

The Role of Parents in Shaping Children's Reading Practices at Home

Siti Sharehen Sakiran¹ & Suziyani Mohamed²

Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Email: sitisharehen@gmail.com¹ & suziyanimohamed@gmail.com²

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i1/24396> DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i1/24396

Published Online: 30 January 2025

Abstract

The role of parents is crucial in shaping children's reading practices, especially at home, to ensure the continuity of learning from school. This study aims to understand the role of parents in fostering preschool children's reading practices by assessing the level of reading practices, identifying factors influencing its effectiveness, and proposing improvements. The research employs a survey design with a quantitative approach, using a questionnaire adapted from previous studies. The questionnaire was distributed online via the Google Form platform. A simple random sampling technique was used, involving a sample of 585 respondents comprising parents of 6-year-old Malay students in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. The sample sized was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample size determination. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to obtain mean values, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. The findings indicate that reading practices are at a moderate level, with parental involvement recoding the highest achievement, while the type of reading activities at home is the lowest. The study highlights that parent's involvement in reading activities with children plays a critical role in enhancing reading skills. Furthermore, the diversity of reading materials helps to cultivate an interest in reading and expands children's vocabulary. However, challenges such as time constraints and cost require creative solutions, including utilizing free materials form libraries or digital sources. The study's implications suggests that home literacy programs should be strengthened through awareness campaigns aimed at parents, emphasizing the importance of their involvement in reading activities. In conclusion, the active role of parents in engagement and the provision of reading materials is essential for improving preschool children's reading skills.

Keywords: Preschool, Early Childhood Education, Reading Practices, Parental Role, Diversity Of Reading Materials.

Introduction

Early childhood education, especially at the preschool level, plays a very important role in the overall development of children. In Malaysia, preschool education has undergone significant development, especially after independence when the government began to pay serious

attention to early education as an important foundation in the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children, contributing to the formation of a positive attitude towards learning.

In 1986, the National Preschool Curriculum was introduced by the Ministry of Education Malaysia as an effort to improve the quality and access to preschool education nationwide. This program continues to be strengthened through the Ninth Malaysia Plan (RMK-9) where the Malaysian government strives to ensure quality early education is accessible to all children in the country, including through the PERMATA Program introduced for children from birth to four years old. This effort aims to improve the quality and access to early childhood education, in line with the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025.

Reading skills are one of the critical aspects of early education because they are not only related to academic skills (Mohammad Nurulnazar & Jamilah, 2024), but also influence the social and emotional development of children (Fong Peng & Fikir Ismail, 2020). Quality early education provides a foundation for children to acquire good reading skills and develop a positive attitude towards learning, which will help them face academic challenges in the future. A study by Claire E. Baker (2013) found that children exposed to quality early education have advantages in reading, mathematics, and social skills compared to children who do not receive early education.

However, in Malaysia, the reading skills of preschool children are still a concern. Although data from the Ministry of Education Malaysia shows an increase in the literacy levels of preschool children, there is still room for improvement. According to the latest report, around 70% of preschool children achieve basic literacy levels before entering primary school (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2023). However, there is a performance gap between children in urban and rural areas. A study by the Khazanah Research Institute (2023) found that children in urban areas have better access to reading materials and literacy support, while children in rural areas may face a lack of resources and a conducive literacy environment.

In the global context, the early literacy levels of children in Malaysia are on par with neighbouring countries like Thailand and Indonesia, but still lag behind countries like Singapore and South Korea. In Singapore, for example, nearly 90% of preschool children achieve basic literacy levels before entering primary school, thanks to strong support from the government and society for early education (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2021). Meanwhile, in South Korea, an education system that emphasizes family involvement also plays a crucial role in achieving a very high preschool literacy rate (Korea Educational Development Institute, 2020).

Parental involvement in reading practices at home is one of the important factors that influence the development of children's reading skills. According to Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory, children aged 2 to 7 years are in the preoperational stage, where they begin to develop important language and symbolic skills for reading. Lev Vygotsky, on the other hand, emphasized that social interactions between children and adults or peers help accelerate the learning process through the concept of the "zone of proximal development"

(ZPD). In this context, parents play the role of facilitators who help strengthen children's literacy skills.

Studies by Hairullah (2023) and Salma Rozana et al. (2021) found that parents are the first educators for children in creating an environment that supports literacy development. Parental involvement in activities such as reading together and providing reading materials at home has a significant impact on children's literacy development. Parents also act as role models by demonstrating the importance of reading to their children through daily interactions and literacy activities conducted at home.

In addition, the educational level of parents also affects children's reading skills. Research by Yang Dong et al. (2020) shows that highly educated parents tend to provide an environment rich in reading materials and are more involved in literacy activities with their children. The level of education of parents also influences their beliefs about the importance of literacy, where parents who have a strong belief in the importance of literacy will be more actively involved in reading activities with their children.

In addition to parental involvement, the types of literacy activities at home also play an important role in the development of children's reading skills. Activities such as reading together, storytelling, and providing various types of reading materials can help strengthen children's literacy skills. A study by Senechal and Lefevre (2002) shows that parents who engage in reading activities with their children tend to provide quality materials and offer additional support in helping their children understand the texts being read.

Overall, the role of parents in shaping children's reading practices at home is key to children's success in achieving good reading skills. Although there are various challenges, active parental involvement in daily literacy activities at home can help strengthen children's reading skills. With cooperation between schools and parents, as well as strong educational policy support, preschool children in Malaysia can be helped to achieve higher literacy levels and be better prepared to face the next educational challenges. Therefore, this study aims to identify children's reading practices at home with their parents based on aspects of parental involvement, reading activities with parents, diversity of reading materials, types of reading activities at home, literacy resources at home, and print exposure.

Literature Review

The role of parents in shaping children's reading practices at home is very important in the early development of preschool children's literacy. Many studies have shown that the role of parents in actively engaging in reading activities at home has a positive impact on the cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of children (Niklas & Schneider, 2017). In this context, parents not only play the role of primary supporters of their child's literacy development but also function as facilitators who help cultivate children's interest in reading through structured and repetitive interactions. Therefore, consistent parental involvement can help shape children's reading habits from a young age, thereby increasing their chances of mastering better reading skills in school.

A study by Lay See Yeo (2014) found that direct interactions such as teaching children to read and write at home have a positive impact on early literacy skills. Children's reading

activities supported by parents using specific literacy approaches have positive benefits in mastering reading skills (Senechal & Yong, 2008). Tiyas and Haenilah (2024) also support and state that literacy activities conducted at home not only support the development of reading skills but also enhance children's motivation to learn and strengthen the parent-child relationship. According to Tiyas and Haenilah (2024), the role of parents at home has a greater impact on children's academic performance, especially in the early stages of formal literacy education. Lay See Yeo (2014) also emphasizes that learning activities carried out by parents at home, such as storytelling and writing activities, are closely related to children's print knowledge. When parents or guardians actively participate in literacy activities at home, such as reading books to children, they can help improve children's ability to understand and recognize words (Tonder, Arrow & Nicholson, 2019). Thus, quality interactions between parents and children during reading can strengthen reading skills, thereby building a solid foundation for early childhood literacy.

According to Mol and Bus (2014), shared reading is one of the most effective roles of parents in developing literacy skills. The increase in reading activities and achievements in mastering reading skills will occur when there is positive affective interaction during shared storybook reading (Baker et al., 2001). This activity not only helps in the introduction of letters and words but also strengthens the emotional bond between parents and children (Schapira & Aram, 2020). The frequency of reading together with children is a literacy practice that helps enhance language and literacy development. Suzanne E. Mol and Bus (2011) state that children achieve well in language, reading, and spelling throughout their development when parents frequently engage in reading activities together. Sinead McNally et al. (2023) state that reading together with children at an early age plays an important role in their reading success in middle childhood. Marina Puglisi et al. (2017) also stated that parents reported the frequency of reading bedtime stories and at other times during the day, which allows children's literacy development to improve significantly. Therefore, the practice of consistently reading together provides advantages to children in building cognitive and emotional abilities, thereby strengthening their reading skills.

Lay See Yeo's (2014) report also states that parents who provide a diverse literacy environment at home can enhance preschool children's reading skills and interest in reading. This study found that children who are exposed to a variety of reading materials tend to perform better in literacy tests (George, Parrila & Inoue, 2021). Sinead McNally et al. (2023) state that access to books at an early age plays an important role in their reading success in middle childhood. Justice et al. (2018) in their study found that the role of parents who are actively involved in reading and providing high-quality reading materials can enhance their children's interest and reading skills. Senechal and Lefevre (2002) in their study found that exposure to various types of books at home helps expand vocabulary and listening comprehension, which are directly related to children's reading. Therefore, providing sufficient and engaging reading materials can foster children's interest in reading activities and enrich their vocabulary.

According to Tiyas and Haenilah (2024), there are several activities carried out by parents as reading activities at home. It includes reading books, labelling objects around, storytelling, teaching numbers and letters, reading children's song lyrics, and reading bedtime stories. Mothers in Kuwait are also involved in literacy activities at home such as storytelling,

reading books together, and exposure to printed materials (Alshatti, Al-Sulaihim & Abdalla, 2020). An active environment involving activities such as reading to children and encouraging early language and literacy development, where parents or caregivers play a role in actively reading with children, helping them understand and enjoy stories, and introducing them to new words and concepts (Tonder, Arrow & Nicholson, 2019). The variety of these activities can create an engaging and enjoyable literacy environment at home, thereby increasing children's interest and motivation to read.

Parents also play a role in providing literacy resources at home such as reading materials and learning aids. Interventions using selected and properly utilized e-books can help develop children's literacy skills either as well as or better than printed books (Lopez, Valverde, and Garcia, 2021). The number of books at home is one of the key indicators in determining children's academic success. A study by Dong and Chow (2022) found that children who grow up in homes with a strong literacy environment have better academic outcomes. Therefore, parents need to ensure access to a variety of printed materials to continuously support children's learning.

The role of parents is also seen in the exposure of printed materials to children. A study by Boerma et al. (2017) emphasizes that exposure to printed materials can predict children's reading skills and reading comprehension. This proves that children who are frequently exposed to printed materials such as books and magazines show better progress in their literacy skills compared to children who are less exposed. Exposure to printed materials during preschool and kindergarten contributes to variations in children's oral language skills, and this positive effect continues to increase throughout children's development (Mol and Bus, 2011). This means that when children are exposed to reading materials such as books and magazines at an early age, it can help improve their oral language skills. Therefore, parents need to be more proactive in providing printed materials at home and ensuring that children frequently interact with these materials to enhance their reading and language skills development.

In conclusion, previous studies clearly show that the role of parents in shaping children's reading practices at home is very important. Active involvement in reading, provision of sufficient reading materials, as well as continuous emotional support and motivation from parents can significantly enhance children's reading proficiency. Therefore, parents need to play an important role in providing a conducive reading environment to help children develop in reading aspects, as well as collaborating with educational institutions to ensure balanced literacy development.

Methodology

This research was conducted quantitatively using a survey design to gather information from parents regarding home reading practices for 6-year-old children. This design was chosen as it allows for extensive data collection in a short period and provides a comprehensive overview of the study topic.

Population and Sample of the Study

The study was conducted at KPM preschools in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, involving a population of parents with $N=2,448$ 6-year-old preschool children. This location was selected

due to its diverse socio-economic background and convenient access for the researcher. A simple random sampling technique was employed, with a sample size of 585 parents, exceeding the minimum number recommended ($n=384$, Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The focus on 6-years-old children ensures specific data collection, as their reading abilities and interactions with parents are more advanced compared to 4 and 5-years-olds. Children with learning difficulties were excluded to ensure focused findings free from interfering factors.

Table 1
Demographic Information of Children Respondents

Code	Item		<i>n</i>	%
A1	Gender of child	Male	279	47.7%
		Female	306	52.3%
A2	Number of siblings	1 sibling	24	4.10%
		2-4 siblings	483	82.6%
		5 or more siblings	78	13.4%

Table 2
Demographic Information of Parent Respondents

Code	Item		<i>n (%)</i>			
			Father		Mother	
A3	Age	30 years and below	40	6.8%	73	12.5%
		31-40 years	359	61.4%	399	68.2%
		41-50 years	173	29.6%	113	19.3%
		51 years and above	13	2.2%	0	0%
A4	Higher education	Primary School	9	1.5%	11	1.9%
		Secondary School (SRP/PMR/SPM)	275	47.0%	226	38.6%
		STPM/Diploma/Certificate	221	37.8%	223	38.1%
		Bachelor's Degree	70	12.0%	113	19.3%
		Master's Degree	7	1.2%	10	1.7%
		Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	2	0.3%	1	0.2%
A5	Occupation	No formal education	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
		Self-Employed/Freelance	81	13.8%	31	5.3%
		Teacher/Lecturer	5	0.9%	22	3.8%
		General/Casual Worker	5	0.9%	3	0.5%
		Government Employee	134	22.9%	95	16.2%
		Construction/Manufacturing Worker	39	6.7%	12	2.1%
		Service Sector Worker (Hotel Management, Restaurant)	6	1.0%	1	0.2%
		Private Sector Worker	255	43.6%	89	15.2%
		Trader/Contractor	18	3.1%	6	1.0%
		Retiree	12	2.1%	1	0.2%
		Professional (Doctor, Lawyer, Engineer)	18	3.1%	3	0.5%
		Agricultural/Livestock/ Fisheries Worker	2	0.3%	0	0%
		Housewife	0	0%	294	50.3%
		Unemployed	10	1.7%	28	4.8%
A6	Monthly Household Income	Less than RM1,500	40		6.8%	
		RM1,501 - RM3,000	253		43.2%	
		RM3,001 - RM5,000	183		31.3%	
		RM5,001 - RM10,000	97		16.6%	
		RM10,001 and above	12		2.1%	

Research Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of two sections; Section A: Demographics (6 items) and Section B: Reading Practices (38 items). Section A included details on gender, number of siblings, parents' age, education level, occupation, and monthly household income. Section B, adapted from Katzir et al. (2009), covered constructs such as parental involvement, joint reading activities, diversity of reading materials, types of home reading activities, literacy resources, and print exposure. The structure of the questionnaire is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Questionnaire Structure

Section	Construct	Number of Items	Source Adaptation
A	Demographics	6	-
B	Role of Parents		
	1) Parents Involvement	6	Katzir et al., (2009)
	2) Joint Reading Activities	5	Katzir et al., (2009)
	3) Diversity of Materials	7	Katzir et al., (2009)
	4) Types of Reading Activities	11	Katzir et al., (2009)
	5) Literacy Resources	4	Katzir et al., (2009)
	6) Print Exposure	5	Katzir et al., (2009)
	Total	44	

Responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Likert Scale for Respondent Agreement

Scale	Response
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Agree
4	Strongly Agree

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted online via Google Forms. The researcher obtained permission from schools to distribute the survey link to preschool teachers, who then shared it with parents through WhatsApp. The Google Form was available from 9th September to 29th October 2024. A total of 631 respondents were received, with 585 complete responses, resulting in a 24% response rate.

Data Analysis Procedure

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed descriptively to determine mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage. Further analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0 to interpret data distribution and provide a clear understanding of home reading practices among preschool children.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted from 1st to 26th July 2024, involving 30 parents of preschool children. The pilot tested the reliability and validity of the questionnaire and led to

refinements, particularly in demographic questions such as special need students' information, ethnicity, and children's age.

Validity and Reliability

The overall Cronbach's Alpha value for the parental role in shaping reading practices was 0.970, indicating a very high internal consistency. The questionnaire was evaluated by a language expert with 29 years of experience and refined based on minor suggestions related to terminology. The pilot study confirmed the instrument's suitability for the actual research.

Findings

Overall, the construct of reading practices recorded a mean value of 3.07 (standard deviation=0.50), which is at a moderate level. The highest construct was parental involvement, with a mean value of 3.21 (standard deviation = 0.47), and the interpretation of the mean score was at a moderately high level. Meanwhile, the lowest construct was the type of reading activities at home, with a mean value of 2.96 (standard deviation = 0.50), and the interpretation of the mean score was at a moderately low level. The mean and standard deviation values for the six constructs of reading practices are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Mean and standard deviation for the role of parents in fostering reading practices

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Interpretation	Score
Parental Involvement	3.21	0.47	Moderately High	
Reading Activities with Parents	3.03	0.50	Moderate	
Variety of Reading Materials	3.06	0.46	Moderate	
Types of Reading Activities at Home	2.96	0.50	Moderate Low	
Home Literacy Resources	3.09	0.54	Moderate	
Print Exposure	3.09	0.51	Moderate	
Total	3.07	0.50	Moderate	

Table 6 shows the frequency and percentage for 38 items in 6 constructs of parental roles in fostering reading practices at home. For the parental involvement construct, most respondents expressed agreement with all items, with the highest percentage for item B3 at 97.00% agreeing and strongly agreeing, followed by items B4, B5, and B1 with percentages of 96.40%, 95.10%, and 93.70%, respectively. In the construct of reading material diversity, the highest agreement was shown on item B15 with 97.90% agreeing and strongly agreeing, and item B16 recorded 96.80% agreeing and strongly agreeing. Meanwhile, item B18 recorded the lowest agreement among the 38 reading practice items, with only 42.90% in agreement.

The construct of reading activity at home recorded the highest agreement on item B27 with 90.80% agreeing and strongly agreeing. Meanwhile, items B21 and B25 recorded relatively low percentages with 65.60% and 68.50% agreeing and strongly agreeing, respectively. For the construct of literacy sources at home, item B33 recorded the highest value with 93.20% agreeing and strongly agreeing. For the print exposure construct, item B34

and item B37 recorded the highest agreement rates with 95.90% and 92.50% agreeing and strongly agreeing, respectively. Further information regarding the items in each construct can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Frequency and percentage of each item in reading practice

Construct	Code	Item	n (%)							
			Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
Parental Involvement	B1	I often read with my child at home.	1	0.20%	36	6.20%	394	67.40%	154	26.30%
	B2	I set aside special time every day to read with my child.	5	0.90%	88	15.00%	371	63.40%	121	20.70%
	B3	I help my child understand the content of the book they are reading.	2	0.30%	15	2.60%	370	63.20%	198	33.80%
	B4	I encourage my child to ask questions while reading.	2	0.30%	19	3.20%	364	62.20%	200	34.20%
	B5	I provide various reading materials for my child at home.	0	0.00%	29	5.00%	352	60.20%	204	34.90%
	B6	I engage in reading activities with my child every day.	2	0.30%	71	12.10%	354	60.50%	158	27.00%
Reading Activities with Parents	B7	I read storybooks with my child every day.	10	1.70%	165	28.20%	345	59.00%	65	11.10%
	B8	I discuss the contents of the book with my child after reading.	7	1.20%	78	13.30%	390	66.70%	110	18.80%
	B9	I asked my child questions about the story he/she read.	3	0.50%	57	9.70%	393	67.20%	132	22.60%
	B10	I encourage my child to retell the story that has been read.	3	0.50%	63	10.80%	386	66.00%	133	22.70%
	B11	I actively participate in my child's reading activities.	2	0.30%	77	13.20%	365	62.40%	141	24.10%
Variety of Reading Materials	B12	I provide a variety of interesting reading materials for my child at home.	0	0.00%	61	10.40%	362	61.90%	162	27.70%
	B13	I make sure there are various types of books at home.	2	0.30%	66	11.30%	360	61.50%	157	26.80%

Construc	Code	Item	n (%)							
			Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
Types of Reading Activities at Home	B14	I encourage my child to read various types of reading materials such as storybooks, comics, magazines, and other interactive readings.	2	0.30%	66	11.30%	369	63.10%	148	25.30%
	B15	I ensure that the books my child reads are appropriate for their age and ability.	0	0.00%	12	2.10%	364	62.20%	209	35.70%
	B16	I give my child the opportunity to choose the books they like, but still under my supervision.	0	0.00%	19	3.20%	356	60.90%	210	35.90%
	B17	I get new reading materials for my child every month, either by buying, borrowing from the library, or using free digital resources.	9	1.50%	120	20.50%	354	60.50%	102	17.40%
	B18	I often take my child to the library to choose books.	55	9.40%	279	47.70%	217	37.10%	34	5.80%
	B19	I involve my child in reading activities at home every day.	1	0.20%	89	15.20%	373	63.80%	122	20.90%
	B20	I read storybooks with the child, encouraging them to ask questions and discuss the story.	3	0.50%	91	15.60%	371	63.40%	120	20.50%
	B21	I use e-books or interactive reading apps to read with my child.	35	6.00%	166	28.40%	312	53.30%	72	12.30%
	B22	I encourage my child to write their own stories or draw pictures based on the books they have read.	16	2.70%	150	25.60%	317	54.20%	102	17.40%
	B23	I encourage my child to retell the stories they have read or create their own stories.	4	0.70%	99	16.90%	370	63.20%	112	19.10%
B24	I use flashcards or word games to help my child learn to read.	29	5.00%	138	23.60%	317	54.20%	101	17.30%	

Construc	Code	Item	<i>n</i> (%)							
			Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
Home Literacy Resources	B25	I label objects around the house (for example, wheat flour, corn flour, milk, coffee, tea, etc.) to help my child recognize letters and words.	27	4.60%	157	26.80%	284	48.50%	117	20.00%
	B26	I use games or applications that combine elements of reading and learning.	10	1.70%	95	16.20%	354	60.50%	126	21.50%
	B27	I teach my child to pronounce letters and words through play.	3	0.50%	51	8.70%	376	64.30%	155	26.50%
	B28	I watch videos or animations related to the book that I have read with my child.	17	2.90%	121	20.70%	326	55.70%	121	20.70%
	B29	I carry out activities with my child after reading, such as writing, drawing, conducting simple projects, and other activities related to the reading topic.	7	1.20%	93	15.90%	350	59.80%	135	23.10%
	B30	I have set up a special space at home for my child to read.	13	2.20%	147	25.10%	308	52.60%	117	20.00%
	B31	I provide interesting and colourful storybooks at home.	3	0.50%	70	12.00%	362	61.90%	150	25.60%
	B32	I took my child to the bookstore to choose a book they were interested in.	7	1.20%	73	12.50%	357	61.00%	148	25.30%
	B33	I choose books that match my child's interests.	1	0.20%	39	6.70%	383	65.50%	162	27.70%
Print Exposure	B34	I believe exposure to printed materials helps improve my child's reading skills.	1	0.20%	23	3.90%	352	60.20%	209	35.70%
	B35	My house has various printed materials such as posters, labels, and children's magazines.	11	1.90%	139	23.80%	315	53.80%	120	20.50%

Construc	Code	Item	n (%)							
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree				
	B36	I make sure my child interacts with printed materials every day.	7	1.20%	126	21.50%	356	60.90%	96	16.40%
	B37	I encourage my child to read the words they encounter while reading cookie recipes or reading road signs.	3	0.50%	41	7.00%	362	61.90%	179	30.60%
	B38	I often discuss with my child about the reading materials available at home.	5	0.90%	77	13.20%	373	63.80%	130	22.20%

Discussion

The practice of reading at home is an important component in the early literacy development of preschool children. The role of parents in shaping a literacy culture at home has a positive influence on children's reading skills and supports their preparation for future learning challenges. This study aims to examine the extent to which parents play an active role in shaping children's reading practices and the aspects that need to be improved to maximize benefits for the children.

Reading Practices at Home

The study found that reading practices at home are at a moderate level overall. There are six main constructs that were evaluated, namely parental involvement, shared reading activities, diversity of reading materials, types of reading activities, literacy resources at home, and print exposure.

The findings indicate that parental involvement recorded the highest achievement among other reading practice constructs. Most parents are actively involved in helping their children understand the content of reading materials, encouraging their children to ask questions while reading, providing various reading materials, and frequently reading together. These findings are in line with the study by Senechal and Lefevre (2002), which emphasizes that active parental involvement in the reading learning process can strengthen children's vocabulary and comprehension.

Parents not only guide their children in reading but also ensure they understand the content being read. According to the study findings, parents engage by asking questions, providing explanations, and connecting the book's content with their children's experiences. This is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) "Zone of Proximal Development" approach, where interactions involving adults and children during reading facilitate children's understanding of more complex content (Senechal & Lefevre, 2002). Interactions like this have the potential to develop critical thinking skills and enhance children's literacy.

Activities such as asking questions while reading play an important role in encouraging children to interact actively. A study by Burgess et al. (2002) states that such interactions can

enhance children's communication skills and reflective thinking. Furthermore, this interaction also helps children to make inferences and connect new information with existing knowledge. This aligns with "dialogic reading," which suggests that children's active involvement in the reading process can enhance their comprehension and vocabulary (Senechal & Lefevre, 2002).

The provision of a variety of reading materials by parents has also been identified as a factor contributing to children's reading skills. Burgess et al. (2002) study shows that a literacy-rich environment with reading materials such as storybooks, magazines, and interactive materials has a significant impact on children's reading skills. This is because exposure to various types of reading materials allows children to experience different reading contexts, strengthen their mastery of new words, and develop positive reading habits. In this regard, Senechal and Lefevre (2002) also found that the quantity and variety of reading materials at home are closely related to the development of children's literacy

The frequency of parents reading with their children at home also shows a positive trend. This activity not only builds a close relationship between parents and children but also creates a conducive reading environment at home. Research findings indicate that reading together regularly can enhance children's reading fluency and comprehension. This is in line with the study by Senechal and Lefevre (2002) which emphasizes the importance of shared reading activities in building positive interactions between parents and children.

The study findings indicate that most parents ensure that reading materials are appropriate for their children's age and abilities. These findings are in line with the study by Burgess et al. (2002), which states that a literacy environment with diverse reading materials is closely related to the development of children's reading skills. The study also found that exposure to a variety of reading materials can enhance children's reading comprehension and interest in reading (Boerma et al., 2017; Yeo, 2014). The provision of diverse reading materials helps to continuously expand vocabulary and reading interest (Puglisi et al., 2017). Parents also give children the opportunity to choose the reading materials they are interested in, but they ensure that the selection aligns with the child's learning needs. This approach is supported by Baker and Scher (2002), who found that parental involvement in providing reading materials can enhance children's interest and literacy skills.

On the contrary, the study results show that most parents expressed the lowest agreement in the overall 38 reading practice items regarding the frequency of taking their children to the library to choose books. These findings are attributed to several factors such as time constraints, the distance of the library, and a lack of awareness about the importance of library visits. Visits to the library should be given attention because they can enrich children's reading experiences through exposure to a wider variety of books and reading materials. Therefore, integrated efforts need to be made to encourage parents to take their children to the library, either through awareness campaigns or collaboration with educational institutions.

The construct of reading activities at home plays an important role in stimulating the interest and reading skills of preschool children. The study findings indicate that the level of parental approval for reading activities varies according to the type of activity conducted.

Most parents tend to use a play-based learning approach to help their children recognize letters and words. This approach is believed to be more engaging for children and can increase their motivation to learn. Game-based learning activities are also supported by previous studies which state that this method is more effective in increasing children's engagement in the learning process (Mohammad Nurulanuar & Jamilah, 2024).

On the other hand, the use of e-books or interactive reading applications shows low approval. The use of e-books and interactive reading applications has the potential to enrich children's reading experiences with interactive elements such as animations, sounds, and colourful illustrations. However, the lower level of approval may be due to constraints in access to digital devices, parental awareness of the effectiveness of these applications, or concerns about excessive screen time for preschool children.

In addition, most respondents also showed low agreement towards the activity of labelling objects around the house. Labelling objects is one of the environmental-based learning methods that can help children associate letters and words with real objects. Although this method has great potential to reinforce learning, the low percentage of agreement may stem from a lack of parental awareness about the importance of this strategy or a lack of time to implement it. Overall, the construct of home reading activity types shows that parents are more inclined to use game-based learning methods compared to other activities such as using e-books or labelling objects at home.

For the construct of print exposure, most parents believe that exposure to printed materials helps improve their children's reading skills. This reflects parents' understanding of the role of printed materials as an important learning medium in enhancing children's reading skills. Exposure to printed materials such as newspapers, magazines, and storybooks can stimulate children's cognitive abilities in recognizing letters, words, and the meaning of texts. Additionally, most parents also agree to encourage their children to read words found on street signs or while reading recipes in the kitchen. This practice demonstrates that parents use a contextual learning approach to help children relate words to daily situations. Activities such as reading signs and recipes can provide a more effective and authentic learning experience for children. This contextual learning approach also enhances children's awareness of the words that exist in their environment.

Factors Influencing Reading Habits

The findings show that parents from low-income groups are more selective in choosing reading materials due to financial constraints. They tend to ensure that the materials purchased are a worthwhile investment for their children's educational needs. Furthermore, parents with lower levels of education may be less aware of certain reading practices, such as taking their children to the library.

Parents' time commitments also pose a challenge in ensuring that the reading routine is carried out consistently. A busy work schedule and other responsibilities at home often prevent parents from dedicating enough time to literacy activities. However, setting aside specific time, even just 10 to 15 minutes a day, can have a significant impact on children's literacy development.

The types of reading activities conducted by parents still require improvement. Activities such as retelling stories or using interactive applications can help children better understand literacy concepts. These activities can also enhance reading fluency through repetition and discussion of reading content.

Suggestions for Improving Reading Practices

Public libraries can play an important role by organizing activities such as reading sessions or literacy workshops for parents. These activities not only provide parents with the opportunity to learn interactive reading techniques but also strengthen family bonds through literacy experiences. Additionally, the library can serve as a platform for children to explore quality reading materials that may not be available at home. Family literacy campaigns that emphasize the importance of reading at home can raise community awareness, thereby encouraging more parents to actively engage in their children's literacy activities.

The initiative to provide quality reading books at affordable prices is an effective step to reduce the financial barriers often faced by low-income families. Access to a variety of reading materials such as storybooks, comics, and illustrated materials can enrich children's literacy experiences. Furthermore, programs such as free book distribution or book vouchers for preschool children can ensure that all families, regardless of their economic background, are able to provide appropriate reading materials at home. This step is in line with efforts to enhance equitable access to quality early education.

Literacy workshops for parents can provide practical guidance on how to implement creative and enjoyable reading activities at home. Through this workshop, parents can learn techniques such as shared reading, storytelling, and how to choose reading materials appropriate for their children's age. This educational program can also help parents understand the importance of consistency in reading practices and guide them in overcoming challenges such as time and resource constraints. With the knowledge gained, parents are more confident in playing an active role in fostering a reading culture within the family.

Game-based literacy applications can help children learn while playing, making the reading process more engaging and enjoyable. Technology like this can encourage children to continue learning even outside of formal hours, as it is designed with engaging interactive and visual elements. In addition, parents can use this technology as a support tool to complement traditional reading activities such as learning letter sounds or forming words. The introduction of this technology should be controlled and monitored by parents, especially for families with access to gadgets, thereby supporting efforts to improve literacy levels at home.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the crucial role of parents in shaping preschool children's reading practices at home. The findings indicate that reading practices are at a moderate level overall, with the parental involvement recording the highest achievement and types of activities at home being the lowest. Most parents actively engage in reading with their children, ensuring they understand the content of reading materials and providing various reading resources. However, limited parental visits to libraries and low usage of e-books or interactive reading applications were identified as areas needing improvement.

Additionally, financial constraints and time limitations emerged as key challenges for parents in creating a conducive literacy environment.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, public libraries and educational institutions can play a pivotal role by organizing family literacy programs, such as interactive reading workshops and book fairs, to raise awareness to the importance of library visits. Second, providing subsidies or free access to quality reading materials, especially for low-income families, can reduce financial barriers and promote equitable access to literacy resources. Third, parents should be encouraged to explore and utilize digital reading tools, such as e-books and interactive apps, which can provide engaging and interactive learning experiences for children. Finally, policymakers could implement community-based initiatives to strengthen parental education and involvement in early literacy development.

By addressing these challenges and implementing targeted strategies, parents, educators and the broader community can collectively contribute to fostering a robust reading culture among preschool children, thereby laying a strong foundation for their future academic success and lifelong learning.

References

- Alshatti, T., Al-Sulaim, N., & Abdalla, F. (2020). Home-Based literacy practices of Arab mothers from Kuwait. *Speech, Language and Hearing*, 23, 133 - 145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2050571X.2019.1581464>.
- Baker, C. (2013). Fathers' and Mothers' Home Literacy Involvement and Children's Cognitive and Social Emotional Development: Implications for Family Literacy Programs. *Applied Developmental Science*, 17, 184 - 197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2013.836034>
- Baker, L., & Scher, D. (2002). Beginning Readers' Motivation for Reading in Relation to Parental Beliefs and Home Reading Experiences. *Reading Psychology*, 23(4), 239-269.
- Baker, L., Mackler, K., Sonnenschein, S., & Serpell, R. (2001). Parents' Interactions with Their First-Grade Children During Storybook Reading and Relations with Subsequent Home Reading Activity and Reading Achievement. *Journal of School Psychology*, 39, 415-438. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405\(01\)00082-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405(01)00082-6).
- Burgess, S. R., Hecht, S. A., & Lonigan, C. J. (2002). Relations of the home literacy environment (HLE) to the development of reading-related abilities: A one-year longitudinal study. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(4), 408-426.
- Dong, Y., & Chow, B. (2022). Home Literacy Environment and English as A Second Language Acquisition: A Meta-analysis. *Language Learning and Development*, 18, 485 - 499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15475441.2021.2003197> Fong Peng & Fikir Ismail, 2020).
- Dong, Y., Wu, S. X.-Y., Dong, W.-Y., & Tang, Y. 2020. The Effects of Home Literacy Environment on Children's Reading Comprehension Development: A Meta-Analysis. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*. eISSN: 2148-7561, ISSN: 2630-5984.. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12738/jestp.2020.2.005>.
- Georgiou, G., Inoue, T., & Parrila, R. (2021). Developmental Relations Between Home Literacy Environment, Reading Interest, and Reading Skills: Evidence From a 3-Year Longitudinal Study. *Child development*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13589>.

- Hairullah. (2023). The Important of the Family Roles in Building the Children's Character. *INFLUENCE: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENCE REVIEW*, 5(1), 100–106. <https://doi.org/10.54783/influencejournal.v5i1.107>
- Hussin, M. N., & Mohd Basir, J. (2024). Keberkesanan Pembangunan Modul Kemahiran Membaca Kanak-Kanak Prasekolah: Sorotan Literatur Bersistematik. *Jurnal Pendidikan Awal Kanak-Kanak Kebangsaan*, 13(1), 116–128. <https://doi.org/10.37134/jpak.vol13.1.10.2024>
- Inouk E. Boerma, Suzanne E. Mol & Jelle Jolles (2017) The Role of Home Literacy Environment, Mentalizing, Expressive Verbal Ability, and Print Exposure in Third and Fourth Graders' Reading Comprehension, *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 21:3, 179-193, DOI: 10.1080/10888438.2016.1277727
- Justice, L. M., Logan, J. A., Kaderavek, J. N., & McGinty, A. (2018). Print-focused read-alouds in early childhood special education programs. *Exceptional Children*, 84(1), 64-82.
- Katzir, T., Lesaux, N.K., & Kim, Y.G. (2009). The role of reading self-concept and home literacy practices in fourth grade reading comprehension. *Reading and Writing*, 22, 261-276.
- Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. 2013. *Ringkasan Eksekutif. Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia 2013-2025*. Putrajaya: Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607–610.
- Kurikulum Pra-sekolah Kebangsaan diperkenalkan oleh Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (1986).
- López-Escribano, C., Valverde-Montesino, S., & García-Ortega, V. (2021). The Impact of E-Book Reading on Young Children's Emergent Literacy Skills: An Analytical Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126510.aktor>
- Marina L. Puglisi, Charles Hulme, Lorna G. Hamilton & Margaret J. Snowling (2017) The Home Literacy Environment Is a Correlate, but Perhaps Not a Cause, of Variations in Children's Language and Literacy Development, *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 21:6, 498-514, DOI: 10.1080/10888438.2017.1346660
- McNally, S., Leech, K., Corriveau, K., & Daly, M. (2023). Indirect Effects of Early Shared Reading and Access to Books on Reading Vocabulary in Middle Childhood. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 28, 42 - 59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2023.2220846>.
- Mol, S. E., & Bus, A. G. (2014). To read or not to read: A meta-analysis of print exposure from infancy to early adulthood. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(2), 302-330
- Mol, S., & Bus, A. (2011). To read or not to read: a meta-analysis of print exposure from infancy to early adulthood. *Psychological bulletin*, 137 2, 267-96. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021890>.
- Niklas, F., & Schneider, W. (2017). Home literacy environment and the beginning of reading and spelling. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 49, 219-232. Program PERMATA - Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013-2025.
- Rozana, S., , M., & Nofianti, R. (2021). An Influence of Parental Habits and Behavior in Children's Education. *International Journal of Research and Review*. <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20210842>.
- Schapira, R., & Aram, D. (2020). Shared Book Reading at Home and Preschoolers' Socio-emotional Competence. *Early Education and Development*, 31, 819 - 837. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2019.1692624>.

- Sénéchal, M., & LeFevre, J. (2002). Parental involvement in the development of children's reading skill: a five-year longitudinal study. *Child development*, 73 2, 445-60. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00417>.
- Sénéchal, M., & Young, L. (2008). The Effect of Family Literacy Interventions on Children's Acquisition of Reading from Kindergarten to Grade 3: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Review of Educational Research*, 78, 880 - 907. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308320319>.
- Tonder, B., Arrow, A., & Nicholson, T. (2019). Not just storybook reading: Exploring the relationship between home literacy environment and literate cultural capital among 5-year-old children as they start school. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 42, 87-101. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03652029>.
- UNESCO. (2021).
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Yeo, L., Ong, W., & Ng, C. (2014). The Home Literacy Environment and Preschool Children's Reading Skills and Interest. *Early Education and Development*, 25, 791 - 814. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2014.862147>.