

Parental Involvement and Early Literacy Development: A Needs Assessment and Guidebook Development for Kindergarten Parents in a Private School Setting

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ABSTRACT: This paper has examined parental involvement in the early literacy acquisition of kindergarten learners enrolled at Christian Faith Montessori in Aduas Centro, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Based on the simplified version of the ADDIE Model, the proposed research design was a needs-assessment research design that surveyed 34 randomly selected parents or guardians in order to find out: (1) what are the barriers to parents and guardians to understand their roles in the literacy development of the children, (2) what is the impact of gadgets on the development of literacy of children and (3) how prepared parents and guardians are to support the early acquisition of literacy skills. The quantitative data collected using a four-point Likert-scale tool were measured by using the mean method and open-ended data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Results showed that the work-related fatigue of parents necessitates, passive dependence on the teachers, and limited time of engagement are major hindrances to active participation. The home-based use of gadgets was also discovered to both be bonding and may negatively affect the

family in relation to parental mediation. Most of the participants stated that they wished to learn practical strategies and reference material to help their children to be literate at their homes. Based on these results, a ten-page parent-targeted guidebook was created that captured six early literacy areas that include print motivation, print awareness, letter knowledge, vocabulary, phonological awareness and narrative skills. The research suggests that the distribution of the guidebook to a wider audience of the institutions addressing comparable parenting issues and communities with the insufficient access to educational support resources be extended.

Keywords: *Early childhood education; parental involvement; home literacy; early literacy development; guidebook development; ADDIE Model; Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

It is generally known that literacy is the foundation of educational attainment and life long learning. As Frankel et al. (2016) argue, through literacy, people are able to interact effectively, learn and be useful in society. The field of early literacy development, in particular, has been depicted to have a long-term effect on the academic paths of children, their cognitive development, and their socio-emotional competence (Gage et al., 2015). Early childhood is a sensitive period in which contact with language and reading and printful environments can put children on a trajectory of continuous learning.

The role of parents and caregivers in the early literacy development of the child is central. Studies have always supported the fact that the home environment is the first and most crucial one to introduce literacy classroom and parents are the first and the most sustained teachers of the child (Patrikakou and Weissberg, 2000). As parents participate in reading, telling stories and having discussions together, they not only instill a passion of reading books but also improve the vocabulary, understanding, and reasoning abilities of their children. Voorhis et al. (2013) also highlight the fact that parental engagement along with formal schooling has compounding positive effects on the literacy levels of children.

However, in most communities (especially in semi-urban and underserved ones in the Philippines), parents are severely hindered by factors that may hinder active

participation. They are lack of time because of workload and lack of awareness of early literacy strategies, use of digital devices instead of a guided learning activity, and access to information and training programs on parenting (Casingal and Ancho, 2021; Barnett et al., 2010). As it has been observed by De Vera and Casingal (2024), although mobile technology has potential in the development of early reading skills in kindergarten students, it largely depends on the intentional parental facilitation and organization of its use.

Early grade literacy has been one of the priorities of the Department of Education since the early 1990s as seen in reading intervention programs like the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and other early childhood literacy programs. Nevertheless, a study of Casingal (2022) on the effectiveness of reading remedial programs indicates certain gaps that remain to be persistent, especially when parent involvement at home is insignificant or even not supported. Such results highlight why parent education programs should be organized as a matter of urgency to facilitate the home-school literacy gap.

This paper is an answer to that requirement, as it looks at the barriers and preparedness of parents in a private Montessori school in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, and it constructs a feasible information guide to enable them have home-based early literacy practices. The sum total is to illustrate how specially focused parental engagement in the form of instructional resources supplemented can be an effective intervention of early literacy improvement. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges that prevent parents to understand their roles in helping their child develop literacy?
2. Does the home use of gadgets influence the literacy growth of the child?
3. What is an appropriate way to make parents prepared to help their child develop early literacy skills?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Parental Involvement and Early Literacy

The correlation between parental involvement and literacy performances of the children has been widely recorded in literature. Voorhis et al. (2013) summarize the information that demonstrates that family involvement during the period between three and eight years old is a potent factor that enhances language development, reading preparedness, and school adaptation. Epstein (1995) discusses a theoretical model which offers six different types of parental participation: parenting, communicating, volunteering, home learning, decision-making, and community collaboration, which offer a model of the multidimensional nature of parental involvement.

Parents literacy, cultural beliefs and home organization also significantly influence the quality and the consistency of parental involvement (Senéchal and Lefevre, 2014). In the Philippine context, Casingal and Ancho (2021) also reported that financial constraints and workplace demands largely limit the parental ability to actively promote the learning of their children, which is supported by the survey results of the current study.

Impact of Home Literacy Activities on Children's Development

There is an emerging body of study that reveals the importance of informal home literacy practices (shared reading, storytelling, singing rhymes, and letter play) in developing children phonological awareness, vocabulary, and knowledge of print. Skwarchuk et al. (2014) established that parents who participate in regular literacy practices at home establish language-enriching households that greatly promote the vocabulary and reading comprehension of children. As well, Willemse et al. (2018, p. 252) determined that the child whose parents actively participate in reading and writing has a better attitude toward reading and writing.

Senéchal and LeFevre (2002) also determined that formal (i.e. teaching letters and sounds) and informal (i.e. reading in pleasure) literacy practices play distinct roles in the development of child-literacy and reading fluency. These results demonstrate the

need to provide parents with a varied array of strategies of home-based approaches a major reason is the guidebook created in the present research.

Child Literacy Programs and Parent Education Initiatives

Child literacy programs have become developed as useful mechanisms of directing parental involvement in achieving quantifiable increases in literacy. It was shown in the program "Reach Out and Read" (Klass et al., 2009b) that age-specific distribution of books and reading recommendations by the pediatrician results in the language inclusion in the young children. The same method demonstrated that the use of interactive reading dialogues involving parents in the process of reading to children led to better vocabulary and comprehension among children (Dialogic Reading, Klass et al., 2009a).

Combining parent workshops with continuous feedback programs are such programs that are likely to yield more sustainable results. Senechal and LeFevre (2002) suggest that the best engagement is achieved through targeted seminars such as those that educate parents on the importance of early literacy and offer practical tools to parents. Mol et al. (2009) also underlined the importance of diversification of reading materials in terms of maintaining the parental motivation levels that are varying in terms of reading level and interest. Epel and colleagues (2004) also observed that systematic observations and follow-ups can be used to ensure parental motivation and adherence to program objectives.

Technology and Literacy in the Home Environment

The increasing number of digital devices in the Filipino households has brought another twist to the practice of home literacy. De Vera and Casingal (2024) examined the application of mobile applications in building reading skills among kindergarten students and discovered that technology-based literacy tools could be very effective when parents participated actively in collaborating with their children during online learning classes. Nonetheless, intermediated or passive gadget use in which children are left alone to play with gadgets may crowd out productive literacy interactions and reduce reading motivation.

Casingal et al. (2025) also indicated that longitudinal reading tests of early grade students indicate the long-lasting improvement in literacy in case all school-based interventions and home-based practices are regularly introduced. These results support the necessity of parent education interventions uniquely covering the role of technology in the home literacy context, and the strategies to use responsible and literacy-driven gadgets.

Challenges to Parental Involvement

Parental engagement in early literacy is still not uniform even though we have indicative data to show that its advantages are clear, especially in neighborhoods that lack adequate educational facilities. According to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), parents have been found to be hindered in their engagement by time constraints, perceived incompetence, and cultural barriers as the key inhibitor. Barnett et al. (2010) recommended that literacy programs should integrate flexible scheduling, culture-sensitive strategies, and explicit and practical guidelines in instruction so as to reduce the entry barrier.

Casingal (2022c) observed in the Philippine setting that work and financial pressures considerably affect the time and energy that parents may dedicate to facilitating the learning of their children at home. This is especially relevant to families whose jobs are blue-collars as their job timetable is irregular and they are physically exhausted that they can only do so. Specialized development of handbooks, which are accessible, free, and practical, is therefore a possible solution to overcome these structural constraints.

ADDIE Model in Educational Material Development

The common instructional design model used in the development of educational resources used in parent and community engagement programs has been ADDIE instructional design model which is a model which consists of a set of stages namely Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. Its methodical, repetitive approach has made sure that instructional resources are need-based, theoretically based and practically oriented. Murray et al. (2013) supported the idea that parent empowerment programs designed according to the systematic

instructional design have more effective results when the materials are designed according to the cultural and educational backgrounds of the end-users.

The Analysis, Design and Development phases of the ADDIE Model were employed completely in this paper in order to come up with a guidebook that will be sensitive to the needs identified during the parent survey. The Future work is suggested to be Implementation and Evaluation of the project, especially once it has been tested on a bigger scale, among other communities.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design of this study was the needs-assessment research design based on a simplified ADDIE Model. The study was done in three stages namely: (1) Analysis, where the parent participants needs and literacy problems were identified using a survey tool; (2) Design, whereby the survey outcomes were mapped to the pertinent domains of early literacy competencies; and (3) Development where parent guidebook was developed. The Likert-scale questions of the survey were analyzed with the help of the mean calculation and the answers to the two open-ended questions were analyzed with the help of the thematic analysis in order to indicate the similar patterns.

Research Site and Participants

The research was carried out in a privately-owned kindergarten school known as the Christian Faith Montessori, Aduas Centro located in Cabanatuan City in Nueva Ecija Province. Aduas Centro is a barangay, and as of the 2020 Census, it has a population of 5,116 or 1.56 percent of the entire population of the Cabanatuan City. The community is also typified by low accessibility of educational outreach programs, internet facilities and support services. Parents have a significant disparity in the levels of education, as there are elementary to college education.

Participants were randomly sampled out of 34 parents or guardians of enrolled children in kindergarten level. This sample was mostly female (33/34 members), 79.4% of the sample had a college degree, 11.8% had a masters degree, and 8.8%

had only secondary school education. On occupation, 50.8% of them were doing blue-collar jobs and 41.2% doing white-collar jobs.

Research Instrument

The survey tool that was created is a Filipino-language survey instrument to make it accessible and understandable by any participant. The tool included two large parts, (1) socio-demographic profile form that included the information about the age, sex, civil status, education level, occupation, and family income and (2) structured rating scale that included 15 Likert-type statements, which were divided into three domains, namely, Individual (5 items), Interpersonal (5 items), and Community (5 items). The items were rated in the scale of four 4 (Strongly Agree), 3 (Agree), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree). The quantitative items were supported by two open-ended questions to obtain qualitative information on learning needs and parental challenges. Two university professors with a background in early childhood education were used to determine the content validity and one parent of a kindergarten child was used to pilot the instrument.

Data Gathering Procedure

An Informed Consent Form was also given to all the selected participants before data collection and signed at their own free will. The interviews with the individuals were in a special room of Christian Faith Montessori, and the office took about 20 to 30 minutes each. The interview guide was administered by the researcher himself, in order to make it clear and consistent. The participants were assured of confidentiality of their answers and they have a choice to pull out of the study without facing any negative effects.

Data Analysis

The Likert-scale items gave quantitative data, which were tabulated and analyzed by the frequency counts and mean calculation. The distribution of the responses in the three domains was described using descriptive statistics. The qualitative information on the two open-ended questions was interpreted using thematic methods, and repeated ideas and phrases were aggregated into groups in order to come up with

themes that were dominant. The results using both data sources were triangulated to guide and shape the design and content of the guidebook.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Profile

The sample size was 34 parents or guardians, most of whom were female (97.1%), and the educational attainment of the group was predominated by college graduates (79.4%). This description indicates a fairly educated parent group, but again, knowledge and confidence in facilitating early literacy at home is not always associated with educational attainment, and this finding is aligned with that of Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), who observed that even literate parents simply do not always have particular pedagogical approaches to support early literacy at home.

RQ1: Obstacles to Parental Involvement in Literacy Development

The findings of the survey within the domain of Individual indicated that 20 participants (58.8) strongly believed that they did everything to assist their children with their school assignments even when there was demand of a heavy workload at home and at the workplace. On the other hand, 16 respondents (47.1%) acknowledged that they have given their children free reign in terms of studying, implying a tendency of benign neglect which can unintentionally restrict formal interactions in literacy. Also, 13 participants (38.2) said that they to some extent agreed that their work fatigue often interferes with their capacity to keep track of their children learning.

This result aligns with the observation that Casingal and Ancho (2021) note that work-related fatigue and financial constraints are some of the key obstacles to active involvement of parents in the Philippine setting. They are also in line with the framework of Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), in which perceived lack of time and skill is cited as the greatest and most tenacious barriers to home-based parental support. The statistics highlight the necessity of the parental interventions that should be practical, at minimum of effort, and time-efficient, which is inherent in the guidebook designed in the current research.

Table 1. Individual Domain: Responses to Statements on Parental Involvement (n=34)

Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
Work prevents me from fully attending to my child at home and school.	3	16	8	7	2.44
I allow my child to study on their own.	3	4	11	16	1.88
I leave my child's learning entirely to the teacher.	2	11	12	9	2.18
I try to help my child with school despite heavy work and home duties.	20	7	3	4	3.26
I am often tired from work and cannot monitor my child's studies.	1	12	15	6	2.24

RQ2: Gadget Use and Its Influence on Children's Literacy

Under the Interpersonal domain, 19 respondents (55.9%) have concurred or strongly concurred that they and their children share insights regarding gadget content-monitored viewing and gaming. One-fifth (24) of the respondents (70.6) talked to their children about the correct use of gadgets, and 22 (64.7) of the respondents pointed out that electronic device usage at home did help them bond in some way. Nevertheless, 24 participants (70.6) did not concur that gadgets were important in strengthening parent-child relationships, which implies that the use of devices is not seen as a major bonding agent.

These results cover a complex image of the gadget usage: although parents tend to mediate all, to some extent, the possibility of unstructured or passive gadget usage is also an issue. According to De Vera and Casingal (2024), mobile-based interventions can be successfully applied to early reading among the kindergarten-aged children-however, when parents are involved in co-intervention in the digital-based literacy activities. Gadget use can substitute instead of complement productive literacy interactions without provided deliberate facilitation. In this study, the guidebook is created, which contains the instructions on how to use digital tools as an important part of a home literacy routine.

RQ3: Parental Preparedness and the Need for a Guidebook

The Community domain showed high levels of aspirational involvement of parents. Eighteen percent (52.9) of the respondents strongly agreed that they would like to know how to assist their children in reading and writing; 26 (76.5) percent said that they would like to attend school literacy programs; and 26 (76.5) percent of the respondents said that they would like to be taught various learning strategies. Most importantly, 23 individuals (65.7) were keen on seeing a module or a handbook that would help them in the development of literacy levels of their children at home.

These results legitimize the creation of a usable parent handbook as one of the main deliverables of this research. The stated need in the availability of easy to understand action-based guidance is in line with the suggestion of practical and parent friendly workshops and materials as suggested by Senechal and LeFevre (2002). The usefulness of the structured systems of support which enable parents and teachers to have clear instructional tools based on the development needs of the learners is further supported by the work by Casingal (2022) on reading remediation.

Table 2. Community Domain: Parental Interest in Literacy Support Resources (n=34)

Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
I want to learn how to help my child with reading and writing.	18	6	3	7	3.03
I want to participate in school programs on literacy development.	14	11	2	7	2.94
I want to learn various strategies to support my child's learning.	16	10	2	6	3.06
I want to have a handbook or module to guide my child's learning.	12	11	5	6	2.85
I am willing to become a volunteer parent in support of my child's learning.	11	12	8	3	2.91

The Developed Guidebook

A ten page parent-oriented guidebook was designed based on the Design and Development phases of the ADDIE Model according to the identified needs. The

guidebook is structured based on the six domains of early literacy that have been found in the literature: (1) print motivation, (2) print awareness, (3) letter knowledge, (4) vocabulary, (5) phonological awareness, and (6) narrative skills. The domains have five age-related activities that could be applied by parents at home without the use of special materials and without financial investments. The narrative skills domain received a broader coverage on the basis of the specific developmental salience of storytelling and oral language among kindergarten learners.

The guidebook is written in an easy-to-understand and practical manner; this is evidenced by the use of simple illustrations, easy-to-follow step-by-step guides to the activities, and easy to understand and comprehend language which is in Filipino-English. Murray et al. (2013) have posited that co-designed parent empowerment materials are the most effective to be used when literacy levels and cultural contexts of end-users are taken into consideration. This principle was implemented by the pre-testing process that was carried out prior to the completion of the guidebook.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper assessed the importance of parental contribution to the early literacy acquisition of kindergarten learners in a private Montessori school in Cabanatuan City and come up with an effective parent guidebook as a programmatic solution to the needs identified. Three major conclusions were made. To begin with, the core barrier to parental involvement is not parental apathy but structural constraint, especially, work-related exhaustion and a lack of time, which limits the ability of parents to participate in a systematic home literacy practice. Second, the use of gadgets at home plays an ambivalent role: when parent-mediated, it may help build a bond and complement literacy development, whereas when not, it may replace productive interactions. Third, parents were highly aspirational in their readiness to learn and participate with most wishing to have a practical, accessible literacy guide.

Based on these findings, a parent based guidebook on six areas of early literacy was created based on the Analysis, Design, and Development stages of the ADDIE Model. The guidebook is free and easy to understand with differing parental educational levels. The six literacy areas include a print motivation, print awareness,

letter knowledge, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and narrative skills, each of which consists of five activities that could be implemented by parents, which offers a carefully organized but adaptive toolkit that could be used to facilitate early literacy.

It provides the following recommendations. To begin with, the guidebook ought to be piloted and tested (conducted in other schools and communities with similar profiles) to gauge its efficiency and make some improvements throughout the cycle. Second, school leaders and teacher must incorporate parent literacy orientation sessions within the school calendar with the guide book as one of the fundamental sources. Third, the longitudinal effects of the guidebook implementation on quantifiable literacy outcomes should be explored in future research based on the pre-post assessment designs and the approaches used in the research on longitudinal reading proficiency assessment, like Casingal et al. (2025). Fourth, electronic copies of the guidebook, which would possibly be incorporated in mobile apps (cf. De Vera & Casingal, 2024), would be able to reach parents within remote or digitally connected communities. Fifth, responsible and literacy-centered gadget use should also be a part of the digital parenting education that is explicitly covered in the parent literacy coaching programs.

The given study adds to the increasing body of evidence that parental involvement, accompanied by the adequate provision of available and culturally responsive tools, is a strong tool of early childhood literacy development. At a national level, where the issue of basic literacy outcomes is a major issue, empowering the home literacy context via informed and active parents is a viable and durable route towards better academic equity (Casingal, 2022).

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