

Exploring Teachers' Experiences in Utilizing the Big Six of Reading Instruction

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Abstract

This study explored the experiences of Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers in utilizing the Big Six of Reading Instruction in the three largest elementary schools in Ipil District, Zamboanga Sibugay during the school year 2025–2026. Anchored in the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Tunmer, 2021), the study examined teachers' understanding, implementation practices, challenges, coping strategies, and support needs related to literacy instruction. The study employed a qualitative case study design guided by Merriam & Tisdell (2016). Nine ECE teachers were selected through purposive quota sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and document analysis, and were analyzed through inductive coding, categorization, and thematic analysis with data triangulation and member checking to ensure credibility. Findings revealed that teachers viewed the Big Six as a structured, interconnected, and comprehension-centered framework for literacy development. Teachers implemented the framework through routine-based and learner-centered instructional practices involving oral language activities, explicit phonics instruction, scaffolding, collaborative learning, and comprehension-focused strategies. However, implementation was affected by challenges such as large class sizes, multilingual classrooms, limited instructional resources, insufficient instructional time, and limited professional development opportunities. To address these challenges, teachers utilized flexible pacing, peer tutoring, contextualized instruction, parental involvement, and creative use of available materials. The study concluded that effective implementation of the Big Six requires continuous professional development, adequate instructional resources, administrative support, and responsive literacy programs. The study aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by promoting quality literacy instruction, teacher development, and collaborative educational support systems. The findings contribute to educational, institutional, and community sustainability by supporting context-responsive literacy practices and improving early reading outcomes in multilingual and resource-constrained environments.

Keywords: Big Six of Reading Instruction, Early Childhood Education, Literacy Development, Multilingual Classrooms, Qualitative Case Study, Reading Comprehension, Scaffolding, Simple View of Reading, Structured Literacy, Teacher Experiences

1. Introduction

Literacy is a fundamental component of education that significantly influences academic achievement, cognitive development, and learners' capacity to function effectively in society. Global educational systems continue to prioritize early literacy due to persistent learning poverty and the growing recognition that reading proficiency predicts long-term educational success (Castles et al., 2022). Contemporary perspectives describe literacy as a multidimensional process involving language, cognition, and social interaction (Cabell et al., 2023). Consequently, structured and research-based literacy instruction has become essential in improving reading outcomes, particularly through early interventions that support sustained academic development (Zucker et al., 2021). Among the most recognized frameworks in literacy instruction is the Big Six of Reading Instruction, which includes oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These components collectively support reading proficiency through explicit and systematic instruction. Existing literature highlights the importance of phonics in early reading development (Ehri, 2022), vocabulary in comprehension (Perfetti & Stafura, 2022), and oral language as a foundation of literacy acquisition (Wasik & Hindman, 2021). However, implementing structured literacy instruction remains challenging in multilingual and resource-constrained educational settings. In the Philippine context, literacy concerns persist despite educational reforms, particularly regarding reading comprehension and foundational literacy skills (Bernardo, 2022; Mullis et al., 2023). These challenges are further influenced by teacher preparation, instructional resources, and classroom realities (Quimbo & Tan, 2021; Dayagbil et al., 2022). This study explores the experiences of Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers in utilizing the Big Six of Reading Instruction in Ipil District, Zamboanga Sibugay. Anchored in the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Tunmer, 2021), the study examines teachers' understanding, implementation strategies, challenges, coping mechanisms, and support needs in literacy instruction. By focusing on teachers' lived experiences, the study seeks to contribute contextually relevant insights into literacy practices in multilingual and resource-limited environments.

1.1 Background of ECE Teachers' Utilization of the Big Six of Reading Instruction

Literacy development remains central to educational success and lifelong learning. Early reading ability strongly predicts academic achievement and cognitive growth (Castles et al., 2022), while literacy itself is recognized as a complex process involving language, cognition, and social interaction (Cabell et al., 2023). Research further indicates that early literacy interventions improve long-term educational outcomes (Zucker et al., 2021). As a result, educational systems increasingly adopt structured and evidence-based approaches to literacy instruction. The Big Six of Reading Instruction—oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—has been widely recognized as an effective framework for developing reading proficiency. Studies emphasize the role of phonics in decoding skills (Ehri, 2022), vocabulary in comprehension (Perfetti & Stafura, 2022), and oral language in literacy acquisition (Wasik & Hindman, 2021). Integrating these literacy components improves overall reading outcomes (Kim et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of literacy instruction depends on contextual factors such as linguistic diversity, learner background, and classroom conditions. Research shows that multilingual and multicultural settings require contextualized and differentiated instruction to improve learner engagement and comprehension (Garcia & Wei, 2023; Martin & Rose, 2021; Connor & Morrison, 2021). In the Philippines, literacy challenges continue despite educational reforms. Filipino learners struggle with reading comprehension and foundational literacy skills (Bernardo, 2022), as reflected in international assessment results (Mullis et al., 2023). Factors contributing to these challenges include inadequate instructional resources, differences in teacher preparation, and learning disruptions (Quimbo & Tan, 2021; Dayagbil et al., 2022). Teacher competence and professional development significantly affect literacy instruction effectiveness, particularly when structured literacy approaches are implemented (Flores & Gago, 2023; Mesmer & Kambach, 2022; Al Otaiba & Folsom, 2022). Continuous teacher training therefore remains essential in improving learner outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023). In Ipil District, Zamboanga Sibugay, ECE teachers utilize the Big Six of Reading Instruction to enhance reading proficiency among learners. However, implementation is shaped by challenges such as large class sizes, multilingual classrooms, limited instructional materials, and diverse learner needs. Teachers often employ scaffolding, peer-assisted learning, and contextualized teaching strategies to address these realities and improve learner engagement (Hjetland et al., 2021; Lonigan et al., 2022; Martin & Rose, 2021). These conditions highlight the complexity of applying structured literacy frameworks in local classroom settings.

1.2 Themes and Insights on Teachers' Experiences in Implementing the Big Six of Reading Instruction

Existing literature emphasizes that effective literacy instruction requires integrating multiple reading components into cohesive and learner-responsive teaching practices. Vocabulary development significantly supports reading comprehension (Piasta & Logan, 2022), while the connection between reading and writing strengthens literacy acquisition (Graham & Hebert, 2022). Studies also show that comprehension skills improve through systematic instruction and active learner engagement (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Guthrie et al., 2021). Research further highlights the importance of formative assessment and timely feedback in reading development (William, 2021; Hattie, 2021). Evidence-based instructional strategies and literacy-rich classroom environments positively influence learner motivation and reading performance (Slavin, 2021; Pressley et al., 2021; Neuman & Kaefer, 2021). Additionally, multilingual contexts require teachers to adapt instruction to learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds to enhance participation and comprehension (Garcia & Wei, 2023; Martin & Rose, 2021). Teacher competence also emerges as a major factor influencing literacy instruction. Professional development and teacher knowledge of reading pedagogy contribute significantly to successful implementation of structured literacy approaches (Flores & Gago, 2023; Mesmer & Kambach, 2022; Al Otaiba & Folsom, 2022). These findings collectively indicate that literacy instruction becomes more effective when instructional frameworks are systematically implemented while remaining responsive to classroom realities.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of the Big Six of Reading Instruction in Early Childhood Education

Globally, educational systems continue to address learning poverty and reading difficulties among young learners. Early literacy development remains a priority because reading proficiency strongly influences long-term academic success (Castles et al., 2022). International research supports structured literacy instruction frameworks, particularly the Big Six of Reading Instruction, to improve reading development through explicit and systematic teaching (Ehri, 2022; Kim et al., 2023). Nationally, the Philippines faces persistent literacy concerns despite educational reforms. International assessment results reveal significant gaps in reading proficiency among Filipino learners (Mullis et al., 2023). Challenges such as limited resources, inconsistent teacher preparation, and educational disruptions affect literacy outcomes (Quimbo & Tan, 2021; Dayagbil et al., 2022). Research therefore emphasizes strengthening teacher training and literacy instruction practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023). Locally, ECE teachers in Ipil District, Zamboanga Sibugay, experience additional contextual challenges in implementing the Big Six framework. Multilingual classrooms, limited materials, and diverse learner needs require teachers to adapt literacy instruction through contextualized and learner-centered strategies (Hjetland et al., 2021; Lonigan et al., 2022). These realities demonstrate the importance of examining literacy instruction within specific educational and community contexts.

1.4 Theoretical Basis of Teachers' Utilization of the Big Six of Reading Instruction

This study is anchored in the Simple View of Reading (SVR) proposed by Gough and Tunmer (1986) and supported by Hoover and Tunmer (2021). The theory explains that reading comprehension results from the interaction between Decoding (D) and Language Comprehension (LC). Effective reading occurs when learners can recognize written words and understand their meanings. The SVR aligns with the Big Six of Reading Instruction framework (Konza, 2014). Oral language supports language comprehension by enhancing vocabulary and communication skills (Konza, 2021). Phonological awareness and phonics strengthen decoding through sound recognition and letter-sound correspondence (Castles et al., 2022). Vocabulary development supports word meaning comprehension (Nation, 2022), while fluency promotes accurate and smooth reading that enables comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2021). Comprehension occurs when learners successfully integrate decoding and language understanding (Duke & Pearson, 2021). Guided by the SVR, this study examines how ECE teachers in Ipil District implement the Big Six framework, address instructional challenges, and adapt literacy strategies in multilingual and resource-constrained environments.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale on ECE Teachers' Experiences in Utilizing the Big Six of Reading Instruction

Although extensive literature supports structured literacy instruction and the Big Six framework, most studies primarily focus on quantitative outcomes and theoretical perspectives. Limited research explores the lived experiences of teachers implementing these approaches in actual classroom settings. There is also insufficient context-specific research examining how ECE teachers navigate literacy instruction challenges in multilingual and resource-constrained environments such as Ipil District, Zamboanga Sibugay. This gap restricts deeper understanding of how teachers adapt instructional strategies, respond to classroom realities, and address implementation challenges. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the experiences of ECE teachers in utilizing the Big Six of Reading Instruction, focusing on their perspectives, challenges, coping mechanisms, and support needs. The study aims to provide insights that may improve contextually responsive literacy practices, teacher support systems, and learner outcomes.

1.6 Alignment of the Study on the Big Six of Reading Instruction with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 – Quality Education, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. By examining the implementation of the Big Six of Reading Instruction, the study contributes to improving foundational literacy and strengthening effective teaching practices for early learners. The study also supports SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, as literacy development contributes to long-term educational achievement and workforce readiness. Furthermore, the emphasis on teacher professional development and instructional support aligns with SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals through the promotion of collaborative efforts among educators, schools, policymakers, and communities to improve literacy outcomes. The study additionally reflects aspects of educational sustainability and socio-economic sustainability by promoting effective literacy instruction, equitable learning opportunities, and context-responsive educational practices for multilingual and resource-constrained settings.

1.7 Importance of the Study on the Big Six of Reading Instruction to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

The study contributes to educational sustainability by strengthening literacy instruction practices that support long-term learner achievement and academic development. By exploring teachers' lived experiences in implementing the Big Six framework, the study promotes contextually relevant and adaptable literacy practices for diverse educational settings. The findings also contribute to socio-economic sustainability because literacy proficiency influences learners' future educational and employment opportunities. Improved literacy instruction may help reduce learning poverty and enhance learner participation in society. Additionally, the study supports institutional sustainability by informing teacher training programs, instructional support systems, and curriculum development initiatives that respond to actual classroom realities. Moreover, the study contributes to community sustainability by addressing literacy challenges in multilingual and resource-limited educational contexts. Insights from the study may guide educators, administrators, and policymakers in creating more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable literacy programs for early learners.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach guided by Merriam & Tisdell (2016). The design focused on understanding how individuals constructed meaning within a specific context and was appropriate for exploring participants' experiences, perspectives, and practices in real-life settings. Through this approach, the study examined how Early Childhood Education teachers implemented the Big Six of Reading Instruction in their classrooms. The qualitative case study investigated a bounded system consisting of selected Early Childhood Education teachers in Ipil District, Zamboanga Sibugay. The case was defined by the group of teachers, the instructional framework, and the school contexts where literacy instruction occurred. The design enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and context-specific insights into teachers' understanding, implementation practices, challenges, coping strategies, and support needs. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to ensure data

triangulation and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The study emphasized depth rather than generalization and generated rich, descriptive data reflecting the realities of literacy instruction in diverse and resource-constrained classroom environments.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in three large elementary schools in Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay. To maintain confidentiality, the schools were assigned codes and described according to their unique educational contexts. These settings represented varied classroom environments where early childhood literacy instruction occurred. The first research environment, coded as RE 1, was an urban school located in Ipil Poblacion and served as a pilot site for division-level literacy programs. Despite its active implementation of structured literacy initiatives, the school experienced high learner density, which affected individualized instruction and classroom management. The second research environment, coded as RE 2, was situated in a rapidly growing community with increasing learner populations and varied readiness levels. The school participated in literacy programs such as I READ and BP de Sibugay, which focused on reducing frustration-level readers. Teachers in this setting adapted instructional practices to accommodate diverse learner needs. The third research environment, coded as RE 3, was located in a developing suburban area and emphasized reading comprehension interventions and teacher training. The school utilized localized materials, video-assisted learning, and educational games to support learner engagement and literacy development. These research environments provided comprehensive insights into how Early Childhood Education teachers implemented the Big Six of Reading Instruction across diverse educational contexts and classroom realities.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The participants of the study were nine (9) Early Childhood Education teachers who served as primary implementers of literacy instruction in their respective schools. They represented three identified research environments, with three participants selected from each school setting. The participants possessed professional experience and training related to literacy instruction and the Big Six of Reading Instruction. They had teaching experience ranging from five to ten years and had participated in seminars, workshops, and trainings related to literacy instruction within the previous five years. Their classroom practices included oral language development, phonics instruction, vocabulary enrichment, comprehension strategies, fluency development, differentiated instruction, learner engagement activities, and the integration of instructional technologies. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms in the form of participant codes (TP1–TP9) were assigned. These participants represented varied instructional contexts and teaching practices shaped by their professional training, classroom conditions, and learner needs.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed purposive quota sampling to select participants who possessed relevant knowledge, experience, and exposure to the Big Six of Reading Instruction. Specifically, three participants were selected from each of the three research environments: RE 1, RE 2, and RE 3. Participant selection was guided by the following criteria: active participation in literacy-related seminars and trainings within the past five consecutive years, teaching experience ranging from five to ten years in Early Childhood Education, and willingness to participate and share classroom experiences and practices. These criteria ensured that the participants could provide rich and relevant data aligned with the objectives of the study.

2.5 Research Instrument

In this qualitative study, the researcher served as the primary research instrument, allowing direct engagement with participants and research settings to collect rich and contextualized data. Multiple instruments were utilized to ensure comprehensive understanding and data triangulation, including field notes, a semi-structured interview guide, and relevant documents and instructional artifacts. Field notes were used during classroom observations to document instructional practices, classroom interactions, learner engagement, instructional materials, and literacy activities related to the Big Six of Reading Instruction. These notes included descriptive and reflective components that captured observable classroom events and the researcher's interpretations and insights. Particular attention was given to teachers' roles as the Most Knowledgeable Other (MKO), scaffolding strategies, and learner responses. A semi-structured interview guide was utilized to gather in-depth information regarding participants' experiences, perceptions, implementation strategies, challenges, coping mechanisms, and support needs related to the Big Six of Reading Instruction. Open-ended and probing questions allowed participants to provide detailed explanations and experiences while ensuring alignment with the research objectives. Relevant instructional materials and documents, including lesson plans and classroom artifacts, were also examined to validate and support observation and interview data. These documents provided evidence of how the Big Six of Reading Instruction was operationalized in classroom settings. To ensure credibility and validity, the interview guide and observation protocol underwent content validation by experts in education and research. Their feedback ensured the instruments' clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. The use of multiple instruments strengthened the trustworthiness and comprehensiveness of the findings.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The study followed a systematic and ethical data-gathering process grounded in qualitative case study principles. Formal permission was first secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of Zamboanga Sibugay and the school heads of the selected research environments. Participants were then identified based on the established inclusion criteria, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Data were gathered through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations focused on teachers' implementation of the Big Six of Reading Instruction and their instructional roles as the Most Knowledgeable Other (MKO). Observational data were documented through field notes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather detailed information regarding teachers' experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and support needs. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy and completeness of data. Document analysis involved reviewing lesson plans and instructional materials to identify patterns and alignment with the Big Six components. The documents were coded and compared with interview and observation data to ensure triangulation and consistency. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and validated through member checking. Field notes, transcripts, and instructional documents were systematically organized for analysis to ensure rigor, accuracy, and credibility in the data-gathering process.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed the qualitative case study approach of Merriam & Tisdell (2016), emphasizing inductive and systematic examination of patterns, categories, and themes. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously to allow emerging insights to guide succeeding interviews, observations, and document reviews. Interviews with the nine participants were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Observation notes and instructional documents served as additional data sources. Analysis began through open coding, where significant statements and meaningful units related to the implementation of the Big Six of Reading Instruction were identified. Codes were derived inductively from participants' responses and observed practices. Similar codes were grouped into broader categories such as instructional practices, challenges, coping strategies, and support needs. These categories led to the emergence of major themes representing recurring patterns in teachers' experiences. To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, data triangulation was conducted by comparing findings across interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking validated the accuracy of transcriptions and interpretations, while peer review by the research adviser ensured coherence and alignment with the study objectives. This process provided a comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences in implementing the Big Six of Reading Instruction.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards to ensure participants' protection, safety, and rights throughout the research process. Written informed consent was secured from all participants before conducting interviews, observations, and document analysis. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, audio recording, and document review processes. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by assigning codes to participants (TP1–TP9) and research environments (RE 1, RE 2, and RE 3). All collected data were stored securely in password-protected digital files and secured physical storage accessible only to the researcher. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were allowed to withdraw or decline answering questions without consequence. Interviews and observations were scheduled at convenient times and locations to respect participants' time and privacy. The researcher minimized potential risks by maintaining a respectful and supportive environment throughout data collection. All collected materials, including recordings, transcripts, field notes, and documents, were used solely for research purposes. Audio recordings and identifiable files were securely deleted after the completion of the study, while anonymized data were retained in accordance with institutional guidelines.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Teachers' Understanding of the Big Six of Reading Instruction

3.1.1 Big Six as a Structured Sequential Framework

The findings revealed that teachers understood the Big Six of Reading Instruction as a structured and sequential framework for developing reading skills. Teachers emphasized that reading instruction should begin with oral language before progressing to phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. Classroom observations showed that teachers followed step-by-step instruction, beginning with oral interaction, followed by sound recognition, word formation, and sentence reading. Participants described the framework as a "master blueprint" and a "systematic ladder," emphasizing that foundational skills must first be mastered before introducing higher-level reading tasks. These findings suggest that teachers recognized the importance of structured progression in literacy development. Duke and Cartwright (2021) and Castles et al. (2022) emphasized that reading comprehension develops through the interaction of foundational skills such as decoding and language comprehension. The findings also aligned with the Simple View of Reading (SVR), which explains that comprehension develops from decoding and language comprehension working together. The teachers' emphasis on oral language, phonological awareness, and phonics demonstrated how they intentionally built reading skills progressively to support effective comprehension.

3.1.2 Big Six as Interdependent Cognitive Components

Teachers viewed the Big Six as interconnected cognitive components that worked together in reading development. Observations showed that vocabulary instruction supported comprehension, while phonics activities strengthened fluency and decoding. Teachers integrated vocabulary discussions, phonics drills, and guided reading activities within a single lesson, allowing learners to connect words, sounds, and meanings. Participants described the Big Six as “cognitive pillars” and an “interconnected cycle,” emphasizing that weakness in one component affected the entire reading process. The findings indicate that teachers understood reading as an integrated and multidimensional process. Hoover and Tunmer (2021), Perfetti & Stafura (2022), and Kim et al. (2023) highlighted that literacy components are interconnected and most effective when taught together rather than in isolation. These results also supported the SVR framework, where decoding-related skills and language comprehension interact continuously to support reading comprehension. The findings demonstrated that integrating multiple literacy components enhanced learners’ reading performance and meaning-making abilities.

3.1.3 Big Six as a Meaning-Making Framework

The findings showed that teachers viewed comprehension as the central goal of reading instruction. Classroom observations revealed that teachers consistently encouraged learners to explain, interpret, and connect stories to personal experiences rather than focusing only on word recognition. Teachers guided learners through questioning, vocabulary clarification, retelling activities, and comprehension discussions. Participants emphasized that reading was about understanding messages and constructing meaning from text. These findings suggest that teachers prioritized comprehension and meaning-making in literacy instruction. Duke & Cartwright (2021) and Cervetti (2020) emphasized that comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading and develops through the integration of decoding and language comprehension. The findings aligned with the SVR by demonstrating that learners needed both word recognition and understanding of meaning to become successful readers. The results further imply that effective literacy instruction should integrate all components of the Big Six while maintaining comprehension as the primary instructional goal.

3.2 Teachers’ Implementation of the Big Six of Reading Instruction

3.2.1 Oral Language Through Daily Routine Integration

The findings revealed that teachers embedded oral language instruction into daily classroom routines through conversations, storytelling, and guided discussions. Classroom observations showed that teachers consistently allocated dedicated time for oral language activities during morning routines and class discussions. Learners were encouraged to express ideas using complete sentences while teachers expanded responses and introduced new vocabulary. These findings suggest that oral language was intentionally prioritized as a foundation for literacy development. Cabell et al. (2023) and Wasik & Hindman (2021) emphasized that oral language significantly supports vocabulary growth and comprehension development. The findings also aligned with the Language Comprehension component of the SVR, where listening and speaking skills contribute to learners’ ability to understand written texts. The results indicate that consistent oral language activities strengthened learners’ confidence, vocabulary, and comprehension readiness.

3.2.2 Phonological Awareness and Phonics Through Explicit Visual Modeling

The findings showed that teachers implemented phonological awareness and phonics through explicit visual and auditory instruction using letter cards, sound drills, repetition, and multisensory activities. Observations revealed that teachers guided learners in producing sounds, blending letters, and connecting sounds to familiar words through structured and interactive activities. These findings indicate that teachers utilized systematic and evidence-based phonics instruction to strengthen decoding skills. Ehri (2022) and Castles et al. (2021) emphasized that explicit phonics and phonological awareness instruction significantly improve decoding and reading fluency. The results aligned with the Decoding component of the SVR, showing that learners developed decoding skills through repeated sound-letter association and guided practice. The findings further imply that multisensory and structured approaches effectively support early reading development.

3.2.3 Vocabulary Development Through Progressive Scaffolding

The findings revealed that teachers used progressive scaffolding in vocabulary instruction by gradually moving learners from simple words to phrases and sentences. Classroom observations showed that teachers provided step-by-step support, beginning with isolated words and later guiding learners toward sentence construction and reading comprehension activities. These findings suggest that scaffolded vocabulary instruction strengthened language comprehension and meaning-making. Duke & Cartwright (2021) and Graham & Hebert (2022) emphasized that structured support and gradual progression enhance literacy development. The findings aligned with the Language Comprehension component of the SVR by demonstrating how vocabulary growth contributed to comprehension. The results imply that scaffolded instruction helped learners build confidence and understanding before progressing to more complex reading tasks.

3.2.4 Fluency Development Through Collaborative Learning Activities

The findings showed that teachers developed reading fluency through peer tutoring, group reading, and collaborative learning activities. Classroom observations revealed that learners worked in pairs during guided reading sessions, where stronger readers assisted struggling learners through pronunciation support and repeated reading. These findings indicate that collaborative learning enhanced learners' fluency, confidence, and participation. Lonigan et al. (2022) and Guthrie et al. (2021) highlighted that socially interactive reading activities improve learner engagement and reading outcomes. The findings also aligned with the SVR by demonstrating how fluency served as a bridge between decoding and comprehension. The results imply that peer-assisted learning created supportive learning environments that strengthened both literacy skills and learner motivation.

3.2.5 Comprehension Through Focused Simplified Instruction

The findings revealed that teachers simplified literacy instruction by focusing on essential comprehension skills rather than introducing multiple reading components simultaneously. Observations showed that teachers used guided questioning, think-aloud strategies, and story retelling to help learners understand texts deeply while minimizing cognitive overload. These findings suggest that focused instruction improved comprehension and learner engagement. Snow (2021) and Spear-Swerling (2022) emphasized that reading instruction should prioritize meaning-making and strategic instructional focus. The findings aligned with the SVR by showing that comprehension develops when learners can focus on meaning without excessive cognitive demands. The results imply that simplified and focused instruction allowed learners to engage more meaningfully with texts and comprehension tasks.

3.3 Teachers' Challenges in Teaching the Big Six Reading Components

3.3.1 Classroom Management with Large Class Sizes

The findings revealed that large class sizes limited teachers' ability to provide individualized attention and monitor learners' reading progress. Classroom observations showed that overcrowded classrooms made it difficult for teachers to address learners' reading difficulties, resulting in uneven instructional support. These findings indicate that large classes negatively affected literacy instruction and learner support. Blatchford et al. (2020) and Connor & Morrison (2021) emphasized that overcrowded classrooms reduce opportunities for differentiated instruction and teacher-student interaction. The findings aligned with the SVR by showing that insufficient instructional support affected both decoding and language comprehension development. The results imply that overcrowded classrooms hinder effective implementation of the Big Six framework.

3.3.2 Language Barriers of Learner Diversity

The findings showed that language differences between learners' home language and the language of instruction slowed reading instruction and reduced comprehension opportunities. Observations revealed that teachers frequently translated materials from English to Bisaya, which consumed instructional time and limited deeper reading activities. These findings suggest that language barriers affected language comprehension and literacy development. Cummins (2021) emphasized the importance of first-language support in multilingual literacy instruction. The findings aligned with the Language Comprehension component of the SVR, showing that unfamiliar language limited learners' ability to understand texts even when decoding skills were present. The results imply that contextualized and multilingual instructional approaches are necessary in diverse classrooms.

3.3.3 Limited Instructional Resources

The findings revealed that teachers lacked sufficient instructional materials such as visual aids, worksheets, and storybooks, forcing them to create improvised teaching materials. Observations showed that learners shared limited resources, which reduced participation and affected lesson flow. These findings indicate that resource limitations affected the delivery of effective literacy instruction. UNESCO (2023) emphasized that adequate instructional materials significantly influence teaching effectiveness and learner performance. The findings aligned with the SVR by demonstrating that limited materials reduced opportunities to develop both decoding and language comprehension skills. The results imply that access to appropriate instructional resources is necessary for effective implementation of the Big Six framework.

3.3.4 Time Constraints in Classroom Instruction

The findings showed that limited instructional time and administrative requirements reduced opportunities for meaningful literacy instruction. Classroom observations revealed that reading activities were frequently shortened or interrupted by classroom routines and administrative tasks. These findings suggest that insufficient reading time affected comprehension development and consistent literacy practice. Duke & Carlisle (2021) emphasized that sustained engagement with reading activities significantly improves literacy outcomes. The findings aligned with the SVR by demonstrating that both decoding and language comprehension require sufficient instructional time for development. The results imply that schools need to allocate more dedicated time for literacy instruction.

3.3.5 Need for Professional Development Training

The findings revealed that teachers lacked continuous and updated training on literacy instruction strategies. Observations showed that some teachers relied heavily on traditional drill-based approaches and were uncertain about integrating multiple Big Six components effectively. These findings indicate that insufficient training affected teachers' implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies. Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) emphasized that continuous professional development improves instructional quality and learner outcomes. The findings aligned with the SVR by showing that incomplete integration of literacy components affected learners' reading development. The results imply that ongoing and practical teacher training is essential for effective implementation of the Big Six framework.

3.4 Teachers' Strategies in Dealing with Challenges

3.4.1 Flexible Curriculum with Learner-Centered Pacing

The findings showed that teachers adjusted lesson pacing based on learners' understanding and needs. Observations revealed that teachers extended activities and provided additional scaffolding when learners struggled with reading tasks. These findings suggest that flexible pacing supported mastery of foundational reading skills. Connor and Morrison (2021) and Castles et al. (2021) emphasized that responsive instruction improves literacy outcomes when teachers adjust instruction based on learner progress. The findings aligned with the SVR by demonstrating that sufficient support strengthens decoding and comprehension development. The results imply that learner-centered pacing improves literacy instruction effectiveness.

3.4.2 Peer Tutoring with Collaborative Learning

The findings revealed that teachers used peer tutoring and collaborative learning to support struggling readers. Classroom observations showed that learners became more engaged and confident when working with peers during reading activities. These findings indicate that peer-assisted learning strengthened fluency, comprehension, and learner confidence. Fuchs et al. (2021) and Topping (2022) emphasized that peer collaboration improves reading performance and learner interaction. The findings aligned with the SVR by showing that collaborative reading activities supported both decoding and language comprehension development. The results imply that peer tutoring is an effective and low-resource literacy strategy.

3.4.3 Resourcefulness of Creative Material Use

The findings showed that teachers improvised instructional materials using recycled and locally available resources. Observations revealed that teachers used handmade story charts, bottle caps, and improvised reading aids to support literacy activities. These findings suggest that contextualized and creative materials effectively supported literacy instruction despite resource limitations. Cabell et al. (2023), Martin & Rose (2021), and Wasik & Hindman (2021) emphasized that contextualized instruction enhances learner engagement and comprehension. The findings aligned with the SVR by demonstrating that creative materials supported both phonics instruction and language comprehension development. The results imply that resourcefulness can sustain meaningful literacy instruction in resource-constrained settings.

3.4.4 Parental Communication Through Home-School Partnership

The findings revealed that teachers maintained regular communication with parents to support literacy practice at home. Observations showed that teachers provided reading guides, pronunciation support, and home reading activities for learners and parents. These findings indicate that parental involvement reinforced literacy development beyond the classroom. Zucker et al. (2021) and Neuman & Kaefer (2021) emphasized that literacy-rich home environments improve reading comprehension and learner outcomes. The findings aligned with the SVR by showing that home support strengthened both decoding practice and language comprehension. The results imply that strong home-school partnerships contribute to improved literacy development.

3.4.5 Emotional Support with Building Rapport

The findings showed that teachers provided emotional support and built rapport to encourage learner participation in reading activities. Classroom observations revealed that teachers used encouragement, casual conversations, and reassurance to reduce learner anxiety and increase engagement. These findings suggest that emotional support strengthened learner motivation and participation. Cabell et al. (2023) and Pressley et al. (2021) emphasized that literacy development is influenced by social interaction and supportive classroom environments. The findings aligned with the SVR by showing that emotional security supported oral language development and comprehension. The results imply that positive teacher-learner relationships contribute to more effective literacy instruction.

3.5 Teacher Support Needed for Effective Implementation of the Big Six of Reading Instruction

3.5.1 Continuous Professional Development with Hands-On Training

The findings revealed that teachers needed continuous and practical literacy training to improve classroom implementation of the Big Six framework. Observations showed that teachers benefited more from hands-on workshops and demonstration activities than purely theoretical discussions. These findings suggest that experiential professional development strengthened teachers' instructional competence. Flores & Gago (2023) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) emphasized

that sustained and practical training improves teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes. The results imply that schools should provide continuous and classroom-based literacy training opportunities for teachers.

3.5.2 Administrative Support with Streamlined Curriculum

The findings showed that reducing administrative workload allowed teachers to focus more on literacy instruction. Observations revealed that teachers were able to conduct longer and more meaningful reading activities when paperwork and reporting requirements were minimized. These findings indicate that administrative support improves instructional quality and learner engagement. Quimbo & Tan (2021) and Flores & Gago (2023) emphasized that reduced workload allows teachers to focus more effectively on classroom instruction. The findings aligned with the SVR by demonstrating that uninterrupted literacy instruction supports integrated development of decoding and comprehension skills.

3.5.3 Access to Instructional Materials

The findings revealed that teachers needed more manipulatives and concrete instructional tools to improve literacy instruction. Classroom observations showed that learners became more engaged and active when using hands-on materials such as letter tiles and picture cards. These findings suggest that instructional materials enhance literacy learning and learner participation. Spear-Swerling (2022) and Kim et al. (2023) emphasized that interactive and material-supported literacy instruction improves reading outcomes. The findings aligned with the SVR by demonstrating that manipulatives support both decoding and language comprehension development. The results imply that schools should prioritize the provision of appropriate literacy materials.

3.5.4 Mentorship with Emotional and Mental Health Support

The findings showed that teachers needed mentorship and emotional support to strengthen teaching practices and maintain motivation. Observations revealed that guidance from master teachers improved instructional strategies, while counseling and emotional support reduced stress and increased teacher confidence. These findings indicate that mentorship and teacher well-being contribute to sustained instructional effectiveness. Ingersoll & Strong (2021) and Jennings et al. (2022) emphasized that mentorship and emotional support improve teaching quality and reduce burnout. The findings aligned with the SVR by showing that supported teachers were more capable of effectively teaching both decoding and comprehension skills. The results imply that schools should establish strong mentorship systems and teacher support programs to sustain effective literacy instruction.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

Early Childhood Education teachers demonstrated a clear understanding of the Big Six of Reading Instruction as a structured, interconnected, and comprehension-centered framework for literacy development. They implemented the framework through integrated and routine-based instructional practices that support oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension development. However, the implementation of the Big Six was affected by challenges such as large class sizes, limited instructional materials, linguistic diversity among learners, and insufficient professional development opportunities. Despite these constraints, teachers employed adaptive strategies including scaffolding, peer-assisted learning, contextualized instruction, and the creative use of available resources to support learners' literacy development. The findings further indicate that effective implementation of the Big Six requires sustained institutional support, adequate instructional resources, and continuous professional development to strengthen literacy instruction and improve learners' reading outcomes.

ECE teachers may continue implementing the Big Six of Reading Instruction through learner-centered, integrated, and comprehension-focused approaches supported by structured classroom routines, scaffolding strategies, and collaborative learning activities. School administrators may strengthen literacy instruction by providing continuous professional development, coaching, mentoring, and sufficient instructional materials and literacy resources. Educational leaders and policymakers may also establish support systems that address challenges related to large class sizes and multilingual learning environments to ensure the consistent and effective implementation of the Big Six of Reading Instruction. Future researchers may further examine the implementation of structured literacy frameworks in different educational contexts to strengthen literacy practices and reading outcomes.

This study was limited to the experiences of Early Childhood Education teachers from the three largest schools in the municipality of Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay during the school year 2025–2026. The findings focused only on teachers' understanding, implementation, challenges, coping strategies, and support needs related to the Big Six of Reading Instruction. As such, the results may not fully represent the experiences of teachers in other schools, grade levels, or educational contexts.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to ethical standards to ensure the protection, safety, and rights of the participants throughout the research process. Written informed consent was secured prior to the conduct of interviews, observations, and document analysis. Participants were informed about the objectives and procedures of the study, including audio recording and document review processes. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of participant and research environment codes. All collected data were securely stored in password-protected digital files and secured physical storage accessible only to the researcher. Participation was voluntary, and participants were allowed to withdraw or decline answering questions without consequence. Interviews and observations were conducted at convenient times and locations to respect participants' privacy and availability. All collected materials were used solely for research purposes, and identifiable files and recordings were securely deleted after the completion of the study in accordance with institutional guidelines.

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