten teaching duties were omitted. The researcher collaborated with School Heads to obtain formal authorization for the study.

Copies of the survey questionnaire checklist were personally distributed to all the respondent-teachers during the scheduled meetings. Clear instructions regarding the accomplishment of the data-gathering instrument were given, and information on the strict confidentiality of information provided was discussed. After the respondents had completed the whole questionnaire checklist, the researcher personally collected the questionnaires to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data. The total number of the collected accomplished questionnaire-checklists was cross-checked against the official list to confirm that all eligible respondent-teachers participated, achieving 100% coverage of the target population.

Instrument

The primary instrument for gathering data in this study was a researcher-made questionnaire-checklist designed, developed, and content validated, specifically to assess the competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils. The questionnaire was structured to measure teachers' competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties of the kindergarten pupils in the four domains of learning difficulties: physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, and academic.

By focusing on these categories, the instrument captured the complex nature of the learning issues kindergarten pupils face. It provided

a comprehensive framework for assessing teachers' proficiency in recognizing the indicators of these difficulties.

The questionnaire consisted of forty (40) items, with ten items per domain. Each statement was rated by respondents using a five-point Likert scale: Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never. This scale allowed teachers to indicate the extent to which they use the action described in each statement and provided quantifiable data for statistical analysis. The use of a Likert scale ensured consistent responses while allowing the researcher to compute a weighted mean and determine the overall competence of these teachers. By focusing on these categories, the instrument captured the intricate nature of the learning challenges kindergarten pupils encounter. It provided a comprehensive framework for evaluating teachers' competence in identifying the signs of these difficulties.

The questionnaire consisted of forty (40) items, with ten items per domain. Each statement was rated by respondents using a five-point Likert scale: Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never. This scale allowed teachers to express the extent to which they use the action being referred to in each statement, and provided quantifiable data for statistical analysis. The use of a Likert scale ensured consistency in responses while allowing the researcher to compute the weighted mean and determine the overall competence of these teachers. The information gathered using the data-gathering instrument enabled the researcher to obtain accurate data for computing the level of teachers' competence, highlighting their strengths and their ability to identify signs of learning difficulties. The analysis of the data and the salient findings provided a basis for meaningful recommendations to enhance teacher instructional strategies and intervention practices in the kindergarten classrooms of District 1 and District 2 in Asingan, Pangasinan.

Procedure

The researcher sought permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Pangasinan Division II to conduct the study. The research data-gathering instrument underwent content validation by experts in the field of early childhood education. It is to ensure that the data to be gathered is valid for the purposes of the study. The researcher requested the respondent-teachers to sign the "informed consent form." It provided the assurance that the conduct of the study adheres to the ethical guidelines and procedures established by educational authorities. After the requested permission from the Schools Division Superintendent was approved, the researcher also informed the principals/ school heads of the participating schools about the approval to conduct the study in their respective schools.

The researcher then distributed the questionnaire checklists to the respondent-teachers. The questionnaire checklist included a brief description of the study and clear instructions for responding to the items. The respondents were given sufficient time to accomplish the questionnaire checklist, after which the researcher collected and checked them for completeness. After gathering all data, the responses were encoded and prepared for statistical analysis. All information gathered was kept strictly confidential, and details of personal information were not included in the final report. The entire data collection followed ethical principles.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the surveys were meticulously arranged, coded, and analyzed to elucidate kindergarten instructors' proficiency in recognizing learning issues among their pupils. Each item on the questionnaire was scored on a five-point Likert scale: Always (5), Often (4), Sometimes (3), Seldom (2), and Never (1). This coding technique enabled the researcher to quantify responses, conduct statistical analyses, and extract meaningful results. After coding, the responses were tabulated across the five domains of learning difficulties: physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, and academic. The researcher computed the weighted mean for each statement and for each domain to determine the overall level of competence of the respondent-teachers. The weighted mean was interpreted using a descriptive scale to categorize teachers' competence as 'Very Competent,' 'Competent,' 'Moderately Competent,' 'Slightly Competent,' or 'Not Competent,' based on the weighted mean (WM) score ranges assigned for each category.

Frequency distributions and percentages were calculated to summarize responses and identify patterns within the population. The results enabled the researcher to identify specific areas of teacher strength and domains requiring additional support or training. Finally, the data were presented using tables and descriptive narratives to provide a comprehensive overview of the salient findings. The results of the statistical analysis served as the foundation for indicating the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties. This level ultimately provided insight into the current state of teachers' competence. It served as a basis for recommendations to enhance early identification practices and interventions in kindergarten classrooms in District 1 and District 2 of Asingan, Pangasinan.

Ethical Considerations

This research on teachers' competence in recognizing signs of learning difficulties in kindergarten pupils was conducted in accordance with stringent ethical standards to uphold the dignity and rights of all individuals involved. Prior to the commencement of the research process, the participating teachers were thoroughly apprised of the study's objective, scope, and methodologies. They received "informed consent forms" detailing their voluntary participation, their freedom to decline or withdraw at any time, and the assurance that there would be no adverse repercussions for discontinuing their involvement. Only individuals who freely signed the "informed consent form" were incorporated into the data collection process. Participants received no financial or material compensation for their involvement in the study, and participation was voluntary.

Before implementing the study instruments, the researcher obtained official approval from the School Division Superintendent, the District Supervisors, and the Principals/School Heads. This also established a framework for the research process within the educational

system and ensured a transparent mechanism for stakeholders to remain informed. The study focuses on identifying the learning difficulties kindergarten pupils face, despite the absence of direct interaction with the children. All information concerning the children was derived only from teachers' observations and self-reports. Consequently, the study refrained from collecting any private or sensitive information regarding the pupils, thereby ensuring their safety and protection.

The questionnaire and data collection approach were developed with the philosophy of non-maleficence, or "do no harm," as a guiding tenet. The measures were implemented to prevent teachers from feeling embarrassed, uncomfortable, or under professional pressure. The research posed no physical or mental harm to the subjects, and all procedures were executed with respect and ethical integrity. It was executed in accordance with the principle of beneficence, aimed at providing the academic community with new resources by offering insights into teachers' ability to identify symptoms of learning difficulties. These findings are expected to benefit future training programs and provide essential information that may enhance instruction and early intervention.

Ultimately, honesty and integrity were maintained in the management and analysis of data. All responses were meticulously documented, objectively evaluated, and faithfully conveyed. Relevant literature and prior studies were appropriately recognized. Upon completion of the research, all acquired data were securely preserved and disposed of in accordance with institutional protocols to guarantee stringent confidentiality.

Results and Discussion

This section presents a profile of the respondent-teachers, their level of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties, mean differences in the levels of their competence across the profile variables, and finally, the relationships between the competence of the respondents and the profile variables. Kindergarten teachers are expected to have proficiency in recognizing diverse learning challenges, as they are seen as facilitators of early childhood education. Their work is crucial for identifying early indicators that may affect learners' academic and developmental advancement, particularly in physical, emotional, psychological, and intellectual domains.

Table 1. *Demographic and Professional Profile of the Respondent- Kindergarten Teachers, n=32*

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	36-40	5	15.6
	31-35	14	43.8
	25-30	13	40.6
Civil Status	Single	10	31.3
	Married	22	68.8
Sex	Male	1	3.1
	Female	31	96.9
Highest Educational Attainment	MA/MS w/ doctoral units	4	12.4
	MA/MS	15	46.9
	BS w/ units in MA/MS	10	31.3
	BS	3	9.4
	16 years & above	4	12.5
Length of Service	11-15 years	10	31.3
	6-10 years	9	28.1
	1-5 years	9	28.1

Age. Most, i.e., 14 of the respondent-teachers or 43.8 percent of them, belong to the 31-35 years old bracket, and 13 of them, or 40.6 percent, belong to the age bracket 25-30 years old. The respondent-teachers are mostly middle-aged.

Civil Status. The majority, i.e., 22 of the respondent-teachers or 68.8 percent of them, are married; and 10 of them, or 31.3 percent, are still single.

Sex. The majority, i.e., 31 of the respondent-teachers or 96.9 percent of them are females. Only one (1) of them, or 3.1 percent, is a male.

Highest Educational Attainment. Most, i.e., 15 of the respondent-teachers or 46.9 percent of them, are Master's degree holders; 10 of them, or 31.3 percent, are BS degree holders with units leading to a master's degree. Only 3 of them, or 9.4 percent, hold a BS degree.

Number of Years in Teaching. Most, i.e., 10 of the respondent-teachers or 31.3 percent of them have had 11-15 years of experience teaching kindergarten. Nine (9) of them, or 28.1 percent have had 6-10 years in teaching, and another nine (9) of them, or 28.1 percent, have had only 1-5 years in teaching experience.

The data indicate that the respondents possess both academic qualifications and experience, which may enhance their ability to recognize learning issues. Ines, Pacheco, Abelha, and Seabra (2022) assert that teachers with higher qualifications and extensive teaching experience demonstrate greater proficiency in meeting the needs of diverse learners. It is also stated in Florian and Black-Hawkin (2011) that years of experience alone in effective identification of signs of learning difficulty are not always sufficient. According to their study, it requires continuous professional learning and that the teachers must continuously develop expansive knowledge, in order to respond effectively to the diverse needs of those with signs of learning difficulties. Overall, the profile of the

respondents suggests that their academic preparation and teaching experience contribute to their competence in handling learners with signs of learning difficulties, although continuous professional development remains essential.

Competence of Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of their Pupils' Physical Learning Difficulties

Table 2. Competence of Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of their Pupils' Physical Learning Difficulties

Physical: Indicator Statements As a Kindergarten Teacher, I can . . . / The Kindergarten Teacher can . . .	WM (KT)	WM (SH)	DR	TR
1. Recognize pupils who have an unusual pencil grip.	4.844	4.667	A	VC
2. Recognize pupils who have difficulty with fine-motor tasks (writing, cutting).	4.688	4.667	A	VC
3. Identify children who have delayed gross-motor skills (running, jumping).	4.781	4.667	A	VC
4. See pupils who avoid tasks requiring physical coordination.	4.781	4.667	A	VC
5. Observe children who tire easily during physical activities.	4.750	4.667	A	VC
6. See signs of poor balance or frequent tripping.	4.750	4.667	A	VC
7. Identify signs of visual-motor difficulties.	4.719	4.667	A	VC
8. Identify pupils who struggle with hand-eye coordination.	4.781	4.667	A	VC
9. Recognize pupils with difficulty manipulating small objects.	4.750	4.667	A	VC
10. Observe children who show unusual posture when writing or sitting.	4.750	4.667	A	VC
Total	47.594	46.667	A	
Overall Weighted Mean (OWM)	4.759	4.667	A	VC

Legend: Literal Rating; WM Score Range; Descriptive Rating (DR); Transmuted Rating (TR) — A: 4.50–5.00, Always (A), Very Competent (VC); B: 3.50–4.49, Often (O), Competent (C); C: 2.50–3.49, Sometimes (S), Moderately Competent (MC); D: 1.50–2.39, Seldom (SI), Slightly Competent (SC); E: 1.00–1.49, Never (N), Not Competent (NC).

Table 2 presents the level of competence of the kindergarten teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties of their pupils. Each of the indicator statements is followed by the WM (KT) of the kindergarten teachers and the WM (SH) of the school heads. The WM(SH) of the school heads, as presented in this table, is only a cross-check or triangulation of the WM ratings of the respondent-teachers. The WM(KT)s are given their equivalence in descriptive rating (DR) and in Transmuted rating (TR). The overall weighted mean (OWM)=4.759, equivalent to "always" (A) in descriptive rating, and "very competent" in transmuted rating, indicates the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties in the physical domain. Indicator statement No. 1, "recognize pupils who have an unusual pencil grip", obtained the highest WM=4.844, equivalent to "very competent," while indicator statement No. 7, "identify signs of visual-motor difficulties", obtained the lowest WM=4.7419. However, this WM is still equivalent to "very competent" in the transmuted rating.

It suggests that teachers are adept at identifying physical indicators of learning disabilities, including poor motor coordination, an inappropriate pencil grip, and difficulty with physical activities. The consistently elevated evaluations across all metrics indicate that teachers are perceptive and adept at identifying physical difficulties in kindergarten pupils. This level of proficiency is attributed to their ongoing classroom interactions with pupils, which enhance their ability to recognize developmental and behavioral markers.

This conclusion corroborates Friend and Bursuck (2012), who underscored the pivotal role of instructors in the early identification of pupils with special needs via ongoing classroom observation. Observable indicators, such as motor coordination deficits and challenges with task completion, are often initially identified by teachers in academic environments. The results indicate that a respondent-teacher's competency in recognizing signs of physical learning challenges correlates with substantial classroom experience and ongoing professional development. This combination enhances their capacity to identify early physical symptoms of learning issues with greater precision, thereby facilitating prompt intervention for learners.

Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Emotional Learning Difficulties

Table 3. Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Emotional Learning Difficulties

Emotional: Indicator Statements As a Kindergarten Teacher, I can . . . / The Kindergarten Teacher can . . .	WM (KT)	WM (SH)	DR	TR
1. Recognize pupils who show sudden changes in mood.	4.469	4.000	A	VC
2. Identify children who easily become frustrated during tasks.	4.531	4.000	A	VC
3. Identify pupils who show signs of low self-confidence.	4.500	4.000	A	VC
4. Recognize children who become overly dependent on the teacher.	4.656	4.000	A	VC
5. Recognize children who show persistent fear or anxiety in class.	4.594	4.000	A	VC
6. Observe pupils who withdraw from group activities.	4.531	4.000	A	VC
7. Observe signs of emotional sensitivity to corrections.	4.438	4.000	A	VC
8. Identify children who overreact to small problems.	4.406	4.000	A	VC
9. See children who frequently cry over simple tasks.	4.469	4.000	A	VC
10. See children who struggle to manage simple emotional tasks.	4.531	4.000	A	VC
Total	45.125	40.000		
Overall Weighted Mean (OWM)	4.512	4.000	A	VC

Legend: Literal Rating; WM Score Range; Descriptive Rating (DR); Transmuted Rating (TR) — A: 4.50–5.00, Always (A), Very Competent (VC); B: 3.50–4.49, Often (O), Competent (C); C: 2.50–3.49, Sometimes (S), Moderately Competent (MC); D: 1.50–2.39, Seldom (SI), Slightly Competent (SC); E: 1.00–1.49, Never (N), Not Competent (NC).

Table 3 presents the level of competence of the kindergarten teachers in identifying signs of emotional learning difficulties of their pupils. Each of the indicator statements is followed by the WM (KT) of the kindergarten teachers and the WM (SH) of the school heads. The WM(SH) of the school heads, as presented in the table, is only a cross-check or triangulation of the WM ratings of the respondent-teachers. The WM(KT)s are given their equivalence in descriptive rating (DR) and in Transmuted rating (TR).

The overall weighted mean (OWM)=4.512, equivalent to “always” (A) in descriptive rating, and “very competent” in transmuted rating, indicates the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties in the emotional domain. Indicator statement No. 4, “recognize children who become overly dependent on the teacher,” obtained the highest WM=4.656, equivalent to “very competent,” while indicator statement No. 8, “identify children who overreact to small problems,” obtained the lowest WM=4.406, and this WM is equivalent to “competent” in transmuted rating.

It means that teachers can effectively recognize emotional behaviors such as anxiety, frustration, withdrawal, and low self-confidence. The results suggest that teachers are sensitive to pupils' emotional needs, which is important for supporting their overall development. This level of competence may be attributed to teachers' continuous interaction with learners, which allows them to observe emotional and behavioral changes during daily classroom activities.

It indicates that teachers can proficiently identify emotional behaviors, including worry, irritation, retreat, and diminished self-confidence. The findings indicate that teachers are attuned to the emotional needs of the pupils, which is crucial for fostering their holistic development. This degree of proficiency might be attributed to teachers' ongoing engagement with students, which enables them to discern emotional and behavioral fluctuations during everyday classroom interactions.

Kauffman (2005) corroborates this finding, noting that emotional and behavioral challenges often manifest as observable classroom behaviors, including withdrawal, hostility, inattention, and minimal engagement. He emphasized that education teachers are typically the first to notice these indicators because of their ongoing engagement with pupils.

Furthermore, Friend and Bursuck (2012) emphasized that teachers are pivotal in the early detection of emotional and behavioral challenges, since they observe students in both academic and social contexts within the classroom. This ongoing exposure enables teachers to identify patterns of emotional distress that may not be readily apparent in formal evaluations.

Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Psychological Learning Difficulties

Table 4. *Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Psychological Learning Difficulties*

<i>Psychological: Indicator Statements As a Kindergarten Teacher, I can . . . / The Kindergarten Teacher can . . .</i>	<i>WM (KT)</i>	<i>WM (SH)</i>	<i>DR</i>	<i>TR</i>
1. recognize pupils who show difficulty following multi-step instructions.	4.406	4.000	O	C
2. Identify children with short attention spans.	4.344	4.000	O	C
3. Observe pupils who appear easily distracted.	4.406	4.000	O	C
4. Recognize children who have difficulty controlling impulses.	4.312	4.000	O	C
5. Observe repetitive or unusual behaviors in pupils.	4.188	4.000	O	C
6. Identify early signs of attention-related difficulties, e.g., <i>ADHD</i>	4.406	4.000	O	C
7. See children who struggle with routine transitions.	4.469	4.000	O	C
8. Identify children who often forget instructions or tasks.	4.375	4.000	O	C
9. See children who show difficulty organizing materials.	4.281	4.000	O	C
10. Recognize pupils who daydream excessively.	4.312	4.000	O	C
Total	43.500	40.000		
Overall Weighted Mean (OWM)	4.350	4.000	O	C

Legend: Literal Rating; WM Score Range; Descriptive Rating (DR); Transmuted Rating (TR) — A: 4.50–5.00, Always (A), Very Competent (VC); B: 3.50–4.49, Often (O), Competent (C); C: 2.50–3.49, Sometimes (S), Moderately Competent (MC); D: 1.50–2.39, Seldom (Sl), Slightly Competent (SC); E: 1.00–1.49, Never (N), Not Competent (NC).

Table 4 presents the level of competence of the kindergarten teachers in identifying signs of psychological learning difficulties of their pupils. Each of the indicator statements is followed by the WM (KT) of the kindergarten teachers and the WM (SH) of the school heads. The WM(SH) of the school heads, as presented in the table, is only a cross-check or triangulation of the WM ratings of the respondent-teachers. The WM(KT)s are given their equivalence in descriptive rating (DR) and in Transmuted rating (TR).

The overall weighted mean (OWM)=4.530, equivalent to “often” (O) in descriptive rating, and “competent” in transmuted rating, indicates the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of psychological learning difficulties.

Indicator statement No. 7, “see children who struggle with routine transitions,” obtained the highest WM=4.469, equivalent to “competent,” while indicator statement No. 10, “recognize pupils who daydream excessively,” obtained the lowest WM=4.312, equivalent to “competent” in transmuted rating.

Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Intellectual Learning Difficulties

Table 5. Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Intellectual Learning Difficulties

<i>Intellectual: Indicator Statements</i> <i>As a Kindergarten Teacher, I can . . . /</i> <i>The Kindergarten Teacher can . . .</i>	<i>WM</i> <i>(KT)</i>	<i>WM</i> <i>(SH)</i>	<i>DR</i>	<i>TR</i>
1. Recognize pupils who struggle with letter recognition.	4.656	4.000	A	VC
2. Identify children who cannot recall learned concepts.	4.625	4.333	A	VC
3. Observe children who have difficulty understanding instructions.	4.625	4.333	A	VC
4. Recognize pupils who struggle with early numeracy skills.	4.500	4.333	A	VC
5. Observe indicators of dysgraphia in children's writing.	4.562	4.333	A	VC
6. Identify pupils who cannot maintain focus during academic tasks.	4.469	4.333	O	C
7. Recognize children who learn at a significantly slower pace.	4.469	4.333	O	C
8. See signs of delayed language development.	4.438	4.333	O	C
9. Identify early signs of dyslexia.	4.531	4.333	A	VC
10. See children who struggle with forming basic concepts.	4.469	4.667	O	C
Total	45.344	43.333		
Overall Weighted Mean (OWM)	4.534	4.333	A	VC

Legend: Literal Rating; WM Score Range; Descriptive Rating (DR); Transmuted Rating (TR) — A: 4.50–5.00, Always (A), Very Competent (VC); B: 3.50–4.49, Often (O), Competent (C); C: 2.50–3.49, Sometimes (S), Moderately Competent (MC); D: 1.50–2.39, Seldom (SL), Slightly Competent (SC); E: 1.00–1.49, Never (N), Not Competent (NC).

Table 5 presents the level of competence of the kindergarten teachers in identifying signs of intellectual learning difficulties of their pupils. Each of the indicator statements is followed by the WM (KT) of the kindergarten teachers and the WM (SH) of the school heads. The WM(SH) of the school heads, as presented in the table, is only a cross-check or triangulation of the WM ratings of the respondent-teachers. The WM(KT)s are given their equivalence in descriptive rating (DR) and in Transmuted rating (TR).

The overall weighted mean (OWM)=4.534, equivalent to “always” (A) in descriptive rating, and “very competent” in transmuted rating, indicates the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of intellectual learning difficulties.

Indicator statement No. 1, “recognize pupils who struggle with letter recognition,” obtained the highest WM=4.656, which is equivalent to “always” in descriptive rating and “very competent” in transmuted rating. While indicator statement No. 8, “see signs of delayed language development”, obtained the lowest WM=4.438. However, this WM is still equivalent to “competent” in the transmuted rating.

Both the WM(KT) and WM(SH) are parallel to each other in that both have equivalent descriptive rating (DR) and transmuted rating (TR) are the same, although the school heads rated their kindergarten teachers higher than the rating the teachers gave themselves. The ratings indicated that teachers are “very competent” in identifying intellectual learning difficulties.

The study indicated that teachers are “highly proficient” in identifying indications of intellectual learning difficulties that may significantly hinder academic achievement. The competency level may be attributed to teachers' continuous classroom exposure, which enabled them to monitor students' cognitive performance across various learning activities closely.

It aligns with the findings of Swanson and Hoskyn (1998), who indicated that learners with cognitive learning difficulties typically have deficits in working memory, processing speed, and comprehension. These issues are frequently evident in scholastic tasks that involve reading, comprehending instructions, and solving problems.

Likewise, the outcome aligns with Geary (2004), who contended that children with intellectual and learning disabilities typically encounter challenges in acquiring fundamental academic skills due to difficulties in memory and conceptual comprehension. He observed that these cognitive challenges became increasingly evident in educational settings that require sustained attention and information processing.

Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Academic Learning Difficulties

Table 6 presents the level of competence of the kindergarten teachers in identifying signs of academic learning difficulties of their pupils. The overall weighted mean (OWM)=4.750, equivalent to “always” (A) in descriptive rating, and “very competent” in transmuted rating, indicates the composite level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of academic learning difficulties.

Indicator statements No. 1 “differentiate between age-appropriate developmental delays and possible learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils,” No. 2 “identify kindergarten pupils who have difficulty recognizing letters and their corresponding sounds,” and No. 6 “identify pupils who have difficulty expressing ideas or answering questions verbally,” obtained the highest WM=4.781, equivalent to “very competent,” in transmuted rating. However, indicator statement No. 9 “identify pupils who experience difficulty in counting, number recognition, and basic numeracy skills” obtained the lowest WM=4.719, which is also equivalent to “competent” in transmuted rating.

It indicates that teachers excel in recognizing academic learning difficulties, including reading readiness, numeracy skills, and comprehension of instructions. It is attributable to teachers' consistent engagement in academic instruction, which allows them to

observe students' performance on literacy and numeracy tasks, including reading comprehension, number recognition, and adherence to written or oral directives.

Table 6. *Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Academic Learning Difficulties*

<i>Academic: Indicator Statements As a Kindergarten Teacher, I can . . . / The Kindergarten Teacher can . . .</i>	<i>WM (KT)</i>	<i>WM (SH)</i>	<i>DR</i>	<i>TR</i>
1. Differentiate between age-appropriate developmental delays and possible learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils.	4.781	4.667	A	VC
2. Identify kindergarten pupils who have difficulty recognizing letters and their corresponding sounds.	4.781	4.667	A	VC
3. Recognize pupils who have difficulty following simple oral instructions during class activities.	4.750	4.667	A	VC
4. Recognize pupils who have difficulty remembering lessons or instructions given earlier in the day.	4.750	4.667	A	VC
5. Identify pupils who struggle with basic reading readiness skills such as matching, sequencing, and phonemic awareness.	4.688	4.667	A	VC
6. Identify pupils who have difficulty expressing ideas or answering questions verbally.	4.781	4.667	A	VC
7. Observe academic difficulties through pupils' performance in developmentally appropriate classroom activities.	4.750	4.667	A	VC
8. Identify pupils who may need further support or referral based on observed academic difficulties.	4.750	4.667	A	VC
9. Identify pupils who experience difficulty in counting, number recognition, and basic numeracy skills	4.719	4.667	A	VC
10. Identify pupils who show difficulty in writing-related skills such as holding a pencil or coloring within lines.	4.750	4.667	A	VC
Total	47.500	46.667		
Overall Weighted Mean	4.750	4.667	A	VC

Legend: Literal Rating; WM Score Range; Descriptive Rating (DR); Transmuted Rating (TR) — A: 4.50–5.00, Always (A), Very Competent (VC); B: 3.50–4.49, Often (O), Competent (C); C: 2.50–3.49, Sometimes (S), Moderately Competent (MC); D: 1.50–2.39, Seldom (SI), Slightly Competent (SC); E: 1.00–1.49, Never (N), Not Competent (NC).

The current findings strongly corroborate the assertions of Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998), who emphasized that early academic difficulties in reading can be identified through observable classroom indicators, including decoding errors, insufficient fluency, and poor comprehension skills. It was stated that teachers are well-positioned to recognize these issues, as they consistently engage with pupils in class.

This conclusion further corroborates the findings of Fuchs and Fuchs (2006), who observed that inadequacies in number sense, computational skills, and problem-solving capabilities mark obstacles in mathematics learning. They emphasized the crucial role of teachers in the early detection of these disorders through regular classroom assessments and performance monitoring.

This conclusion aligns with the findings of Swanson and Hoskyn (1998), who found that learners with academic learning difficulties frequently demonstrate impairments in working memory and information processing, which adversely affect reading comprehension and mathematical reasoning.

Furthermore, it corroborates the assertion by Friend and Bursuck (2012) that teachers are crucial actors in recognizing academic learning challenges, as they directly evaluate students' literacy and numeracy performance during classroom activities. By maintaining continuous engagement with students, weaknesses in fundamental academic skills can be identified promptly.

Summary of Overall Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Learning Difficulties

Table 7. *Overall Competence of Teachers in Identifying Signs of Kindergarten Pupils' Learning Difficulties*

<i>Learning Difficulties</i>	<i>OWM (KT)</i>	<i>OWM (SH)</i>	<i>DR</i>	<i>TR</i>
A. Physical	4.759	4.667	A	VC
B. Emotional	4.512	4.000	A	VC
C. Psychological	4.350	4.000	A	VC
D. Intellectual	4.534	4.333	A	VC
E. Academic	4.750	4.447	A	VC
Grand Total	22.905	21.447		
Grand Overall Weighted Mean	4.581	4.289	A	VC

Legend: Literal Rating; WM Score Range; Descriptive Rating (DR); Transmuted Rating (TR) — A: 4.50–5.00, Always (A), Very Competent (VC); B: 3.50–4.49, Often (O), Competent (C); C: 2.50–3.49, Sometimes (S), Moderately Competent (MC); D: 1.50–2.39, Seldom (SI), Slightly Competent (SC); E: 1.00–1.49, Never (N), Not Competent (NC).

Table 7 presents the summary of the overall competence of teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils. It is to be noted the OWM(KT), the overall weighted mean for the kindergarten teachers, and the OWM(SH), the overall weighted mean for the school heads, are parallel to each other, in that both are equivalent to “very competent” in transmuted rating (TR), although the OWM(SH) are consistently higher than the OWM(KT) in all dimensions of learning difficulties.

It is to be noted, as well, that the respondent-teachers obtained OWM (KT)=4.759 in the physical domain of learning difficulties, which is the highest OWM (KT), while they obtained the lowest OWM(KT)=4.350 in the psychological domain of learning difficulties. It is understandable, mainly because the physical signs of learning difficulties are more visible than the signs of psychological learning difficulties. Psychological indicators appear slightly less visible, possibly due to their more complex and less observable nature.

In general, the grand overall weighted mean (GOWM)=4.581, equivalent to "very competent," indicates the composite competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils. The teachers are "very competent" in identifying the signs of difficulties of their pupils.

The findings support Friend and Bursuck (2012), who highlighted that teachers are pivotal in the early detection of varied learning challenges by ongoing classroom observation and everyday engagement with students. They elucidated that teachers frequently serve as the initial observers of both academic and non-academic variables that may influence learning outcomes.

Furthermore, it supports the findings of Loreman, Sharma, and Forlin (2014), which indicate that teachers' proficiency in recognizing learning issues is enhanced by prolonged exposure to inclusive classrooms. They emphasized that continuous professional development is crucial for improving teachers' capacity to consistently identify both apparent academic difficulties and less visible psychological or behavioral issues.

Moreover, it endorses the assertions of Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), who contended that effective inclusive pedagogy necessitates ongoing professional development beyond mere experience, especially in catering to learners' diverse and intricate needs. It involves enhancing instructors' ability to recognize psychological and behavioral indications that may not be readily observable in classroom environments.

Differences in the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties across the Variable, Age

Table 8. Mean Differences in the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties across the Variable, Age

Domain of Learning Difficulties		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Physical Tot	Between Groups	46.131	2	23.065	1.278ns	.294
	Within Groups	523.588	29	18.055		
	Total	569.719	31			
Emotional Tot	Between Groups	16.563	2	8.281	.447ns	.644
	Within Groups	536.937	29	18.515		
	Total	553.500	31			
Psychological Tot	Between Groups	81.877	2	40.938	1.691ns	.202
	Within Groups	702.123	29	24.211		
	Total	784.000	31			
Intellectual Tot	Between Groups	7.354	2	3.677	.143ns	.868
	Within Groups	747.865	29	25.788		
	Total	755.219	31			
Academic Tot	Between Groups	71.363	2	35.681	1.852ns	.175
	Within Groups	558.637	29	19.263		
	Total	630.000	31			
Grand Total	Between Groups	118.916	2	59.458	.183ns	.833
	Within Groups	9396.959	29	324.033		
	Total	9515.875	31			

ns=Not significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance

Table 8 presents the ANOVA results of the mean differences of the levels of competence of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils, across the variable, age. The F- values with their respective significance are shown across each of the areas of learning difficulties.

F=1.278, p=0.294 for the area of physical learning difficulty, F=0.447, p=0.644 for emotional learning difficulty, F=1.691, p=0.202 for psychological learning difficulty, F= 0.143, p=0.868 for intellectual learning difficulty, F=1.852, p=0.175 for academic learning difficulty, and F=0.183, p=0.833 for the total, which is the composite of all the learning difficulties, are not significant at the 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, stating "there are no significant mean differences in levels of competences of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers (KT) across the variable, age," is accepted. It means that whatever age bracket the respondents belong to, their level of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils would be similar to each other. It means, further, that no matter how old the respondent-KTs are, their level of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties of their pupils is "very competent."

Differences in the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties across the Variable, Civil Status

Table 9 presents the t-Test results of the mean differences of the levels of competence of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils, across the variable, civil status. The t- values with their respective significance are shown across each of the areas of learning difficulties.

$t=1.958$, $p=0.060$ for the area of physical learning difficulty, $t=-0.378$, $p=0.708$ for emotional learning difficulty, $t=-0.299$, $p=0.767$ for psychological learning difficulty, $t=-0.724$, $p=0.475$ for intellectual learning difficulty, $t=0.842$, $p=0.406$ for academic learning difficulty, and $t=0.287$, $p=0.776$ for the total, which is the composite of all the learning difficulties, are not significant at the 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Table 9. Mean Differences in the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties across the Variable, Civil Status

Domain of Learning Difficulties	Equal variances	<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means						
		<i>N</i>	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>Df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Physical	Assumed	10	49.700	3.064	1.565	1.958ns	30	.060
	Not Assumed	22	46.636					
Emotional	Assumed	10	44.700	-.618	1.634	-.378ns	30	.708
	Not Assumed	22	45.318					
Psychological	Assumed	10	43.100	-.582	1.947	-.299ns	30	.767
	Not Assumed	22	43.682					
Intellectual	Assumed	10	44.400	-1.373	1.897	-.724ns	30	.475
	Not Assumed	22	45.773					
Academic	Assumed	10	48.500	1.465	1.727	.842ns	30	.406
	Not Assumed	22	47.045					
Grand Tot	Assumed	10	230.400	1.946	6.783	.287ns	30	.776
	Not Assumed	22	228.4545					

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance
ns=Not significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance

Therefore, the null hypothesis, stating "there are no significant mean differences in levels of competences of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers (KT) across the variable, civil status," is accepted. It means that whether the respondents are married or single, their level of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils would be similar to each other. It means, further, that no matter what the civil status the respondent-KTs have, their level of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their pupils is "very competent."

Differences in the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties across the Variable, Highest Educational Attainment

Table 10. Mean Differences in the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties across the Variable, Highest Educational Attainment

Domain of Learning Difficulties		Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Physical Total	Between Groups	23.769	3	7.923	.406ns	.750
	Within Groups	545.950	28	19.498		
	Total	569.719	31			
Emotional Total	Between Groups	62.917	3	20.972	1.197ns	.329
	Within Groups	490.583	28	17.521		
	Total	553.500	31			
Psychological Total	Between Groups	245.917	3	81.972	4.266*	.013
	Within Groups	538.083	28	19.217		
	Total	784.000	31			
Intellectual Total	Between Groups	18.235	3	6.078	.231	.874
	Within Groups	736.983	28	26.321		
	Total	755.219	31			
Academic Total	Between Groups	25.167	3	8.389	.388	.762
	Within Groups	604.833	28	21.601		
	Total	630.000	31			
Grand Total	Between Groups	603.442	3	201.147	.632	.601
	Within Groups	8912.433	28	318.301		
	Total	9515.875	31			

ns=Not significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance

Table 10 presents the ANOVA results of the mean differences of the levels of competence of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils, across the variable, highest educational attainment. The *F*-values with their respective significance are shown across each of the areas of learning difficulties.

$F=0.406$, $p=0.750$ for the area of physical learning difficulty, $F=0.197$, $p=0.329$ for emotional learning difficulty, $F=4.266$, $p=0.013$ for psychological learning difficulty, $F=0.231$, $p=0.874$ for intellectual learning difficulty, $F=0.388$, $p=0.762$ for academic learning difficulty, and finally, $F=0.632$, $p=0.601$ for the total, which is the composite of all the learning difficulties, are not significant at the 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, stating "there are no significant mean differences in levels of competences of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers (KT) across the variable, highest educational attainment," is accepted. It means that whatever degree course the respondents hold, their level of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils would be similar to each other. It means, further, that whether the respondent-KTs hold a BS degree, a Master's degree, or even a Doctor's degree, their level of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties of their pupils is "very competent." However, $F=4.266$, $p=0.013$ for the psychological domain, is significant at the 0.05 alpha level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis of no mean difference in the level of competence of the respondent-teachers across the variable, highest educational attainment, is rejected. It means that the level of competence of the kindergarten teacher in identifying signs of learning difficulties is differentiated by the variable, highest educational attainment, favoring those who hold higher degree courses, like Master of Arts in Education, major in Early Childhood Education, and those with EdD/PhD degrees.

Differences in the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties across the Variable, Number of Years in Teaching

Table 11. Mean Differences in the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teacher in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties across the Variable, No. of Years in Teaching

Areas of Learning Difficulties		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Physical Total	Between Groups	82.708	3	27.569	1.585ns	.215
	Within Groups	487.011	28	17.393		
	Total	569.719	31			
Emotional Total	Between Groups	73.456	3	24.485	1.428ns	.255
	Within Groups	480.044	28	17.144		
	Total	553.500	31			
Psychological Total	Between Groups	14.178	3	4.726	.172ns	.914
	Within Groups	769.822	28	27.494		
	Total	784.000	31			
Intellectual Total	Between Groups	91.091	3	30.364	1.280ns	.300
	Within Groups	664.128	28	23.719		
	Total	755.219	31			
Academic Total	Between Groups	80.094	3	26.698	1.359ns	.275
	Within Groups	549.906	28	19.639		
	Total	630.000	31			
Grand Total	Between Groups	695.931	3	231.977	.736ns	.539
	Within Groups	8819.944	28	314.998		
	Total	9515.875	31			

ns=Not significant at 0.05 alpha level of significance

Table 11 presents the ANOVA results of the mean differences of the levels of competence of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils, across the variable, number of years in teaching, and across the number of years in teaching. The F- values with their respective significance are shown across each of the areas of learning difficulties.

$F=1.585$, $p=0.215$ for the area of physical learning difficulty, $F=1.428$, $p=0.255$ for emotional learning difficulty, $F=0.172$, $p=0.914$ for psychological learning difficulty, $F=1.280$, $p=0.300$ for intellectual learning difficulty, $F=1.359$, $p=0.275$ for academic learning difficulty, and finally, $F=0.736$, $p=0.539$ for the total, which is the composite of all the learning difficulties, are not significant at the 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, stating "there are no significant mean differences in levels of competences of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers (KT) across the variable, number of years in teaching," is accepted. It means no matter how many years of teaching experience the respondent-KTs have, their level of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties among their kindergarten pupils would be similar to each other. Further, this means that no matter how many years of experience in teaching the respondent-KTs have had, their level of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties of their pupils is "very competent."

It is to be noted that all the r- values signifying the relationships between the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils, and the profile variables, across all domains of learning difficulties, are not significant at the 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, stating, "there are no significant relationships between the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties, and the profile variable," is accepted. It means that the levels of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties are not associated in any way with the profile variables considered in this study. Further, it means that in further follow-up studies, in the future, on levels of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties, there is a need to explore other variables.

Relationships between the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties and the Profile Variables

It is to be noted that all the *r*- values signifying the relationships between the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties among kindergarten pupils, and the profile variables, across all domains of learning difficulties, are not significant at the 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Table 12. Relationships between the Level of Competence of the Respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in Identifying Signs of Learning Difficulties among Kindergarten Pupils, *n*=32

Areas of Learning Difficulties	Pearson Correlation	Sex	Age	CS	HEA	NYT
	<i>r</i> - value					
Physical Total	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.102	-.280	-.337	-.037	-.233
		.577	.120	.060	.842	.200
	<i>r</i> - value					
Emotional Total	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.211	.106	.069	.028	.143
		.247	.563	.708	.878	.436
	<i>r</i> - value					
Psychological Total	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.236	-.089	.054	.060	-.016
		.194	.627	.767	.746	.932
	<i>r</i> - value					
Intellectual Total	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.172	.030	.131	.047	.167
		.346	.872	.475	.798	.362
	<i>r</i> - value					
Academic Total	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.101	-.179	-.152	.113	.087
		.582	.326	.406	.538	.634
	<i>r</i> - value					
Grand Total	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.218	-.106	-.052	.057	.042
		.231	.562	.776	.756	.818

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

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

Strength of Pearson *r* Coefficient of Correlation — Correlation Value Range and Interpretation: 0.90 to 1.00 (–0.90 to –1.00), Very high positive (negative) correlation; 0.70 to 0.90 (–0.70 to –0.90), High positive (negative) correlation; 0.50 to 0.70 (–0.50 to –0.70), Moderate positive (negative) correlation; 0.30 to 0.50 (–0.30 to –0.50), Low positive (negative) correlation; 0.00 to 0.30 (–0.00 to –0.30), Negligible correlation.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, stating, “there are no significant relationships between the level of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties, and the profile variable,” is accepted. This means that the levels of competence of the respondent-teachers in identifying signs of learning difficulties are not associated in any way with the profile variables considered in this study. Further, it means that in further follow-up studies, in the future, on levels of competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties, there is a need to explore other variables.

Conclusions

It is concluded that the respondent-teachers are academically prepared and experienced in teaching kindergarten pupils. It is also concluded that overall, the respondent-teachers are “very competent” in identifying signs of learning difficulties. Further, the findings revealed that teachers demonstrate comparable competence regardless of their profile variables, i.e., their competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties is not differentiated by the profile variables, except in the competence of the respondent-teachers in the psychological domain of learning difficulties, across the variable, highest educational attainment. Furthermore, it can be concluded that teachers are more competent in identifying physical learning difficulties, rather than in other domains, especially in psychological learning difficulties.

It is recommended that teachers continue to participate in professional development programs, seminars, and in-service training to maintain their level of competence in identifying learning difficulties among pupils, and to further enhance it. School administrators are urged to provide administrative support for implementing the suggested training to improve kindergarten teachers' competence in recognizing signs of learning difficulties. Further studies on kindergarten teachers' competence in identifying signs of learning difficulties should be conducted with a larger sample and explore additional variables under the auspices of accredited graduate institutions.

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