

**PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S READING: A CASE STUDY  
IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK**

AMAL HAYATI BT. MUHAMMAD

This final project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree  
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Received for examination by:

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(Mdm. Lily Law)

Date:

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Grade
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## Statement of originality

The work described in this final year project, entitled  
**“Parents’ Involvement in Children’s Reading: A Case Study in Universiti  
Malaysia Sarawak”**

is to be the best of the author’s knowledge that of the author except where due  
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(Date submitted)

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Amal Hayati bt. Muhammad  
11617

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## ABSTRACT

### **PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S READING: A CASE STUDY IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK**

Amal Hayati Bt. Muhammad

This study aimed to investigate parents' involvement in children's reading at home. The objectives of the study were to find out how parents are involved in their children's reading, to examine the selection of reading materials by parents, to find out parents' perception towards reading aloud to children and to find out parents' perception on their involvements in children's reading. This study involved twenty parents that were selected from a homogeneous group which were lecturers in University Malaysia Sarawak and all of them were in the same profession and in the education field. The parents were selected based on the criteria of having at least one preschool child below seven years old and they were involved in their children's reading at home. In this study, semi structured interviews were employed as the data collection method. The first objective found out nine ways in which parents were identified involved; parents read to their children, provided their children early exposure to reading, discussed with their children what they read, monitored their children's reading, provided guidance if their children had difficulty in reading, took their children to the library, bought books for their children, read aloud to their children and parents were a good role model for reading. The second objective found that parents were concerned with their children's reading by providing lots of reading materials at home for their children's reading convenience and preferred to purchase reading materials for their children. The third and fourth objectives found out that parents had positive perceptions toward reading aloud strategy and had positive perceptions on their involvements in children's reading.

## ABSTRAK

### **PENGLIBATAN IBU BAPA DALAM PEMBACAAN ANAK-ANAK: SATU KES KAJIAN DI UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK**

*Amal Hayati Bt. Muhammad*

*Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penglibatan ibu bapa dalam pembacaan anak-anak di rumah. Objektif kajian ini ialah untuk mengenalpasti bagaimana penglibatan ibu bapa dalam pembacaan anak-anak, untuk mengenalpasti pemilihan bahan bacaan anak-anak oleh ibu bapa, untuk mengenalpasi persepsi ibu bapa terhadap strategi membaca iaitu 'reading aloud' kepada anak-anak dan untuk mengenalpasti persepsi ibubapa terhadap penglibatan mereka dalam pembacaan anak-anak. Kajian ini melibatkan ibu bapa yang dipilih dari kumpulan yang sama iaitu dikalangan pensyarah di Universiti Malaysia Sarawak dan mereka tergolong dalam bidang kerja yang sama iaitu dalam bidang pendidikan. Mereka juga dipilih berdasarkan dua kriteria lain iaitu mereka mesti sekurang-kurangnya mempunyai seorang anak yang berumur tujuh tahun ke bawah dan mereka mestilah terlibat dalam pembacaan anak mereka. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah temubual sebagai alat pengumpulan data. Objektif yang pertama mendapati bahawa terdapat sembilan cara ibu bapa terlibat dalam pembacaan anak-anak iaitu membaca kepada anak-anak, mendedahkan anak-anak kepada aktiviti membaca sejak kecil, membincangkan setiap bahan bacaan yang dibaca, memantau pembacaan anak-anak, memberi tunjuk ajar jika mereka menghadapi masalah dalam membaca, membawa anak-anak mereka ke perpustakaan, membeli buku untuk anak-anak, 'reading aloud' kepada anak-anak dan menjadi contoh yang baik kepada anak-anak. Objektif yang kedua mendapati ibu bapa begitu mengambil berat tentang pembacaan anak-anak dengan menyediakan jumlah buku yang banyak di rumah untuk mempermudah aktiviti membaca anak-anak. Ibu bapa juga lebih cenderung untuk membeli bahan bacaan untuk anak-anak berbanding meminjam dari perpustakaan. Objektif yang ke tiga dan ke empat mendapati ibu bapa mempunyai persepsi yang positif terhadap strategi membaca 'reading aloud' dan juga mempunyai persepsi yang positif terhadap penglibatan mereka dalam pembacaan anak-anak.*

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the background of the study, research problem, objectives of the study, research question, significance of the research, definition of terms, and scope of the study. The background of the study involves discussing the importance of parental involvement in children's reading development. Section on research problem highlights in details the specific problem that this study is interested to explore. The research question and objectives draw specific aspects which this study sought to investigate in-depth. Subsequently, section on the significance of the study explains how the findings may be useful for specified group of participants, particularly parents and children. Section on the definition of key terms involves defining keywords which are widely used through out the study and the definitions are based on the context of this study. Finally, the scope of the study explains boundaries of what this study covers and does not cover.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

The involvement of parents on their children's education is one of the important determinants of children's success in school. The degree of parental involvement in children's educational process both at home and at school is associated with the children's school achievement. Heath and Teale (as cited in Nielsen & Monson, 1996) stated that the research had proved that the literacy development of children is influenced by the quantity and quality of literacy-related experiences in the home environment.

Many researches (Dixon, Stuart, Masterson & Quinlan, 1998; Evans & Shaw, 2008; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2001) demonstrate that parents' involvements are positively related to children's achievement. It shows that the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the more positive the effects on children's achievement. There are strong indications that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Programs which involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001).

Learning to read is an important educational goal for children. The ability to read opens up new worlds and opportunities. It enables children to gain new knowledge, enjoy literature, and do everyday things that are part and parcel of modern life. Many, but not all, learn to read as children. Some children might need additional help to acquire reading skill. In Malaysia, as far as children's education is concerned, parents' involvement in children's reading is vital for their reading development. Study after study has shown that parents' involvement in education is a powerful predictor of how that child is going to do in school. Past research

demonstrates that when parents encourage children to practice reading at home, the children make significant gains in reading achievement compared to those who are not (Caminiti as cited in Kaplan, 1992).

An effective involvement of parents in children's reading is an educational process. The desire to have their children be successful in education is a catalyst that causes parents to become increasingly involved in their children's reading. Parents can be involved in children's reading in many ways and every single participation will affect their children's reading development. It is also widely held that beneficial effects on children's reading are gained from parents reading to their children (Dixon, Stuart, Masterson & Quinlan, 1998). Parents play a vital role in the development of young children. The home is where children first encounter language and literacy. Parents can provide experiences to help young children gain a strong foundation. The language and literacy richness of the home in the preschool years has been shown to benefit children's performance in areas that relate to school success. Working with parents to enrich home environments, through family or intergenerational literacy programs, increases the chance that preschoolers will succeed once they reach school (Wiegel & Martin, 2008).

Children will read better when they experienced their parents read stories to them (Weinberger, 1996). There is no question that reading aloud to children is a good practice. But new research is showing that certain conditions surrounding read-aloud will ensure the greatest benefits. When adults read aloud, they model the characteristics of fluent, independent reading. Children not only learn about the many, varied printed materials available to them, but also the reasons why anyone would want to learn to read in the first place. When they hear a variety of texts such as stories, poetry, jokes, recipes, and information, children learn that reading has a practical purpose, as well as an enjoyable one. Reading aloud to children builds awareness about the importance of reading and fires their desire to learn to read

(Reutzel, 2001). While the family is involved reading the books on a specific topic there should be time for family members to discuss what they are reading and learning an activity that would be relevant to the topic. (Richardson, Miller, Richardson & Sacks, 2008).

Children reading well were those whose literacy was resourced at home when parents allowing them experience of favourite books (Weinberger, 1996). Parents are responsible in selecting good reading materials for their children. When selecting books for children, the following criteria must be considered: the books should provide positive parent-child interaction and meets their needs, enhance conversation between parent and child, and create high interest and discussion. These books could be based on controversial topics, favorite childhood stories of the parent or imaginative and well illustrated books. The books can be categorized based on the three levels of the strategy which are the easiest book should be a breeze for the child to read, the in-between book should be just right for the reader, and the third should be a challenging read (Richardson *et al.*, 2008).

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Reading is one of the major skills that a child needs to acquire in order to be successful in academic. In this new global era, reading is fundamental and family plays a great role in ensuring children's reading development. Foundations of Literacy Study conducted by the University of Nevada claims that although reading and writing abilities continue to develop throughout the lifespan, the early childhood years from birth to eight years old are the most important period of literacy development (Wiegel & Martin, 2008).

Of all academic subjects, research shows reading is the most sensitive to family influence. In 1994, the College Board established a correlation between

reading and a family's support for their children's efforts. Reading achievement is felt to be more dependent on learning activities in the home than either math or science. Moreover, success in reading appears to be the gateway to success in other academic areas as well (Colker, 2008).

Most parents want their children to be successful readers but some parents are not confident in how to provide information, or using strategies and activities to promote reading success (Richardson *et al.*, 2008). They proposed the four steps in family involvement include selecting books, categorizing books, preparing materials, and scheduling the use of the material. According to Weinberger (1996) in his study of children's early literacy, children with literacy difficulties owned fewer books, were less likely to read to themselves or their parents, and generally had less support for literacy at home. Indeed, children spend most of their time outside school, and much of their literacy learning occurs within a family context at home.

There are a large number of previous studies that were conducted generally on parents' involvement in children's learning. However for this study, the researcher found out the involvement of parents specifically in children's reading at home. This study was conducted in the different setting which is in Kuching Sarawak, the east coast of Malaysia with using semi-structured interviews as the instrument of data collection. The researcher focused on many ways of parental involvement to promote reading to children such as take them to the library, get them a library card, buy them books, read to them or read with them, and talking about the books, newspapers, and magazines they are reading.

### **1.3 Research Question**

- a) What are parental involvements in children's reading at home?



In order to answer this research question, these are the objectives of the study:

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

- a) To find out how parents are involved in their children's reading.
- b) To examine the selection of reading materials by parents.
- c) To find out parents' perception towards reading aloud to children.
- d) To find out parents' perception on their involvements in children's reading.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

The importance of conducting this study is to help parents realize the importance of their involvements to their children's reading development. The reason why this aspect of parents' involvement is chosen to be studied is that to improve it in other ways and to ensure the future improvement in children' reading development.

The findings of this study would help to bring awareness to parents that their roles are very important to ensure their children's reading development. Moreover, it would help to direct parents to fully involve in their children's reading activities at home. When parents are involved in their children's reading, they can encourage their children in many ways such as provide children with variety of books, get them to library, read to them, talk about what they read and so on. This strategy would in turn lead to improve achievement of their children in Education.

In addition, this study would help parents to realize the importance of choosing the appropriate reading materials for their preschool children. It is important for parents to know the types of material which are suitable for young children in order to attract their children to read. Parents would need to consider some characteristics of books that are preferred by young children in order to gain children's interest to read books.

This study also would help parents to realize the advantages of reading aloud to their children. This reading strategy would in turn lead to improve children's motivation to read, bring benefits in children's reading development and lead them to be successful readers ahead.

It is hoped that the results of this study would benefit parents to increase their awareness on their involvement in their children's reading. Thus it will give a positive effect on children's literacy development as well as enhances their achievement.

## **1.6 Definition of Terms**

### **1.6.1 Parents' Involvement**

According to Catsambis (1998), involvement of parents includes parent obligation such as expectation for their child, parental control of the child TV viewing and supervision of academic or behavioral activities, parent-school communicating regarding student's behavior and academic performance, support of school such as volunteering and fund raising, learning activities at home such as private lesson, decision making in Parent-Teacher Association and collaborating with community. According to Cotton and Wikelund (2001), the term "parent involvement" includes several different forms of participation in education and with the schools. Parents can support their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations such as parent-teacher conferences. They can become more involved in helping their children improve their schoolwork by providing encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, modeling desired behavior, monitoring homework, and actively tutoring their children at home.

For this study, the term ‘parent’s involvement’ holds several different forms of participations of parents in their children’s reading. This term includes parents and their children sharing in literacy leisure activities such as going to the library, get their children a library card, buying books, read aloud to their children or read with their children, provide guidance, monitoring and talking about the books, newspapers, and magazines they are reading.

### **1.6.2 Parents**

According to Pate and Andrews (2006), the term ‘parents’ refers to biological parents, adoptive and stepparents, and primary caregivers (e.g., grandmother, aunt, brother).

The definition of parents in my study is parent (mother/father) who have children aged below seven. This group of parents should have at least one child who is below seven years old and has not attended primary school. The basic requirement for this study is parents must be involved in their children’s reading.

### **1.6.3 Children**

The definition of children in my study is young kids below seven years old. This group of children has not entered primary school yet.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

This study did not take into consideration the race of the participants. It did not study the perception of parents of one particular race. This study only looked at the academic background of the participants. These twenty parents were selected

from homogeneous group which are lecturers in University Malaysia Sarawak. All of them are in the same profession and in the education field. The parents were selected based on the criteria of having at least one preschool child below seven years old and they are involved in their children's reading at home. Thus, this implies that the results are only valid to this group of parents.

## **1.8 Chapter Review**

This chapter has discussed the background of the study which comprise of the importance of parental involvement in children's reading development. Besides, this chapter has highlighted in details the specific problem that this study is interested to explore. Specific aspects that this study sought to investigate in-depth were outlined in the research question and objectives of the study. This chapter has also explained how the findings may be useful for specified group of participants, particularly parents and children. In addition, the definitions of term were presented based on the context of this study and finally this chapter explained the boundaries of what this study covers and does not cover. In the next chapter, the researcher will do a review of related literature about this study and will discuss more in depth on the topic being studied.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Chapter Overview**

This chapter reviews the literature on parents' motivation on their involvement in children's learning, types of parents' involvement in children's reading, home reading literacy activities for children, home environment factor on literacy development and caregivers-child interaction in reading.

#### **2.1 Parents' Motivation on Their Involvement in Children's Learning**

A study (Grace & Mason, 2008) on parent's motivation of involvement in children's learning claims that parents' motivations to be involved in their children's learning evolved in three themes which are parents need to develop relationships, parents need to influence their children's learning and education is the key for children to achieve success. Participants chosen in this study were individuals who had full attendance in the family literacy workshops, received all the family literacy

packages, and had taken advantage of the one-on-one support from the family literacy specialists. At each family literacy workshop, every participating family would receive a family literacy package. The package included educational materials that directly related to what they had just learned at the workshop. The researchers find out that the participants in this study demonstrated a strong need to make a big effort towards their children's learning. These parents were motivated to empower themselves with knowledge (competency building), and enhance their children's learning. They are most wanted to work with their children however they indicated that they are lacked of family literacy strategies to do so. This is one of the primary reasons they participated in the family literacy program. Regarding the parents' views about their children's education, they indicated that their children were not born into a legacy of success. Similarly, these parents strive to be involved in their children's education and make things better for them. By attending the family literacy workshops and learning various methods, they believed that their children's educational attainment can be increased.

Similarly, The article of *Literacy Bags to Encourage Parental Involvement* by Richardson, Miller, Richardson and Sacks (2008) find out that parents were very positive about the literacy projects and increased their understanding of the importance of time spent reading and interacting with their children. There are several variations of literacy bags that may be used with families to encourage their involvement. The bags described are different types that can be developed and be made available as a guide for families to be involved in children's reading. Literacy bags exposed them to the variety and breadth of children's literature. Children and parents learned about each other's interests and abilities, while children made positive progress in becoming lifelong readers.

## 2.2 Types of Parents' Involvement in Children's Reading

There are six types of parental involvement which includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community. Within this framework, effective parental involvement practices are suggested to engage parents in children's learning. Examples of practices include family education programs, home visits, classroom volunteer programs, PTO/PTA involvement, and conferences (Epstein as cited in Grace & Mason, 2008).

A study by Ediger (2008) noted some problems that parents faced when they get involved in children's reading which are how to choose library books for home reading, how to read aloud to young children at home so they become enthused readers, how to assist pupils in the home setting to recognize unknown words, how to guide pupils to understand and attach meaning to what is being read, how to encourage pupil reading activities in the home setting as well as at school, how to assist pupils to reflect upon what has been read, how to motivate pupils in desiring to do more reading, how to provide a learning environment in the home setting to facilitate pupil reading, how to involve older siblings in helping young learners in reading achievement, and how to assist pupils in test taking when state mandated test are forthcoming.

A longitudinal study of children's early literacy experiences at home and later literacy development at home and school by Weinberger (1996) claims that parents can be involved in children's reading by providing their children with access to reading and writing materials, buy them books and read to their children. Literacy experiences of 42 children at age 3, 5 and 7 were investigated, and the relationship of home factors to literacy development explored. The findings suggest that parents' interactions with their children had a positive influence on later literacy development.

Those children with least experience of books at home at age three (without favourite books, not having access to library books, and without being read to from storybooks) were children who faring less well with their reading at school at age seven (Weinberger, 1996).

### **2.3 Home Reading Literacy Activities for Children**

The single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills that is required for reading appears to be reading aloud to children regularly and interactively (Adams, 1990). One of the most effective ways of improving communication is inculcating the love of reading in the family. This involves both reading aloud and silently which should lead to a discussion that will enhance the literacy development of all members of the family (Richardson, Miller, Richardson & Sacks, 2008).

Family reading activities comprise of children interaction with adults in writing and reading situations, activities where the children were able to explore print independently and experiences where the children would observe adults modeling literate behavior (Teale and Sulzby, as cited in Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000).

A study on home storybook reading in primary or second language with preschool children had been conducted by Roberts (2008) to examined how providing either primary or English language storybooks for home reading followed by classroom storybook reading and vocabulary instruction in English influenced English vocabulary acquisition. The participants in the study were preschool children from low socioeconomic status families, whose primary language was either Hmong or Spanish. The study was guided by a theoretical framework which suggests that home storybook-reading experiences followed by classroom English-language storybook reading and vocabulary instruction on the same books could constitute an effective model for fostering the vocabulary acquisition of preschool English-