

Parental Involvement and Early Literacy Development in Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Communities

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Abstract: Focusing on parents' involvement in children's early literacy acquisition, especially children in economically disadvantaged families, this research paper analyses parents' roles in early literacy development. Literacy skills gained in early childhood become a predictor of academic success. Children in economically disadvantaged families become further disadvantaged in early literacy development because of a combination of poor resources, poor parental education, and an unstable economy. By recognizing these challenges, the research looks at the positive contribution of parental engagement in practices of shared reading, storytelling, and educational interactions to their home's literacy development. These practices include the development of vocabulary, the awareness of phonemic structures in speech, and the development of the readiness to start reading in children 3-6 years of age. Using a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods and the data collection techniques of interviews and assessments, the research of this paper attempts to study the tasks and challenges of early literacy development for children in socioeconomically disadvantaged families. The study shows a positive statistical correlation between greater parental engagement and children's literacy skills. Children in high parental engagement families have a mean literacy of 80, while children in low parental engagement families score a mean of 45. Community-based programs to help parents develop meaningful home literacy practices with their children are needed. The research highlights the need for programs and policies to create supportive environments for families with children to help affected parents create home literacy practices that are meaningful and effective. Strengthening parental engagement can directly impact outcomes literacy achievement gaps and provide educational equity to all children. Reinforcing literacy activities at home for children creates a building block for academic and career success.

Key Words: early literacy, parental involvement, socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, language development, reading readiness, home literacy environment, educational inequality

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Introduction

Early literacy development for children and their parents involves parents or caregivers aiding children in education by fostering language, reading, and writing (Setty, 2024). This includes practices like reading books to children, conversing, supporting engagement with schools, and creating interactive and learning-rich home environments. Studies show that the more parental activities in a child's academic career, the better the child's literacy skills that will ultimately lead to academic achievement (Sengonul, 2022).

The early years of a child's education are crucial for the development of early literacy skills. Vocabulary, phonemic, and comprehension skills are the early building blocks for academic success in later years (Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Evidence suggests that children who have developed early literacy skills are more likely to succeed academically in reading and writing. Furthermore, early literacy skills are

positive indicators of social and cognitive growth because it helps foster a child's willingness and motivation to learn and achieve. Early literacy skills are highly predictive of a child's success in all academic subjects, which is why it is essential to emphasize and cultivate them in all children (Daniel et al., 2016; Bennett et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, there are a number of factors that create a deficit of early literacy skills in communities of low socioeconomic status. Many families in these communities are unable to provide their children with enriching literacy activities outside of school due to the scarcity of learning aids, like books, and supplemental educational services. Also, many parents in these communities are unable to engage in literacy activities with their children because they have low educational attainment, are un- or underemployed, or are unable to provide their children with literacy activities due to time constraints.

Parental involvement refers to caregivers actively participating in language and cognitive activities that support children's reading and writing (Li & Fischer, 2017; Daniel et al., 2016). Where literature suggests that parents with higher levels of engagement are more likely to achieve better outcomes, there exists an inverse relationship for communities with low socioeconomic status because of insufficient resources and time availability of parents.

The aim of the study is to focus on the engagement of parents in low socioeconomic communities and assess their home literacy practices.

Research Objectives

- Analyze how varying degrees of parent involvement are correlated with child literacy.
- Pinpoint major challenges and socio-economic barriers to effective parental involvement.
- Propose feasible and budget-friendly solutions and policies to increase parent involvement.

The report is organized into six main sections. Section I covers the topic, aims, and the organizational structure. Section II consists of a literature review on parental influence, synthesizing the findings of the existing studies. Section III describes the mixed-methods approach, covering the sample and the framework. Section IV explains the findings using statistics, charts, and graphs. Section V addresses the policy and practice implications. Finally, Section VI wraps up the report with the main findings and directions for further study.

Literature Review

Parental involvement is crucial in cultivating early literacy skills as children learn their first language skills (Ma et al., 2016; Bartolome et al., 2017). Children gain better understanding, vocabulary, and interest in reading when their parents are active participants in their storytelling, reading, and discussion activities at home. Readiness for formal schooling is supported when children are participants in linguistically enriched environments early in their lives. Readiness for reading and academic success at school is most determined by both the quality and frequency of literacy-based interactions between parents and their children (Dawson-McClure et al., 2015).

Parental involvement is highly influenced by context and socioeconomic factors (Harris & Robinson, 2016). Most of the parents from economically poor neighborhoods who have completed the minimum acceptable education and/or have low paying jobs tend to have leading literacy, time barriers to participating in child literacy, and/or poor literacy skills (Buckingham et al., 2023). There may be language and/or environmental barriers that impact those parents to take part in child literacy and support the home-based

literacy activities. Many of those parents tend to be willing to support the education of their children, which suggests that most of the barriers are not due to lack of interest and/or motivation (Murray et al., 2015).

A review of research literature has pinpointed several strategies for boosting parental involvement (Puccioni, 2018). One strategy is to create a positive home literacy environment that includes interaction through reading and meaningful discussions. This has positive effects of reading's confidence and participation. Other strategies include frequent and meaningful communication, as well as participation in school related events and close partnerships. This is important as flexibility is often needed throughout the school year to appreciate the limitations and adapt for the needs of the families. Sustained parental involvement is often dependent on the school and community context. However, for children, the impact of parental involvement is substantial on early literacy achievements (Gkaintartzi et al., 2020; Bartolome et al., 2017).

Thus, it follows that low literate children from low socioeconomic families are likely to join in an informal reading economy, creating a literate community, gap that follows them in their schooling, and likely throughout their adulthood. Consequently, the impact of literacy deprivation linked to low socioeconomic status should be a key focus in efforts to reduce poverty and instill a sense of equity in society.

Evidence has shown that children with better comprehension and vocabulary are from homes with an inviting literacy environment, where informal reading activities, storytelling, and discussions are commonplace. The challenges low inclined parents faced were related to the accessibility of resources and time. The parents still exhibited a strong motivation for their children, highlighting that the barriers faced were related to systems and not attitudes.

Considerable amount of research shows that the amount of interaction between a parent and a child is a greater factor in determining a child's reading ability than the quantity of reading activities conducted and the expensive reading programs available. Research supports causal relationships of parental teaching efficacy as a factor to be strengthened by community education and school partnerships. In addition, interventions are most effective if the context-sensitive form taking into account the economic and time constraints of the poor families.

Methodology

Research Design and Framework

Utilizing a mixed-method design, this study quantifies and qualifies the nexus between parental engagement and early literacy development in educationally and economically disadvantaged domains.

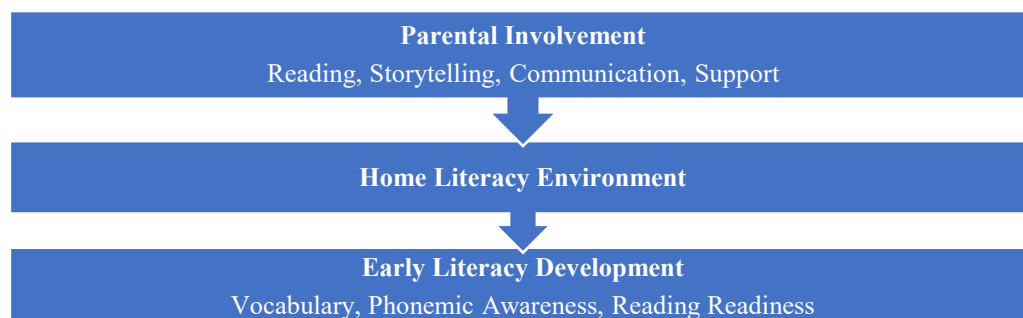


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Proposed Research

This design enables simultaneous literacy assessment and assessment of parental engagement and obstacles. The study attempts to observe the correlation rather than focus on variable manipulation. The natural, real-life correlations and the described, emphasized correlations figure 1 shown in the conceptual framework remain as the home literacy environment, where parental engagement is active, and relational participation is responsible for instilling the cognitive aspects of readiness to read.

Sampling and Participant Profile

Purposeful sampling identifies participants across income strata to select economically disadvantaged parents. Participants are parents of children aged 3–6 years and are recruited from economically disadvantaged families (i.e. low-income) to illustrate the literacy gap. The participants (estimated sample size of 80 to 100 parent-child dyads) include early childhood educators from low-income local preschools and anganwadis. The sample is designed to provide a meaningful qualitative framework for the study and a large enough sample for quantitative assessments. The sample is designed to address literacy deprivation in a variety of family structures and to meet a variety of parental educational levels (Calzada et al., 2015). The study design also provides a framework for participant safety and the adherence to strict ethical standards of informed participation and assured data confidentiality.

Data Collection Techniques and Triangulation

This researcher employs several methods of gathering information to factor in triangulation, which increases the validity and also the reliability of the results. Primary information was obtained from parents through the use of structured sets of questions and surveys on some demographics, the frequency of some literacy activities, and perceptions on some aspects of early education. The surveys used Likert scales as well as closed-ended questions to promote statistical measurement. To help in the triangulation of data, semi-structured interviews are also used on a specific sample of parents as well as teachers to aid in the understanding of some root concerns in the interaction of parents and educators. All of the data gathering tools were also translation and back translation and a pilot study was conducted in the concerned local languages first to cross-check the cultural appropriateness and the clarity of the text.

Data Analysis and Integration

Literacy data for the parents is also analyzed with respect to the questionnaires using different statistical measures. The measures include standard deviation to show how close the responses are to the frequency and the mean. Using some of the data from the parents, literacy activities, and the involved sample, literacy readiness of the children was determined.” the interviews also provide the literacy activities that were conducted. A triangulation of the methods used in this study is also examined. In all the study of situational factors this concern defines the boundaries on literacy development in economically and socially deprived situations.

Results

Correlation Between Parental Involvement and Literacy Achievement

Within lower socioeconomic communities, it appears that the early development of literacy skills is strongly and positively correlated with parental involvement. Children with parents who support literacy are observed to foster and develop greater skills, including vocabulary, reading readiness, and language growth. These described skills are a direct result of participation in the reading process. The quantitative measures in table 1 indicate parental participation leads to increases in literacy scores, with parents of children in the high parental participation category reporting an average score of 80, and parents of children

in the low parental participation category reporting an average literacy score of only 45. These measures illustrate that parental involvement is a principal and critical factor in overcoming the language and cognitive deficits created by socioeconomic difficulties.

Table 1: Parental Involvement Levels and Corresponding Mean Literacy Scores

Parental Involvement Level	Number of Children	Mean Literacy Score	Standard Deviation
Low	20	45	5.2
Moderate	35	60	6.1
High	25	80	4.8

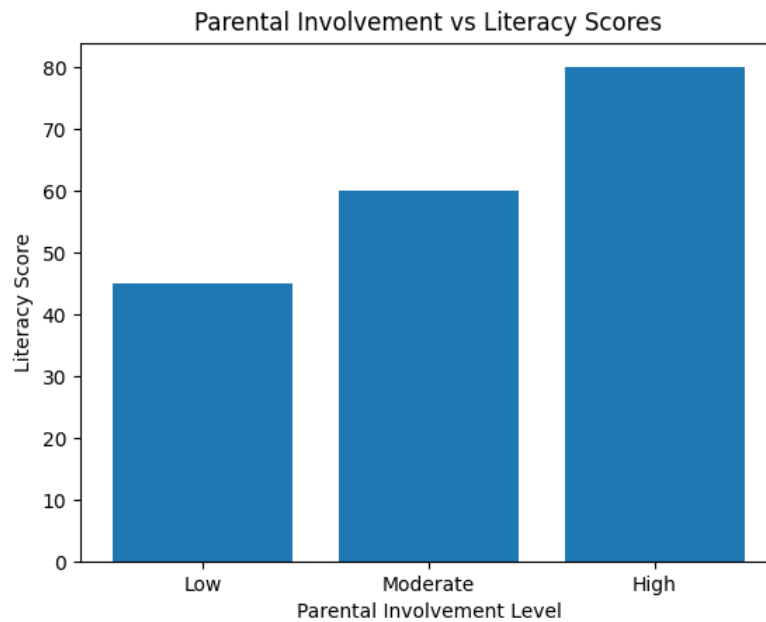


Figure 2: Parental Involvement vs Literacy Scores

Figure 2 shows the distribution of parental involvement and literacy scores. Parents' levels of involvement are separated into three tiers along the x-axis. The y-axis documents scores. The scores of the children improve the greater the parental involvement. Children with "High" involvement received literacy scores around 80. Children with "Low" involvement scored around 45. The "Moderate" involvement parents scored around the average, showing that the results of the placement of the satisfaction of the parental tiers are directly correlated to the active involvement of parents. The study also received results that showed the "High" and "Moderate" parents show results of actively trying to improve their child's education. The "Low" involvement parents show results of not caring about improving their child's education. The results also show the "Moderate" and "High" parents to be positively correlated, showing the determination of active involvement by parents.

Impact of Home-Based Activities and Interaction Quality

Each of the "High" and "Moderate" Parents of the study combined showed that the parents read and taught literacy skills to their children outside of school. The parent's taught their children to be literate at a high cost, and the parents showed the children to improve significantly by participating in lessons along with the parents. The "High" satisfaction parents based their child's teaching and learning literacy skills, improving their children (Hannon et al., 2020; Gkaintartzi et al., 2020). The parents involved in the "Low" involvement parents for literacy skills believes in showing their children to read but not coming in the

sentence or participating. Engaging children in storytelling, or simply chatting about the day's happenings, improves learning outcomes.

Socioeconomic Barriers and Parental Self-Efficacy

Regular interaction is critical, but the level of parental engagement in most disadvantaged settings is influenced by a number of factors. Parental education is one of these. Parents with better education tend to more awesomely assist language development and parents with little education tend to feel insecure about what is possible. Economic demands and time constraints are perhaps the most common barriers in this set. Parents having to work for long hours tend to be left with no energy to engage learners in daily activities. Some parents in this set can have beliefs that can impinge on their involvement, to the effect that the formal education of children is purely the responsibility of the schools. However, the most powerful factor in this is found to be parental self-efficacy. This is a belief that a parent can engage children and assist them to pursue learning, and this can be positively changed through support of the local community and the local institutions.

Table 2: Barriers and Self-efficacy

Primary Barrier	Frequency (N=80)	Percentage (%)	Impact Severity (Scale 1–5)
Economic/Time Constraints (Long working hours/multiple jobs)	52	65.0%	4.8
Limited Educational Attainment (Parental literacy/confidence)	41	51.3%	4.2
Resource Scarcity (Lack of books, stationery, or digital tools)	38	47.5%	3.9
Language Barriers (Difference between home language and school medium)	18	22.5%	3.5
Perceptual Barriers (Belief that education is strictly the school's role)	12	15.0%	3.1

The addition of table 2 expands on table 1's findings to explain why the "Low-Involvement" group (n=20) likely experiences substantial implementation friction. Despite 65% of participants listing time as a key constraint, the "High-Involvement" group's scores reveal that lifting such constraints leads to high cognitive gains for the child, suggesting that gains extend even to those with less cognitive support.

Discussion

The conclusions drawn here will be of immense value for policy and practice, particularly in educational systems and classroom practice in socio-economically deprived regions (Tran et al., 2017). The benefits of working with parents and families on early literacy suggest that successful future policies will have to integrate families into the learning of children (Coley et al., 2020). Literacy-focused parenting policy on education and literacy will need to offer schools and parents low-cost, simple activities to achieve positive educational outcomes with children. Integrated early education will likely require parents to participate as primary stakeholders, and policymakers and educational planners will focus on early education as key concerns.

Schools and early education centers will need to become much more interdependent to achieve educational and early education well-being. Practitioners will be expected to develop responses to educational outcomes that are less reliant on school-based and more reliant on home-based learning. With

an increased demand for context-focused learning programs that families with little time can easily integrate, a greater focus will be on the same goal: a positive educational outcome.

To achieve an equal and friendly educational outcome, the following three key strategies will need to be prioritized.

- Advocating for a culture shift: Working with parents on simple, low-cost activities.
- Resource Accessibility: Community-based centers, such as local libraries and Anganwadi centers, will be able to provide reading kits to families that have limited access to resources.
- Technological Integration: Digital tools and messaging apps will be the primary mediums for communicating educational content and activities to parents in real-time, as the cost of technology will be dropping further in the future.

Future research will focus on the impact of early involvement of parents on educational outcomes at later stages in life and study the impact of technology based interventions in resource deficient settings.

Conclusion

This study reinforces that in populations of low socioeconomic families, the improvement of early reading skills will have strong connections to the direct involvement of parents. For the purpose of addressing gaps in education, the relationship that will be most important will be the involvement that will help students both in phonemic awareness and reading skills. In settings lacking adequate resources and skills, consistent implementation of interactive reading and engagement will provide the foundations for children's further educational endeavors. The persistence in systemic barriers such as time and lack of education will not change; however, the study shows that targeted and low-cost measures will bring constant positive results. Beyond education, the time spent on parent involvement will be crucial for the children in establishing a positive mindset and self-efficacy for a life-long focus on learning. From an educational equity standpoint, a long-term combined effort will be necessary. Parents will be assisted by teachers in a more active way and a broader network of community stakeholders will need to be created, alongside more adequately targeted funding by policymakers. Support for parents should be empathetic and persistent in order to equip all children, irrespective of socioeconomic background, with basic literacy skills for the challenges that lie ahead.

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