



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**PARENTS' ROLES IN DEVELOPING EARLY READING HABITS  
OF THEIR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE ASAJAYA  
DISTRICT: A CASE STUDY**

**Siti Hasrat Nurbani Bte Kamari**

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Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development

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**15654**

**This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a  
Bachelor of Education with Honours  
(English as a Second Language)**

**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development  
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**2008**

## BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS

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## BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS

JUDUL: Parents' Roles in Developing Early Reading Habits of their Preschool children in the Asagaya District : A Case Study

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Siti Hasrat Nurbani Bte Kamari

This study was to investigate the parents' roles in developing early reading habits of their preschool children in the Asajaya District. The objectives of the study are to find out the parents' roles in developing early reading habits of their preschool children, to find out the types of reading materials accessible for preschool children, to find out the parents' roles in obtaining reading materials for their preschool children and to find out the factors that affect the parents in developing early reading habits of their preschool children. This is a case study which was carried out in fourteen villages in the Asajaya District. Observation and interview were used to collect the data. There were thirty respondents; from thirty families had took part in this study. The findings in this study had shown parents' roles in developing early reading habits of their preschool children were as the role models, readers, educators and motivators. Meanwhile, the most common reading materials found during observation were alphabet books, colouring books, self-identification materials, counting books, story books with pictures, books contain pictures, multiple objects, big books and wordcharts. However, newspapers, magazines and novels were not available during the visit.

It is hereby confirmed that the student has done all the necessary amendments of the project for acceptance.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **PARENTS' ROLES IN DEVELOPING EARLY READING HABITS OF THEIR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE ASAJAYA DISTRICT**

**Siti Hasrat Nurbani Bte Kameri**

This study aims to investigate the parents' roles in developing early reading habits of their preschool children in the Asajaya District. The objectives of the study are to find out the parents' roles in developing early reading habits of their preschool children. Then, to identify the types of reading materials accessible for preschool children, to find out the parents' modes in obtaining reading materials for their preschool children and to find out the factors that affect the parents in developing early reading habits of their preschool children. This is a case study which was carried out in fourteen villages in the Asajaya District. Observation and interview were used to collect the data. There were thirty participants from thirty families had took part in this study. The findings in this study had shown parents' roles in developing early reading habits of their preschool children were as the role models, readers, educators and motivators. Meanwhile, the most common reading materials found during observation were alphabet books, colouring books, self-development materials, counting books, story books with pictures, books contain pictures, multiply charts, big books and word charts. However, magazines, newspapers and novels also accessible during the visit which parents themselves had used these reading materials for reading. In obtaining the reading materials, there were five modes such as bought, borrowed, photostated, used the wasted materials and provided by the school. Lastly, preparation before getting formal education and gaining knowledge were the factors that affect the parents in developing early reading habits of their preschool children.

## ABSTRAK

### **PERANAN IBU BAPA DALAM MEMUPUK TABIAT AWAL MEMBACA DI KALANGAN ANAK-ANAK PRA SEKOLAH DI DAERAH ASAJAYA**

*Siti Hasrat Nurbani bte Kamari*

*Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti peranan ibu bapa dalam memupuk tabiat awal membaca dikalangan anak-anak prasekolah di Daerah Asajaya. Objektif kajian ini ialah untuk mengenalpasti peranan ibu bapa dalam memupuk tabiat awal membaca dikalangan anak-anak prasekolah mereka. Kemudian, mengenalpasti jenis-jenis bahan bacaan yang didapati untuk anak-anak prasekolah, mengenalpasti cara ibu bapa mendapatkan bahan bacaan untuk anak-anak prasekolah mereka dan mengenalpasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi ibu bapa dalam memupuk tabiat awal membaca dikalangan anak-anak prasekolah mereka. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di empat belas buah kampung di Daerah Asajaya. Sebanyak tiga puluh sampel yang terdiri daripada tiga puluh buah keluarga telah terlibat dalam kajian ini. Hasil daripada kajian ini mendapati bahawa, ada empat peranan ibu bapa dalam memupuk tabiat awal membaca iaitu sebagai model, pembaca, pendidik dan motivator. Sementara itu bahan bacaan yang paling mudah didapati semasa pemerhatian ialah buku abjad, buku mewarna, bahan buatan sendiri, buku kira-kira, buku cerita bergambar, buku-buku bergambar, carta darab, buku besar dan carta perkataan. Bagaimanapun, majalah, suratkhbar dan novel juga dilihat semasa pemerhatian di mana digunakan oleh ibu bapa sendiri sebagai bahan bacaan mereka. Bagi cara memperolehi bahan, terdapat lima cara iatu beli, pinjam, fotostat, guna bahan terbuang dan disediakan oleh pihak sekolah. Akhir sekali, persediaan sebelum ke pendidikan formal dan untuk memperolehi ilmu pengetahuan adalah faktor yang mempengaruhi ibu bapa dalam memupuk tabiat awal dikalangan anak-anak prasekolah mereka.*

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Chapter Overview

To my friends who had being with whenever I felt give-up. Thank you very much for my dearest friends, Sarini Marty, Sharen Tham Fung Ling, Tang Siew Kit, Sarah Abdullah, Paula Dickson and Ida Surnaya. We had great moments within these three years.

### 1.1 Research Questions

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

For the love and support, my beloved mother who as the shoulder to rely on, my supportive brother and wife for your blissful words and the younger sister who will be graduated soon.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

background of the study which explains about of their preschool children. Then, it leads to the statement of the problem of the study. Next, it points out the aim and objectives of the study and also research questions that guide the whole research. The significance of the study is briefly discussed. Then followed by the operational definitions of terms that are used in the study. Finally, the scope of the study is

### 1.1 Background of the Study

literacy is a level which the young children know about reading and writing where they can actually read and write. Neuman and Roskos (1997) as cited from Walen and Coates (2004), suggest that long before formal instruction begins, young children use reading and writing behaviors as an integral part of their

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Chapter Overview**

This chapter discusses the background of the study which explains about parents' roles in developing reading habits of their preschool children. Then, it leads to the statement of the problems of the study. Next, it points out the aim and objectives of the study and also research questions that guide the whole research. The significance of the study is briefly discussed. Then followed by the operational definition of terms those are used in the study. Finally, the scope of the study is mentioned briefly.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Early literacy is a level which the young children know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write. Neuman and Roskos (1997) as cited from Raban and Coates (2004), suggest that long before formal instruction takes place, young children use reading and writing behaviours as an integral part of their everyday life.

Thus, as a part of early literacy, the young children need a variety of supportive and encouragement that stimulate their interest in reading and writing.

The young children 'read' and 'write' in the unconventional ways. They do not learn to read and write formally as in the school. Sylva (1993) as cited from Raban and Coates (2004) has pointed out that the young children do not require didactic teaching. Therefore, early literacy here is not a formal teaching of reading and writing. It is a level which the young children prefer to have fun atmospheres that can give them opportunities to learn language that will develop early literacy skills.

Developing early literacy skills is very important when the preschoolers are in the early years of childhood. In this level, they also go through the developmental of language because it is for communication. Bredekamp and Copple (1997) state that, 'by the age of 3, a preschooler's vocabulary consists of an approximately 2,000 – 4,000 words and by age 5, approximately 5,000 – 8,000 words'. Therefore, these amounts of words show that the preschool children also have oral language ability and it is a strong link to their success in learning to read and write.

In order to promote early literacy to the preschool children, parents themselves are as the role models. They are the readers and influence their children to be interested in reading. As mentioned by Demise (2001), 'parents who were readers encouraged reading for leisure to their young children'. This behaviour is also supported by Stainthorp and Hughes (2000) that parents might wish to include information on 'reading to their child' and 'they took daily newspapers, Sunday newspapers, magazines and comics'. Therefore, in order to catch the children in reading, the parents themselves are the readers.

In relation to the parents' roles in developing early literacy, home environment also promotes the early literacy to the preschoolers. As stated by Kalson (2001), 'reading begins at home with parents who read to their babies, toddlers and preschoolers every day. Here, the parents' role is as the reader for their children. They do shared reading with their preschoolers and create the reading environment such as sharing books, notes, lists and environmental print. Based on reading environment that created at home, it will be gradually encourage the preschoolers to love reading.

In order to understand the parents' roles in developing reading habit in their preschool children, the appropriate materials are needed to support their literacy development. The materials uses are very important as they become a bridge to arouse the preschool children to be interested in early reading habits. Hence, parents should know that the appropriate reading materials can support their preschool children in the literacy development.

Lin (2001) views that 'story times is the best way when they are short' (5 – 10 minutes) because the very young children have 'very short attention spans'. Other materials that has suggested are cardboard books, nursery rhymes, books with photographs or drawing of animals, people, and brightly coloured objects. These materials can be used for activities which the 'children learn to give attention on words and pictures (Neuman and Bredekamp, 2000).

In Malaysia, parents also have given a criterion in choosing the books for their preschool children. As stated by Small (1996), parents prefer the books have pictures for their children. The young children tend to like colours and pictures. Therefore, based on the preferred books stated, parents also have their roles to choose the appropriate reading materials for their young children.



In providing appropriate reading materials for developing early literacy, parents also obtain the materials by purchasing books or regularly bring their children to the library as well as they themselves as the membership. Based on the research done by Stainthorp and Hughes (2000), it was mentioned that 'buying habits' are one way parents get the reading materials. It was reported that The Young Early Readers' families gave positive information about buying books. Some of them are 'members of book clubs, frequently visited bookshops, also some of them buying second hand books and bought a lot of their books from car boot sales'. Hence, parents get the books through purchasing them in many ways.

Besides that, parents have the roles to bring their children visiting library regularly. This is also one of the ways they can get reading materials for their children. As stated by Stainthorp and Hughes (2000), 'the parents who take their children to the library are signaling that libraries are places to be valued'. Therefore, library is the resource to provide reading materials for the parents and their preschool children.

As reading is a skill to gain information and knowledge, parents aware that a child's potential for success in schools begins in his or her early age before she or he enters into a formal education. According to Adam (1990), 'before formal instruction is begun, children should possess a broad, general appreciation of the nature of print. Therefore, a child's success in learning to read in his or her formal education appears to be the best 'predictor of his or her ultimate success in schooling' (Adams, 1990, p. 1).

## **1.2 Research Problems**

Knowing that Malaysian has poor reading habit, every parent is required to have awareness about the importance of reading for gaining information and

knowledge. Small (1998), found that literate Malaysians only read two books per year. It is an indication on the reading habit among Malaysians. Pandian (1997), 'a large group of non-readers who prefer to spend their leisure time watching television, listening to the radio or taking part in any of the many forms of recreation' (p. 9). This statement shows that Malaysians less spend their time for leisure reading.

In relation to promote early literacy, availability of the books for the preschoolers is difficult for the parents to obtain. As reported by Small (1998) that 32% of Malaysians are viewed that the children's materials are insufficient. This percentage shows that the insufficient of children's reading materials should be highlighted.

The price of the books is also considered as problem for the parents to buy books. Small (1998) states that there are two types of reading materials for the children which is the first type is specialized guides for those who teach children how to read. This type is considerably expensive. The second type is the reading materials for children themselves to read. Based on the types of reading materials mentioned, the first type may be affordable for the parents who have highly income and live in urban area. However, the parents who have low income area may not afford to get the high quality books for their children.

The library also plays an important role in providing the reading materials to the preschoolers. It is a resource for the parents to get high quality books or appropriate books for their children. As reported by Small (1998), there are 1,148 public libraries in Malaysia. However, this amount does not reflect they have provided sufficient reading materials for the preschoolers.

In relation to develop reading in early years of preschool children, the researcher focuses on Asajaya District as the place for research study. Then, the researcher also

needs to investigate the parents' roles in the Asajaya District in developing reading habits of their preschool children.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the parents' roles in developing early reading habit of their preschool children in the Asajaya District. This research aims to find out the parents' roles in developing early reading habit of their preschool children. This research also aims to identify the types of materials available for preschool children. Finally, it also aims to find out the factors that affect the parents in developing early reading habit of their preschool children.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the research objectives explained in previous section, the following are the research questions as guidance in this study:

- i) What are the parents' roles in developing early reading habits of their preschool children?
- ii) What types of reading materials accessible for the preschool children?
- iii) What are the parents' modes in obtaining the reading materials for their preschool children?
- iv) What are the factors that affect the parents in developing early reading habit of their preschool children?

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is useful for the Samarahan Division Council because it is one of the channels to improve the facilities in the Asajaya District. Instead of facilities provided, reading materials are considered as the needed facilities that can be used for the people in the Asajaya District. However, within this technology era, reading is no longer confined as the printed materials such as books, magazines and newspapers. However, reading can be done through electronic media such as television or computer. Therefore, these facilities should be considered by the town planner when they making a planning to improve the facilities.

Based on the parents' support towards encouraging their preschoolers in their early reading habit, the town planner can increase the budget in order to provide more reading materials for the preschoolers. Therefore, all parents are able to obtain the high quality and appropriate reading materials for their preschoolers. With the sufficient budget from the town planner, the library can organize the activities for preschool children which involve the parents. Besides that, the electronic media can be provided as well as to expose the preschoolers to informative world.

The findings from this study also will give awareness to the parents that their roles are very important in developing early reading habit of their preschool children. It may not a financial problem as the reason for getting the reading materials for their children but there are other ways such as provided reading materials that supply by the District Council to village library. Therefore, it is accessible for the parents to get the reading materials for their preschool children.

As Malaysian's aspiration to become an Information-Rich Society, these findings also will reveal the importance of developing early reading habit of the preschool children before they come into formal education. Furthermore, reading

does not for exam purpose only but it is for gaining knowledge, for pleasure and long life habit.

## **1.6 Operational Definition of Terms**

### **1.6.1 Reading Habit**

In this study, reading habit refers to the voluntarily act of reading that is done repeatedly, then it becomes as automatically action by an individual. As reading becomes a habit, an individual tends to feel eager to read in any kinds of reading materials. According to Abeyrathna & Zainab (2004), reading is an activity that is considered as a habit when it is done again and again. Then reading habit is often measured by the amount of reading materials read.

### **1.6.2 Parents' Roles**

In this study, parents' roles refer to their participations in developing early reading habits of their preschool children. This is supported by Slegers (1996) that parents' roles refer to the adults who are responsive to their young children's interest and sensitive to their current level of language development.

### **1.6.3 Preschooler**

In this study, a preschooler is a young child that is 3 – 5 years old. According to U.S Department of Education (1993), it was categorized that a preschooler is a child that aged in 3 – 5 years old.



aim and the research objectives section, the aims of the study are mentioned and followed by the research questions that for guiding the study. In the significance of the study, the findings also discussed briefly. The operational definitions of terms are defined as they can be understood in this study. Finally, it is mentioned about the scope of the study. For the next chapter, the literature review will be discussed critical review previous findings by other researchers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on literature reviews that are related to this study. The chapter are based on 'the parents' role in developing early reading habit in their preschool children. Then, it reviews on types of available reading materials for the preschool children. Then, it highlights the evidence for parents' role in choosing the reading materials. Finally, it reviews the factors that affect the parents in developing early reading habit of their preschool children.

### 2.2 Parents' Role in Developing Early Reading Habits in their Preschool

Children

As mentioned by Albert (1996), parents' role is to be the "first and most important" in their young children's learning and activities in their home and in the language environment. Thus, in this section the researcher will discuss how the parents' role support their preschool children's in learning a early reading habit.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Chapter Overview**

This chapter focuses on literature reviews that are related to this study. The reviews are based on the parents' roles in developing early reading habit in their preschool children. Then, it reviews on types of available reading materials for the preschool children. This chapter also reviews the parents' modes in obtaining the reading materials. Finally, it reviews the factors that affect the parents in developing early reading habits of their preschool children.

#### **2.1 Parents' Roles in Developing Early Reading Habits in their Preschool Children**

As mentioned by Slegers (1996), parents' roles refer to the 'adults who responsive to their young children's interest and sensitive to their current level of language development'. Thus, in this section the researcher will discuss how the parents' roles support their preschool children to be interested in early reading. It is

hypothesized that family literacy activities is one of the factors to promote early reading habit. The following literature reviews will explain and support this hypothesis.

In a research article by Stainthorp & Huges (2000), the study was presented about the literacy activities participated in by the parents. A sample of 29 families is divided into 2 groups, Young Early Readers' families which consist 15 children and 14 children are from Non Early Readers' families. By using structured questionnaire, parents from 29 families have responded. The findings in this study showed that seven literacy activities were done by the parents. There were families' library usages, buying habits, parental reading activities, parental writing activities, games and parental reading to children. The family library usages showed that libraries are places to be valued in developing literacy for their children.

Furthermore, libraries are the environment that can encourage children to read. The result through buying habit showed that family supported the children in purchasing books. There were other ways the parents get the reading materials such as through book sales and bookshops. For parenting activities, two sets of parents spent their pastime with reading. This result indicated that the children who have parents are readers will behave as they were. Games also considered as the literacy element in this finding.

The finding also showed that parents played their roles do shared reading with their children. It was reported that most of the children were exposed to print from birth. Based on the findings mentioned, it supported the hypothesis that family literacy activities are one of the factors in promoting early reading habit. The young children those who were exposed to the literate environment will be interested in their early reading. Furthermore, literate activities that provided by parents at home will inculcate the young children that reading is a leisure activity.

Next, the point is addressed according to parents' as the role models. In a research article by Pandian and Ibrahim (1997), the study attempted to investigate the home and school literacy and their relationship with the emergent literacy knowledge among the schooling students. They were two hundred (257) matriculation students responded the questions. Based on the finding, parents also influence on the reading skills and habits of the children. It showed that the formation of reading habit came from the parents' themselves. Parents who did shared reading with their children will motivate them to love reading.

Therefore the findings in this study supported that parents as the motivators for their children. However, in this findings also showed that encouragement is a helpful influence but it is quite strong to say that parents are the motivators through encouragement. Encouragement can be said as the parents' motivation to develop reading habits of their children.

Taken together, the findings point out that parents as the motivators and family literacy activities at home are very important in developing reading habits of the young children. (Pandian & Ibrahim, (1997) ; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000). It can be assumed from these literature reviews that parents can influence their young children's reading habits.

## **2.2 Types of Readings Materials Accessible for Preschool Children**

Sleger (1996) as noted from Lin (2001) had identified the types of reading materials for preschool children. The common books for preschool children are story books and nursery rhymes. The researcher also listed the types of preschool children's books that can be used such as books with photographs or drawing of animals and books with brightly coloured objects. Based on the criteria given for

preschool children's book, it can be said that preschool children tend to be attracted to colourful books that contain pictures.

In the survey conducted by Small (1996), it was found that 24% of Malaysian parents preferred books with pictures for their young children. As mentioned earlier, children are mostly attracting to colourful pictures. However, 15% of parents choose story or fiction or fairy tales as second important in criteria selection of the books for their children. The result from this study indicated Malaysian parents choose the books that contents pictures for their children. This element can be found in children story books, colouring books and alphabetical books. Therefore, these kinds of books are listed as reading materials in this study.

Parents' also consider the price in choosing book for their children. According to Small (1996), it was noted that 2% of the parents give priority to price is 'not too expensive'. Another finding showed that 11% of parents gave priority to the simplicity of the books and can arouse children's in reading. Further, it was stated that 10% of parents choose the books based on the age.

In the longitudinal study by Weinberger (1996), it aims to provide the detail about home literacy experiences of children in earlier age. There were families which all the parents agreed to be interviewed. In this study, the children were in aged of 3. The findings indicated that parents also use newspapers and magazines in order to form early reading habit for their children. Newspapers and magazines were the types of reading materials that parents use for their children in home literacy.

Similarly in a study done by Purcell-Gates (1996) in the USA and Cairney et al, (1996) in Australia, the result showed that literacy events were related within everyday literacy practice such as reading TV guides, reading TV subtitles, reading newspapers, magazines and comics or playing computer games. As comic is one of