The Effects of Parents' Assistance on Children's Reading Performance

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Abstract. The objective of this research was to find out the relationship between how parents help their kids with reading and how well the children can read. This was done among students aged 7 to 18 in Guangzhou, China. A survey that involved 94 participants in local libraries was carried out. Data on children's reading behaviors, how parents were involved in their reading, and performance in language exams were collected. The results showed that there was a big link between how regularly parents assisted their children in reading and the kids' academic performance, particularly in Chinese and English. It turned out that those who did their reading consistently with their parents, either at home or library, scored more as (90-100) or Bs (80-89) compared to those without such regular parental support. It was interesting to note that most parents' involvement entailed just being quiet while the child read, rather than participating in shared reading aloud which is commonly thought to be more effective. Other factors like what books are available at home or even how educated the parent is did not make any significant impact on how well the child performed in reading within this group of students from Guangzhou, China. The study suggests that regular shared reading can be a very good activity even if it is for a short time to develop children's literacy in a positive way. The research underscores the critical value of consistent and constructive parental participation as part of kids' reading culture molding and skill development. Teachers can help parents through sharing effective shared reading strategies and materials. It is important to note that future research should use objective measures plus longitudinal designs to explore better ways of helping parents provide support through reading. This work adds to literature on parent involvement in child literacy with its own recommendation perspective, meant not only for scholars but also families and educators.

Keywords: parental reading assistance, children's reading performance, literacy development, shared reading, academic achievement.

1. Introduction

Parents' assistance in reading plays a significant role in the learning process of children, especially in their reading. To improve the reading skills of children, the Parents' Assistance in Reading (PAIR) helps to promote assistance in particular areas of reading and strengthen and improve the weak areas of the children's reading performance [1]. Many research indicates that parents' involvement in reading assessment can help children to improve their reading and language ability. The more shared reading with parents reported, the better word reading skills the children may have [2]. Meanwhile, the children's relationship with parents as well as family socioeconomic status will have a close correlation with the children's reading skills and interest [3]. Generally, PAIR influences children's reading in a variety of aspects. For example, it strengthens and develops reading skills for children, enhances parents and children relationship, and increases motivation to interact with parents.

Parents must be aware of the importance of PAIR. Knowing that children need to have assistance reading, parents can contribute to developing children's reading performance. The survey is about an investigation on students aged 7 to 18 visiting The Guangzhou Children's Library. For the survey, at least 50 questionnaires were needed to get enough data for the credibility and trustworthiness of the article. To know the students' reading performance, we would record students' Chinese and English scores from their final exams. This approach is being used for understanding whether the time and frequency of reading with parents affects children's overall reading performance.

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate and confirm the effectiveness of parents' assistance in children's reading ability and their related final scores. Furthermore, it aims to identify the related family factors that affect parents and children's reading assistance, such as using the correct reading method to accompany and develop a 'home literacy environment'. The survey results can potentially be used for further study in many other aspects, including the development of children's reading ability, the improvement of the family education process, and the reading interventions developed by parents for their children.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Methods of Parental Reading Assistance

A previous study had pointed out the benefits of parental companionship in reading for children's self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation [1]. Parents play a key role in helping children strengthen their reading skills, identifying weaknesses and even providing reading materials. Their assistance significantly influences both oral and silent reading; when reading with parents, children tend to focus more on the content being read and thus comprehend better. Moreover, parents can offer motivation and create opportunities for children's success as they attempt higher-level books to read, which is highly essential during this process.

In terms of primary school children, parents are advised to alternate reading paragraphs or even pages, assisting with challenging words and playing word games that would make the content more understandable [3]. Additionally, they should motivate independent choice of books, establish a cozy reading atmosphere, talk about the book's content and raise questions related to comprehension. For young readers at elementary level, where emergent readers require more interaction with parents, it is important that both parties engage in interesting reading activities which can foster high levels of motivation and interest. This kind of support allows parents to effectively help their children through discussions while encouraging kids to participate in interactions where they can freely express their ideas and reinforce their oral language as well as communication skills.

2.2. Effects on Brain Development

When parents assist their children in reading, it has profound impacts on the development of a child's brain which includes language acquisition and cognitive awareness besides social interactions plus emotional growth and communication milestones [4]. Typically, parents adopt a particular style of speaking with children that involves using high-pitched intonation along with instructions that are shorter or vocalizations/expression that are exaggerated. More frequent oral reading sessions with children enhance brain development for them — thus constructing a stronger basis later on for their own performance in reading and writing.

2.3. Importance of Family and Community Involvement

Major actors including family and community members are vital in the holistic development of a child [5]. Creating an effective reading society calls for more children's reading habit cultivation which should be the basis for innovation, creativity and advanced reading skills. The involvement of family is important in helping children develop good habits: through the process of reading, strengthening relationships within the family (such as shared interests) can also be achieved. The reading environment has impact on children's habits, proficiency and individual capability — parents must therefore realize about creating a suitable environment, with due consideration to partnership.

2.4. Factors Affecting Reading Performance

The study investigates how factors in a home environment, such as the parents' job status and levels of education, can influence the reading performance of students [6]. In nuclear families, children typically perform better academically when parents have higher dual income and are more

educated, with the mother's education level impacting more than that of the father [7]. Although not primary contributing elements, an affirmative family surrounding still has capacity to push up better figures on reading scores.

2.5. Home Literacy Environment

The concept of 'Home Literacy Environment' pertains to the presence of reading materials and how often the family engages in reading activities [8]. The attitude of parents towards cultivating this environment plays a significant role; it should encompass the frequency of reading sessions as well as the quantity of books children have access to. Nevertheless, creating an optimal reading environment has the potential to establish reading as a customary family practice on a regular basis.

When children participate in shared reading, those who are less frustrated tend to be more interested in the material that is read, thus leading to better performance [9]. Educators may have to assist parents in making joint reading enjoyable rather than just an increased frequency of the activity; this underscores the importance of family context and daily reading routines in early literacy development. Studies highlight the association between family characteristics and literacy-oriented activities within the family based on daily routines. Positive attitudes and encouragement during parent-child reading can significantly enhance children's literacy levels with regard to cognitive skill attainment; motivation is indeed an important component that cannot be overlooked during these sessions.

3. Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of parents' reading assistance on children's reading performance and related exam scores. A questionnaire survey and on-site interviews were conducted at libraries in Guangzhou to gather data on students' experiences and perceptions of reading with their parents [10].

3.1. Participants

Participants included 94 students from grades 1-11 and two university students who visited libraries in Guangzhou. They came from different regions but had similar school policies and educational settings. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling at the libraries. Consent was obtained from participants or their guardians before proceeding with the survey.

3.2. Materials

A structured questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data on family reading environment, children's feelings about parental reading assistance, and their language exam scores. The questionnaire consisted of 11 closed-ended questions with multiple-choice options (see Appendix). Responses were coded numerically for analysis. On-site interviews were also conducted to gather qualitative insights to supplement the survey data.

3.3. Procedure

Researchers approached potential participants at the libraries and explained the purpose of the study. Those who agreed to participate were given the questionnaire to complete on the spot. Researchers were available to clarify any questions. After completing the survey, some participants were invited for a brief interview to share more about their reading experiences and habits. Interview notes were taken by the researchers.

3.4. Data Analysis

Questionnaire responses were tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). Cross-tabulations were performed to examine relationships between variables such as

frequency of parental reading assistance and children's exam scores. Interview data were reviewed to identify common themes and illustrative examples to enrich the interpretation of the survey findings.

The combination of quantitative survey data and qualitative interview insights allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of how parents' reading assistance influences children's reading performance and academic outcomes. The findings could inform recommendations for parents and educators on effective strategies to support children's reading development.

4. Results and Discussion

The survey data obtained from 94 students frequenting Guangzhou libraries provide valuable insights into the relationship between parental reading assistance and children's reading performance. As depicted in Table 1, many children (93.6%) expressed enjoyment in reading, with only a small proportion (6.4%) showing little interest. Furthermore, a significant number of children (83.0%) reported having engaged in reading activities alongside their parents, highlighting the prevalence of this practice.

Table 1. Children's enjoyment of reading and experience reading with parents.

Question	Response	Count	Percentage
Do you like reading?	A (like)	88	93.6%
	B (don't like)	6	6.4%
Have you ever read with your parents?	A (yes)	78	83.0%
	B (no)	16	17.0%

A deeper analysis revealed a connection between the regularity of parental reading assistance and children's language exam scores, as detailed in Table 2. Children who frequently read with their parents, either at home or in a library, tended to achieve more as (90-100) or Bs (80-89) in Chinese and English compared to those who did not receive such support regularly. The latter group was more likely to obtain Cs (70-79) or Ds (60-69) in their language exams. This finding suggests that the consistency of parental involvement may be more influential on academic achievement than the total time spent reading together, which aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of a positive socioemotional environment during shared reading [11].

Table 2. Relationship between frequency of parental reading assistance and children's exam scores.

Frequency of reading with parents	Chinese exam scores	English exam scores
Regularly (at home or library)	Mostly As (90-100)	Mostly As (90-100)
	Some Bs (80-89)	Some Bs (80-89)
Not regularly	Mostly Cs (70-79)	Mostly Cs (70-79)
	Some Ds (60-69)	Some Ds (60-69)

Interestingly, the survey data revealed that most of the parental reading assistance (60%) involved parents quietly staying with their children while they read, rather than engaging in interactive activities such as taking turns reading aloud. Some families even resorted to using audiobooks as a substitute for direct parental participation. However, the results did not indicate any significant impact of factors such as the home reading environment or parents' education level on children's reading scores within this sample.

Table 3 presents the relationship between the method of parental reading assistance and children's perception of its helpfulness to their language scores. Children who experienced taking turns reading aloud with their parents (method A) mostly found it helpful to their language scores. In contrast, those who experienced other methods, such as listening to audiobooks (method D), generally perceived these methods as less helpful or had mixed opinions. Children whose parents stayed quietly while they read (method C) or only had their parents read to them (method B) had mixed perceptions of helpfulness.

Table 3. Relationship between the method of parental reading assistance and children's perception of its helpfulness to language scores.

Method of parental reading assistance	Perceived helpfulness to language scores
A (Take turns reading the book aloud)	Mostly A (yes)
B (Only parents read)	Mixed A (yes) and B (no)
C (Parents stayed quietly while the child read)	Mixed A (yes) and B (no)
D (Other methods, e.g., listening to audiobooks)	Mostly B (no) or C (so-so)

These findings support earlier studies that emphasized the positive impact of a nurturing socioemotional environment during shared reading on children's interest and enjoyment in reading [11]. Moreover, the results reinforce the notion that children's reading proficiency serves as a determinant of their future reading behaviors, which in turn reciprocally nurture their capabilities [12].

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the current study, which relied on self-reported data from a non-random sample. Future research should employ more objective measures of reading performance and recruit participants from diverse population groups to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into the causal relationship between parental involvement and children's reading success, exploring whether parental participation leads to improved reading outcomes or if successful readers tend to attract more parental involvement.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study have significant implications. It is recommended that parents strive to make shared reading an enjoyable and consistent activity, even if it is brief. Teachers can support this by assisting children in developing strong reading skills and providing materials that facilitate positive parent-child reading interactions. While audiobooks can serve as a supplementary tool, they should not entirely replace the valuable experience of parent-child reading sessions.

In summary, this research contributes to the growing body of evidence highlighting the crucial role of parents in fostering children's reading habits and skills. Although the optimal approach may vary depending on individual family circumstances, the key appears to lie in consistently creating a positive shared reading experience. Further research employing objective measures and longitudinal designs will be instrumental in refining our understanding of the most effective strategies for parental support in reading.

5. Conclusion

A study was conducted to analyze how parental reading assistance impacts children's reading performance and behavior. The findings from a survey of 94 students in Guangzhou libraries indicate that it is not the total time spent but rather the consistency of parental involvement in reading that correlates with higher scores in language exams. Students who regularly read with their parents (either at home or in the library) tended to achieve more A or B grades in Chinese and English as opposed to those without such support, interestingly, the common form of assistance was silence during the

child's reading session. Some families used audiobooks, indicating low effect. Factors like home reading environment and parental education level did not have a significant influence on children's reading scores within this sample population, implying that shared reading, irrespective of its brevity or resource dependence, can be made enjoyable to foster literacy development among children. Parental consideration should focus on fostering a positive socioemotional climate in their children through reading interactions as it enhances motivation and engagement levels. Although audiobooks may provide some assistance, they should not entirely substitute parent-child reading sessions. Teachers can help families by offering advice on appropriate shared reading practices and materials. The future studies using objective measures coupled with longitudinal designs will shed more light on what works best to fine tune the optimal approaches to parental reading guidance. In summary, this research underscores the importance of parents in developing children's reading behavior and skills, indicating that they can have a lasting impact through regular positive involvement.

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Appendix

Questionnaire:

1. What's your grade? What's your gender?
2. Do you like reading?
   A. like B. I don't like C. I don't know
3. Have you ever read with your parents?
   A. yes B. no C. I don't know
4. How, if at all, did your parents read with you?
   A. Take turns reading the book aloud
   B. Only parents

C. When I was reading, my parents stayed with me quietly
D. Others (may be added)
E. don't know

5. Besides your parents, is there anyone else in your family to read with you? If so, who?
A. yes B. no C. I don't know
6. Do your parents have a college degree or above? (Ask your parents.)
A. yes B. no C. I don't know
7. Do you like reading with your parents?
A. like B. I don't like C. I don't know
8. Do you think reading with your parents is helpful to your language score?
A. Yes B. No C. So-so D. I don't know
9. Do you have the habit of going to the library or reading regularly?
A. yes B. no C. I don't know
10. If so, do you think your parents helped you get into the habit of reading regularly?
A. yes B. no C. I don't know
11. If possible, could you write down your English or Chinese score in the final exam?
A. (90-100) B. (80-89) C. (70-79) D. (60-69) E. (under 60)