
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN READING: DOES INVOLVEMENT TRANSLATE TO PERFORMANCE IN KISWAHILI COMPREHENSION AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN, KENYA?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of parental involvement on performance of children aged 5-6 years in Kiswahili reading comprehension in public preparatory schools in Athi- River Zone, Machakos County. The sample size comprised of 100 preparatory school parents, 100 preparatory pupils and four preparatory school teachers. Data were collected using interview guides, pre and post preparatory school reading comprehension test, school archival data and parent's focus group discussion guides. Reliability of research instruments stood at ($r=0.84$) signifying that the instruments were reliable. Based on the findings the study recommended that the government through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should come up with workshops, seminars, training sessions and a reading manual to guide parents on meaningful indulgence in their children's reading at home. The study further recommended mobilization of stakeholders to establish community libraries to make books available to more families.

Keywords: Comprehension, parental involvement, performance, elementary schools

INTRODUCTION

Reading plays an integral part in the education of individuals, especially young children. It is so important that it cannot be eliminated from the education process. Reading is a basic life skill which is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and, indeed, throughout life (Willinsky, 2017). Without the ability to read properly, opportunities for personal fulfilment and job success will inevitably be lost. Reading provides an opportunity to develop children's minds and this helps them form enduring habits and character (Arthur, 2015). It is significant that children at their formative age should acquire love for books and reading culture, which should start right from birth of a child and the book, can be considered as the third parent to the child (Willinsky, 2017).

Involvement of parents in young children's educational endeavors promote parental engagement and has a major impact on children's academic success and social development (Pomerantz & Monti, 2015). Studies have shown the importance of parent-child activities in contributing to the quality of children's home learning environment (Sammons et al., 2015; Bergen, Zuijen, Bishop

& Jong, 2017). According to Hesketh et al. (2014), programs which directly promote activities for parents and children to engage in together are likely to be most beneficial for young children.

Parents' willingness to delegate part of the care for their children to Early Childhood Education and Care services does not mean that the importance of the parent's role has diminished. It is still widely acknowledged that parental behaviour in the child's first five years is critical for the development of important academic and social skills and abilities (Waller et al., 2015). Educationists recognizes the importance of parental involvement in children's learning in ECDE. However various impediments have been found to exist. Some parents are illiterate implying that they are unable to fully participate in their children's reading development. Many parents are ignorant and do not seem to understand their role in children's reading development and most think that learning to read and write is a function of the teacher and the school. Most parents claim to be so busy and thus do not dedicate any time to engage their children in any reading activities in the home. Moreover most homes do not provide a rich reading environment full of reading materials to expose children to reading (Castro et al., 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parental involvement in children's reading and its benefits

Parents are the first educators the children come in contact with. They are the first teachers and role models for their children, and therefore have a strong influence on their learning. Impacting knowledge to the children through reading at the early stage adds a lot of meaning to their lives (Whalley, 2017). Reading makes them eager to explore things written in books as they grow older, thereby cultivating reading culture and learning about things, places, events and experience (Deal & Peterson, 2016).

Parents' attitudes and support for their children's learning influence performance on literacy tests irrespective of socio-economic status for academic success than other family background variables such as social class, family size and level of parental education (Benner, Boyle & Sadler, 2016). Parents make the greatest difference to achievement through supporting their learning in the home rather than supporting activities in the school (Casey et al., 2018).

This parental activity is associated with strong evidence of benefits for children such as language growth, reading achievement and writing. The enhancement of children's language comprehension and expressive language skills, listening and speaking skills, later enjoyment of books and reading, understanding narrative and story .Children who are read to at an early age tend to display greater interest in reading at a later age (Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2015).

Numerous researches have revealed that reading stories at an early age at home, a popular form of parental engagement has clear benefit in children's reading development. It enhances children's language comprehension and expressive language skills (Boonk, Gijsselaers, HRitzen & Brand-Gruwel, 2018). Oral language developed from parent/child reading predicts later

writing development at a later age (Arnold & Whitehurst, 1994). When parents read to their children they have the opportunity to interact positively with their children and create a pleasurable reading experience, effective quality of interactions foster children's interest in reading. It is the quality of the shared reading experience that determines its effectiveness in nurturing literacy skills. More crucial than whether the parents read to the child every day or less often, is the extent of the child's active participation in these situations (Boonk, Gijsselaers, HRitzen & Brand-Gruwel, 2018).

Parents who introduce their children to books give them a head start in school and an advantage over their peers throughout primary school and Parental support continues to play a crucial role throughout children's and young people's lives: Although parental involvement has the greatest effect in the early years, its importance to children's educational and literacy outcomes continues into the teenage and even adult years (Bergen, Zuijzen, Bishop & Jong, 2017). For example, Whalley (2017) found that parental interest in their child's education was the single most powerful predictor of achievement at age 16.

Developing children's reading and comprehension skills

Development of comprehension skills are developed when learners acquire abilities to use context and prior knowledge to aid and make sense of what one has read and hears (Yule, 2016). Children who can read well and with understanding have automatic interpreting skills, build up vocabulary of sight words, read smoothly and with expression and self-corrects.

For beginning readers, talking about print may be a way to help improve Children's awareness of print (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). According to Greenstein (2016), beginning with letter recognition, parents can read and discuss alphabet books with their children (practicing sounds, identifying letters, relating letters to the child's world – their name, favourite colour etc.). Within story books parents can discuss the concept of words by pointing to words that you read out loud, relating words relevant to the child's life, and pointing out specific words for discussion (that is. "This is the word cat. What letters do you see in cat? What sound does the first letter make? Can you see a word in the book that you know?" (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2018). Later, parents can point out and discuss some of the conventions of print (that is, title, author's name, the start and end of a sentence, breathing between sentences). Discussing print should be included in small amounts when children are interested in talking about it, but not over done to the point of disengaging the child (Strouse & Ganea, 2017).

It is important to choose specific routine points in the reading to pause and engage in discussion about what has happened in the book and what may be about to take place. This action will allow the child to become an active participant and help to develop their active thinking skills. Extending reading time to include creative play centered on the story you are reading correlates with an increase in receptive and expressive vocabulary in preparatory school learners (Strouse & Ganea, 2017).

According to Zhou and Yadav (2017), reading storybooks to young children will familiarize them with story structure which, in turn, should help facilitate their comprehension of stories. Discussion about the text will familiarize the children with strategies that readers use to comprehend text. For example, based on observations of middle income preparatory school children's reading interactions with adults, adult readers guided children's understanding of the text by modelling the use of four sources of information to facilitate comprehension: general knowledge of the world, knowledge of literacy conventions, knowledge of narrative structure, and knowledge of how to respond as members of a reading audience. It was noted that such modelling of strategies occurred even though "instruction was neither the goal nor the context of the story reading" (Snow, 1991) has addressed the importance of certain types of talk about text for story comprehension. In particular, Snow suggested that talk that requires the child to go beyond the immediate text, such as asking a child to predict outcomes or asking to evaluate parts of a story, will foster the type of cognitive skills necessary for higher-level comprehension. Snow (1991) proposes the following as measures of helping children develop reading comprehension: Parents should let children to make predictions about events in the story and what might happen next, while reading; Ask questions about the story (who, what, where, when, and why); When reading with your child one should not forget to ask questions that require your child to read between the lines (Why do you think Bob said that? How would you feel if that happened to you? How do you think Ken felt when he wasn't allowed to play hockey?); the topic of the story should be related to the child by asking questions or discussing the topic before beginning the story. When reading nonfiction books, parents should discuss the topic and questions that parent and the child might have about the topic before reading the text (this will help the child develop a purpose for reading the text – added motivation).

The importance of quality and active parental involvement in children's reading development

According to Snow (1991), the full value of reading with young children is most effectively realized when the child and adult engage in conversations that support interpreting and constructing meaning. The oral language abilities developed through this type of explanatory talk is crucial to literacy development. From a very young age children learn to use sounds and words for an ever-increasing number of purposes. In addition to discovering the power of language to make requests and demands in more subtle and powerful ways, children also begin telling stories about personal experiences and communicating information and ideas. The link between language skills and reading lies in the way children comprehend words by the individual sounds that constitute them. This developing phonemic awareness allows children to expand their language capabilities and therefore assume greater control over their environment. Because oral language acts as a precursor to literacy, we can see why book reading is of such value. With books children encounter a broader range of words than they do in typical conversations. Also, they can construct imaginary worlds using the text and pictures as a springboard, and when discussing books they get a chance to reflect on language and to develop skills interpreting and constructing extended discourse. Shared book reading is beneficial, then, because it involves the child in conversations that interpret and construct meaning (Otto, 2015).

Among the many sources of compelling evidence of the benefits of shared reading is the recent study of the outcomes of different learning environments (Darling-Hammond et al., 2015). Darling-Hammond et al. (2015) undertook a longitudinal study of children who, during their toddler years, had been exposed to share reading in the home against a control group who had not. At the age of five, the children underwent a series of tests to measure their language and literacy skills. The tests included a narrative production task in which the child is asked to tell a story about a group of bears shown in three photographic slides that the evaluator cannot see. The purpose of the task is to evaluate the child's ability to produce a narrative for someone who does not share the same visual field. In addition, the study used a Comprehensive Assessment Programme (CAP) which assesses a child's print skills, such as recognition of print words, identification of alphabet letters, the comprehension of story and print concepts, as well as phonemic awareness and writing skills. The study found that incidence of structured conversation in shared reading was correlated with the child's performance on the CAP, the test of early print skills. In other words, the parent who makes book reading a rich and cognitively challenging event is also helping his or her child to develop a familiarity with how books work and what you need to do to read one. Engaged shared reading was also shown to support the more sophisticated skills of story comprehension and story production. This relationship was evidenced by children's improved performance on telling the bear story and better story comprehension.

Overall, recent research provides powerful evidence to suggest that the language interactions of young children with adults are important determinants of their literacy development. Because literacy development is closely related to the development of language skills, challenging verbal interaction with adults can be a powerful promoter of early literacy for young children. The shared reading experience advocated by Book start speaks to precisely this kind of practice. It is hoped that through the book packs Book start can make a significant contribution to establishing book sharing as a routine feature of family life across the country (Beal's, De Temple & Dickinson, 1994).

METHODS

The study adopted quasi-experimental research design to investigate the influence of parental involvement on pre-school children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. The target population for this study was 17 public pre-schools, 1059 parents, 58 teachers, and 970 children from all public pre-schools in Athi-River Zone, Machakos County. Purposive sampling was used to sample the zone. Experimental and control group were randomly selected to ensure that each school had an equal chance to be in the experimental group. The researcher used the lottery method to obtain both the control and experimental group for research. From the two schools, the pre-unit class, parents and pre-school teachers were purposively selected to participate in the study because they possessed the information needed for this study and moreover pre-school teachers directly or indirectly influenced the children's reading development. The study used Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Assessment tests and record analysis for data collection. Data were analysed using both

quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative analysis was done where the raw scores were keyed into the computer and percentages computed. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse qualitative data. Data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpreted according to the objectives of the study. The results from data analysis were presented using descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

Return Rate

Out of the 104 parents sampled, 96.2% responded to items in the interview guide at baseline. All the sampled parents responded to mid- and end-term focus group discussion schedule, all sampled children responded to pre-test at baseline and post-test at the end of the intervention. All the 4 sampled pre-school teachers responded to and returned the questionnaires.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Parents

Demographic information of parents is focused on their gender, age, educational level, occupation and language proficiency. Table 1 represents the gender, age and language proficiency of the parents sampled.

Table 1. Gender, age and language proficiency of the parents

Demography		%
Gender	Male	37
	Female	63
Age	Below 25	19
	25-40	62
	41-50	20
	51 and above	9
	Language Proficiency	Kiswahili
	English	18
	Local vernaculars	2

From table 2, most of the parents, 63% were female while the male accounted for 37%. A few parents, 19% were below the age of 25 years and a majority 62% aged between 25– 40years. Most of the parents, 80% were proficient in Kiswahili, few, 20% were proficient in English, mother tongue and other languages. Asked to indicate their educational level and occupation, they responded as indicated in Table 2

Table 2. Education and occupation

Demography		%.
Education level of parents	Masters	4
	Bachelor Degree	17
	A level	20
	O level	39
	KCPE	14
	Others	6
Living/Occupation	Civil Servants	18
	Farmers	20
	Casual Worker	35
	Businessmen	23
	others	4

Data in Table 2 indicates that most of the parents, 80% were holding ‘O’ level certificates to master’s degrees, a few, 14% had attained primary education. About 35% were casual workers followed by business men accounting for 23%. From the findings one can deduce that parents who participated in the study had of adequate education background, they were of young age and productive in their occupation which implies that the sample fitted very well with the purpose of the study.

Elementary School Children

The demographic data of pre-school children focused on their gender and age. The school archival record was used to establish the gender and age of the children. Data are presented in Table 3

Table 3. Distribution of Pre-school Children by Gender and Age

Demography		%
Gender	Boys	53
	Girls	47
Age	Below 5yrs	0
	5-6 Years	85
	Above 6 Year	15

Data in Table 3 indicates that there was gender parity among children who participated (boys being 53% while girls being 47%) the respondents and the interviewee. Their average age was 6 years. This is the appropriate age children are required to develop basic language skills.

Teachers

Teachers’ demographic information was focused on their gender, age, highest academic qualifications and the duration of teaching as summarized in Table 3 Their responses on gender showed that majority of teachers 75% were female; a characteristic of many preparatory school

in Kenya. Responses on age indicated that 50% teachers were aged between 20 and 30 years while the other half fell between 31 and 40-year age bracket. Asked to indicate their professional qualifications and teaching experience, they responded as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3 .Teacher Demographics

Demography		%
Gender	Male	25
	Female	75
Education	Degree	25
	Diploma	50
	Certificate	25
Teaching experience	0- 6yr	0
	6-10yrs	25
	11-20yr	50
	21-30	25
	Over 30yrs	0
Age	20-30years	50
	31-40 years	50

Findings in Table 3 indicate that 2(50%) of the teachers had a Diploma in ECDE; one had a Degree in ECE while the other one had a certificate in ECE. This implies that all the teachers had the minimum qualification required to teach in pre-school. Two teachers (50%) had a teaching experience of 11-20years; one teacher had a teaching experience of 21-30 years while another between 6-10 years. This implied that all the teachers had adequate teaching experience which was critical in credibility of teacher research findings provided in this study.

Learners

The demographic data of pre-school children focused on their gender and age. The school archival record was used to establish the gender and age of the children. Data are presented in Table 4

Table 4. Distribution of Pre-school Children by Gender and Age

Demography		%
Gender	Boys	53
	Girls	47
Age	5-6 Years	85
	Above 6 Year	15

Data in Table 4 indicates that there was gender parity among children who participated (boys being 53% while girls being 47% the respondents and the interviewee. Their average age was 6 years. This is the appropriate age children are required to develop basic language skills.

Extent to which parental involvement in reading with children select story books at home influences children’s performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension

The researcher sought to establish the extent to which parental involvement in reading select story books with the children at home influenced performance of pre-school children in Kiswahili reading comprehension. Respondents rated the intensity of their involvement in children’s reading in terms of time and frequency of the reading activities at both baseline and end-line. Parents were, for example, asked to indicate whether they involved themselves in any reading activities with their children at home. Responses from them revealed that a large percentage of parents from the experimental 32 (64%) and 35 (70%) control group did not carry out any reading with the children at home at all. Few parents did read to their preparatory school learners. In other words, parental involvement in children’s reading development was wanting, thus confirming the need for this study and the intervention that was implemented. Parents were asked to indicate the time they read with their children. Their responses are presented in Table 5

Table 5. Frequency of reading with Children

Time the Parents Read	Control (%)	Experimental (%)
At bed time	6	6
After work	6	6
On weekend	6	8
During Holidays	12	16
Never	70	64
Total	100	100

Findings in Table 5 indicate that 70% from the control and 60% from the experimental group at baseline were never involved in reading activities with their children. Few (6%) from both groups did help the children to read after work and at bed time. The percentage of parents who read with their children on weekends was (6%) and (8%) from the control and experimental groups respectively while that of parents who read with their children during holidays was slightly high. In view of these findings on when parents read to the children at baseline, both groups seemed to do poorly in relation to their participation in children’s reading activities. These findings were disheartening in light of the fact that a rich home literacy environment is crucial to the child’s reading orientation and establishment of a reading culture in them.

Parents were asked to indicate the kinds of reading materials found in their homes. Findings are presented in Table 6

Table 6. Reading Materials in Homes

Kind of Reading Materials	Control (%)	Experimental (%)
Children’s Story books	10	14
Reading charts	8	10
Bible /Quran	24	20
Newspapers	36	18
Magazines	10	18
Picture books	8	6
Novels	4	14
TOTAL	100	100

The findings in Table 6 indicate that at baseline there were few reading materials in many homes. Only 10% of the parents in the control group self-reported that they had children’s story books compared to 14% in the experimental group. The situation was no better for reading charts with 8% of parents in the control group and 10% in the experimental group self-reporting that they had them. It was even worse for picture books with 8% of parents in the control group and 6% in the experimental group reporting that they had them. Interestingly, the most common reading materials found in many homes were the Quran or bible, newspapers and magazines. Would these be materials parents can use to share a love of reading in homes? Future research could inquire into this. These results indicate that there were poor home environments that did not fully support children’s reading development which could, in turn, affect children’s performance in reading comprehension. Indeed Bojczyk, Davis and Rana (2016) affirm that storybook reading between a parent and their young child can promote their young child’s vocabulary skills and in time facilitate their reading comprehension; story book reading has a positive relation to listening comprehension skills and positive reading attitude.

The study also sought to establish the number of children’s story books in homes. Findings are presented in Table 7

Table 7. Number of Children’s story Books in Homes

No. of Story Books per Home	Control (%)	Experimental (%)
1-5 Story books	62	54
5-10 story books	14	16
10-20 Story books	24	40
Above 20 story books	4	6
Total	100	100

The data in Table 6 shows that many homes had between 1 and 5 children’s story books, that is, 62 % and 54 % for the control and experimental groups respectively. Two homes from the control and 3 from the experimental group had over 20 children’s story books respectively. This implies that many homes were not print-rich a fact that negatively impacts children’s reading development.

The researcher sought information on the number of Kiswahili storybooks present in children’s home. Pre-school children were asked to indicate the same. Findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Number of Kiswahili Story Books in Homes

	Control (%)	Experimental (%)
1-5 Story books	60	76
5-10 Story books	32	20
10-20 story books	1	4
Over 20 story books	2	0
Total	100	100

The results in Table 8 indicate that 60% of home the respondents and the interviewee from the control and 70% from the experimental group had between 1- 5 children’s Kiswahili story books. Only 2 of homes from the control group had over twenty of such books. These findings, dismal though they are, indicate there were some materials in a language learners were likely to understand; a necessary factor in augmenting learners’ reading development.

To ascertain if any meaningful reading took place in the homes or whether there was any positive reading culture or habits in the homes, parents were asked to comment on the reading habits and culture of family members in general. Findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Family Members’ Reading Habits

	Control (%)	Experimental (%)
Very Good	18	14
Good	16	20
Poor	32	36
Very Poor	34	30
Total	106	100

The findings in Table 9 indicate that 34% families from the respondents and the interviewee control and 30% from the experimental group rated themselves very lowly in terms of their reading habits stating they were very poor with the majority (32%) in the control and 36% in the experimental group indicating reading habits to be poor. Very few parents reported that their reading habits were good or very good as shown in Table 8. Bergen, Zuijen, Bishop and Jong

(2017) asserts that children who grow in a literate environment are likely to develop comprehension skills and vocabulary and are likely to enjoy reading later. Thompson (2016) further explains that reading for children is beneficial to the entire family as it improves interaction of members, develops thirst for books and nurtures a culture of reading.

The researcher also sought information on whether parents ever engaged in any literacy activities themselves in their homes to help cultivate a reading culture in their homes. Parents were asked to indicate any literacy activities they engaged in at home. Findings are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Literacy Activities Parents Get Involved in

Literacy Activities	Control (%)	Experimental (%)
Reading novels	16	10
Writing	22	24
Reading newspapers	36	28
Reading magazine	6	0
Story telling	8	12
buying reading materials	12	26
Total	100	100

The results in Table 10 established that parents got involved in reading activities at home. Newspaper and writing emerged as the most popular literacy activity among parents standing at 36% and 28% for newspaper reading and 22% and 24% for writing for control and experimental groups respectively. Story telling was the least popular activity among the parents as indicated by 8% and 12% of parents from control and experimental groups respectively followed by reading magazines done by none of the parents in the experimental group and only 3(6%) from the control group.

Impact of Parental Involvement in Select Kiswahili Story Book Reading and Shared Reading Activities On Children’s Performance In Kiswahili Reading Comprehension

To establish whether parental involvement in children’s reading at home through intensified reading, active and meaningful interactions and time input in select Kiswahili story book reading and shared reading activities with the children at home influenced children’s performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension, Parents were asked to indicate the benefits shared story book reading activities they had noted in regard to development of children’s reading skills. Their responses are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Parents’ Opinions on Benefits of Shared Reading at end line

	%
Increased vocabularies	54
Improved reading fluency	30
Improved Story comprehension	60
Promote social interactions	70
Improved expressive skills	52
Improve reading speed	28
Boosts child interest in reading	56
Others	56
N=50	

Findings in table 11 indicate that Parents noted improvement in their children’s reading sub-skills including: increased vocabulary (54%), improved reading fluency (30 %), improved story comprehension (60%) and expressive skills (28%). About 56% of the parents indicated that it boosts children’s interest in reading among others. These findings imply that parental involvement in children’s reading at home has positive outcomes towards story comprehension and other reading skills in children.

Parents were also asked to indicate any general improvements they could have noted in the reading development of their children other than reading comprehension. The responses are presented in Table.12.

Table 12. Improvements in Children’s Reading Development

Comments	%
can read more complex words and stories	50
Improved speed of reading	54
Understand what they read	72
motivated to read and write	34
Little guidance in the homework needed	40
Increased vocabulary	32

Findings in table 11 show that 25(50%) of the parents observed that their children could now read more complex words and stories. 27(54%) indicated that the children’s reading speed had improved.72% of parents noted that children could understand better what they read and this according to 34% of the parents had in turn had motivated the children to not only read but write as well. Noteworthy was the fact that according to 34% of parents, children could now work with little or no supervision.32% reported to have noted an increase in children’s vocabulary. These positive self-reports imply that parental involvement in children’s reading at home had positively

influenced children’s reading development in many areas and specifically in their reading comprehension.

The researcher also sought information from teachers on changes, if any, in children’s reading skills as a result of the reading intervention. Findings are presented in figure 1.

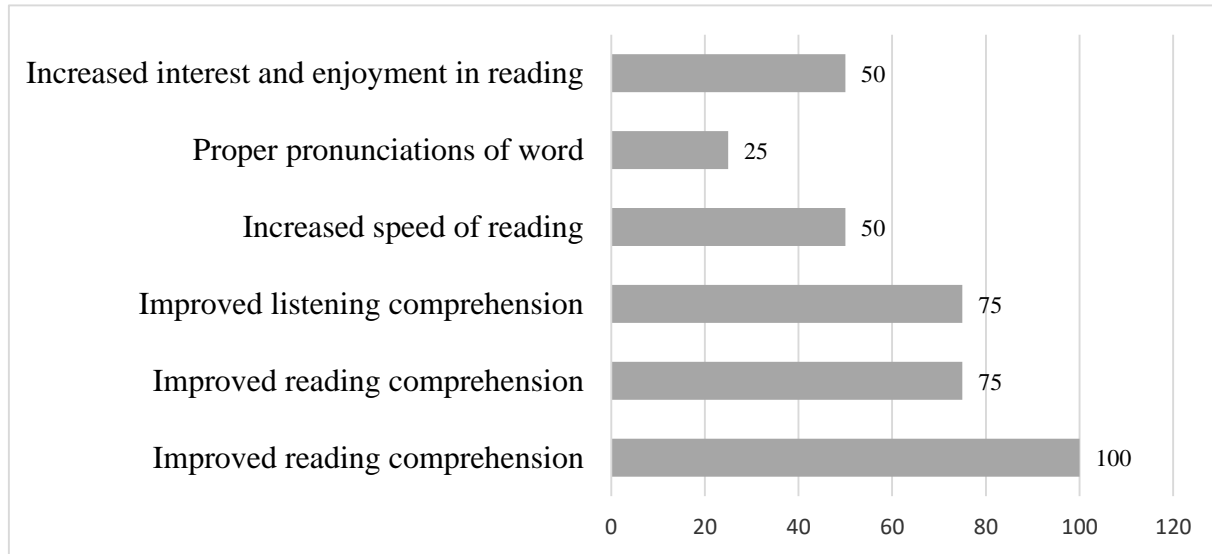


Figure 1: Changes in Children’s Reading: Teacher Perspectives at end line

The results in figure 1 indicate that 100% of the teachers observed improvements in motivation of pupils towards reading and also improvement in children’s listening and reading comprehension. 2(50%) of the teachers stated also that there was increased reading speed and increased interest and enjoyment in reading. One (25%) teacher reported improvement in pronunciation of words. These findings concur with those of the parents in relationship to the improvement they had noted in their children’s reading development.

To establish whether parental involvement in children’s reading at home influenced their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension measured by their scores in a Kiswahili reading comprehension test, all children participating in the study were given a test at baseline. This was meant to establish their entry behavior as far as their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension was concerned. A pre-test on Kiswahili reading comprehension was administered to both the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the experiment. Findings are represented in Table 13

Table 13. Learner’s Kiswahili Reading Comprehension Pre-Test scores at Baseline

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean mark
Treatment Group	51	5.588	1.791	.251
Control Group	49	5.388	1.766	.252

Results from table 13 indicate that the pre- test for both groups were not statistically significant on observed and unobserved characteristics at baseline. Mean performance in Kiswahili at the beginning of the experiment was: Treatment (Mean=5.5882); Control (5.3878) a difference of 0.20 in the mean score of the scores the two groups.

The researcher also wanted to establish if there was any significant change noted on children’s performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension after the treatment. All children from experimental and control groups were again subjected to a post-test of a similar difficulty level as the pre-test administered to them at baseline. Results from the two groups are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. Learner’s in Kiswahili reading comprehension post-test scores

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean mark
Group	Treatment	51	6.2549	2.15261	0.30143
	Control Group	49	3.7143	1.87083	0.26726

The findings in table 13 indicate that at End-line, mean performance in Kiswahili was as follows: Treatment group Mean =6.2549; Control group Mean =3.7143 with a difference of 2.55 in the two mean scores. This findings show a statistically significant difference between the two groups suggesting that there’s a strong relationship between parental involvement in children’s reading at home and their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension Contextual factors that made this possible included creation of a literate home environment that encouraged reading, actively participating in quality shared reading activities in the home with pre-school children and children’s ability to comprehend what was read. It is hypothesized that these variables interacted meaningfully to bring about a positive effect on pre-school child’s performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. This positive impact has important implications for learners’ future educational outcomes. Overall, it appears there was a win-win situation for children, their parents and teachers.

Indeed, imparting knowledge to children through reading at an early stage adds value to their lives. This is consistent with the findings of Sobel (2017) that children are easily taught and mentored through parental action. Further, Mwanda, Odundo, Midigo and Mwanda (2016), provides that learners learn best in their locale using materials that they see and trust. When parents take time to read to them, the children become more interested in reading. Reading

makes them eager to explore things written in books as they grow older, thereby cultivating reading culture and learning about things, places, events and experience. Parents' attitudes and support for their children's learning positively influences performance on literacy tests irrespective of socio-economic status. When parents read to their children they have the opportunity to interact positively with them and create a pleasurable reading experience. Affective quality of interactions in fostering children's interest in reading is critical.

Recommendations

The study established children whose parents got involved in their reading development at home performed better in a reading comprehension test compared to their counter parts. There were poor home reading environments at baseline characterized by little or no story books for children and other reading materials coupled by poor reading habits of family members. This study thus recommends that parents involve themselves actively in their children's learning through practices such as reading and telling stories to their children, conducting shared reading activities, buying and reading books for children, creating a literacy-rich environment and creating a reading culture in the home. It also recommends that home libraries can be created by parents for their children with children's books placed in an accessible area in the house to attract attention of the children and sense of treasure of the books should be developed in their children. Future studies could consider influence of home environment on development of pre-school children's reading skills in other languages.

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