



Available online at JECE (Journal of Early Childhood Education)
Website: <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/jece>
Permalink/DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15408/jece.v5i2.35737>
JECE, 5 (2), Desember 2023, 92-109

HOME ENVIRONMENT ON ACQUISITION OF LITERACY SKILLS AMONG EARLY GRADES LEARNERS IN TANZANIA

Agnes J. Lyimo

School of Education, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Corresponding e-mail: agylyimo2010@gmail.com

Abstract

Literacy skills are essential in children's future learning and development. Studies indicate that literacy skills among early grade learners in Tanzania are below the required standards. This study explored the contribution of home factors that hinder acquisition of reading and writing skills among early grades learners in Tanzania. The study was informed by a qualitative methodology and case study design. The study involved a total of 92 participants, including 80 parents and 12 standard one and two teachers from four primary schools in two districts of Morogoro region. The study employed purposive sampling technique to select teachers and convenience sampling technique to obtain parents who were involved in interview and focus group discussion. Data was collected using semi-structured interview, focused group discussion and documentary review. The data were analysed thematically based on themes and sub-themes emerged in the study. The findings revealed that most factors that hinder early grade learners from acquiring reading and writing skills included (poor parents fall up, engaging children in many home activities, low parents' education and parent's income) It was suggested that there should be cooperation between parents and teachers to assist the children in developing their reading and writing skills. The study concludes that parents and teachers should work collaboratively to develop reading and writing in children. Lastly, it is recommended that parents should buy materials like books, and they make time to assist their children at home.

Keywords: Literacy Skills, Children, Learning and Development

Abstrak

Keterampilan literasi sangat penting dalam pembelajaran dan perkembangan anak di masa depan. Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterampilan literasi di kalangan pelajar kelas awal di Tanzania berada di bawah standar yang disyaratkan. Studi ini mengeksplorasi kontribusi faktor rumah yang menghambat perolehan keterampilan membaca dan menulis di kalangan pelajar kelas awal di Tanzania. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dan desain studi kasus. Penelitian ini melibatkan total 92 peserta, termasuk 80 orang tua dan 12 guru standar satu dan dua guru dari empat sekolah dasar di dua distrik di wilayah Morogoro. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik purposive sampling untuk memilih guru dan teknik convenience sampling untuk mendapatkan orang tua yang dilibatkan dalam wawancara dan diskusi kelompok terfokus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara semi terstruktur, diskusi kelompok terfokus, dan telaah dokumenter. Data dianalisis secara tematis berdasarkan tema dan subtema yang muncul dalam penelitian. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa sebagian besar faktor yang menghambat siswa kelas awal memperoleh keterampilan membaca dan menulis adalah (miskin orang tua terjatuh, melibatkan anak dalam banyak kegiatan di rumah, rendahnya pendidikan orang tua dan pendapatan orang tua). Disarankan agar ada kerjasama antara orang tua dan anak-anak. guru untuk membantu anak-anak dalam mengembangkan keterampilan membaca dan menulis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa orang tua dan guru harus bekerja sama untuk mengembangkan membaca dan menulis pada anak-anak. Terakhir, disarankan agar orang tua membeli bahan-bahan seperti buku, dan menyediakan waktu untuk mendampingi anak-anak mereka di rumah.

Kata kunci: Keterampilan Literasi, Anak, Pembelajaran dan Perkembangan

Introduction

Literacy skills derive from the first days of a child's life (Mielonen, 2009). Children's development of literacy skills occurs in multiple contexts; the family setting, the school and the community to mention but a few (Kitta & Kapinga, 2015). Therefore, the interaction between the child and parents, caregivers and others members of the family is the key for developing literacy skills. Parents and caregiver's motivation are also crucial as they lay strong foundation in enhancing reading and writing (UNESCO, 2010). In this regard, (Mudziewana, 2014) views reading and writing skills as a process that begins to children before elementary grades and continues into adulthood. This means the children's home environment plays a great role in building a foundation of reading and writing skills (Mudziewana, 2014). (Goodman, 2000) asserts that literacy skills are more than just writing and reading words. It is about understanding the language that is found in many places such as books, magazines, or website. This language is also found in manual or sign in advertisement in films or even conversation. Therefore, literacy begins before the child starts schooling where a child experiences 'roots' in his/her social and cultural context.

Literacy skills among primary schoolchildren are the central theme in the present thesis with a focus on the role of the home environment. The home environment is regarded as a setting which contains social and cultural knowledge and skills that are important for children's growth and development in literacy skills (Lanter, 2006). The social knowledge and skills provide children with education and life skills that enable them to interact actively with other people in the community. The cultural knowledge and skills provide children with language, technology and strategies which enable them to participate functionally in social experiences and activities (Miller, 2002).

One of the major objectives of primary education in Tanzania is to enable every child acquire and develop communication skills including basic reading and writing skills (MoEVT, 2014). In order to achieve the needs of the policy, the current pre and primary education curriculum emphasizes on relevant and adequate Kiswahili language literacy skills that will enable children to build foundation of learning in further educational levels. Therefore, literacy skills are the most important skills that received greater attention in pre-primary and primary schools in Tanzania (Mligo, 2018). Despite the government initiatives in eradicating illiteracy in Tanzania, there is an outcry on the low reading and writing literacy levels witnessed among early grade learners in primary schools (UNICEF, 2017). Studies conducted in Tanzania reveals that children in Tanzania fail examination and have poor examination results due to poor reading and writing skills (Kumburu, 2011; Juhudi, 2018; & Mbise et al., 1996). The study by (UWEZO, 2018) also revealed that, children's performance in lower primary schools in Tanzania is still below the standards. According to (UNESCO, 2010) this situation led to low efficiency of basic skills that has been limiting children performance in other levels of education and the society as whole.

Children develop language and learn important information about language

through active participation and interaction with other people in and around the home environment. For example, children naturally learn sounds and sound structure and how to organize speech sounds according to the pattern characteristic of their native language as a predisposition to acquiring spoken language (Gillon, 2004; Lundberg, 2009). The patterns of sound structure enable children to form words and understand how to use them. The knowledge that words are constructed from sounds facilitates the development of phonological awareness which is a pre-condition for reading acquisition in an alphabetic language system (Adams, 1990; Anthony, 2004 & Lonigan, 2000). Phonological awareness comprises a variety of sub-skills which reflect the access and understanding of the sound structure of a spoken language. That is, the awareness that oral language can be broken down into individual words and, in turn, the words can also be broken into individual sounds (phonemes) (Snowling, 2001). Reading in a language which is made up of alphabetic letters involves two things: first, to relate the sounds of the language to printed letters, and second, to understand the meaning of individual words and printed text (Stone, Silliman, Ehren & Apel, 2004). Just as reading requires knowledge about sounds, so does writing (Juel, 1994; Lundberg, Olofsson & Wall, 1980). Specifically, learning to write requires the ability to translate units of sounds into units of print (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Thus, the home environment provides the earliest important knowledge and skills for the development of phonological awareness and reading and writing skills.

Children further develop the ability to read and write as a result of exposure to literacy facilities and practice, especially where the environment is supportive of these abilities. For example, the availability of reading materials and parental involvement in the child's reading and writing activities at home has a motivating effect on reading and writing ability (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). Various studies have shown that most children who are successful in reading and writing come from families with a literacy-rich environment (Aulls & Sollars, 2003; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Moreover, a literate home environment also includes parents who value reading, because by so doing, children get the impression that reading is an important activity. In addition to having a home with reading materials and where parents are involved in reading, parents create a literate home environment when they encourage their children to write regularly (Colker, 2009).

Knowledge of these factors will help to improve appropriate interventions to address the problem of reading and writing literacy among primary school's grandaunts. Further, the achievement of reading and writing literacy skills will in turn not only help to achieve Millennium Development Goal Number Two, but also, all the other seven MDGs as literacy is the foundation of learning in other educational levels. To achieve this purpose the study was guided by two research questions: What are the key home factors affecting acquisition of reading and writing skills among early grades learners in Tanzania? What are the initiatives taken by parents to improve reading and writing skills among early grade learners in Tanzania?

The theory postulates that individuals in their social world engage in complex interrelations that shape their cognitive, social, and physical development (Wozniak, 1993). Core to these theories is (Vygotsky, 1978) socio-cultural theory which stipulates that knowledge acquisition is rooted in social interactions. In these interactions, children grow into an intellectual life by the help of those around them (Vygotsky, 1978). This growth occurs in the Zone of Proximal

Development (ZPD) In the ZPD, the adult monitors the current skills and scaffolds the child's extension of current skill to a higher level of competence (Wretch, 1985). In this process, adult involvement and contribution gradually decreases as the learner competencies increase. Therefore, the development of reading and writing is determined by the support given by an adult at home environment which creates fruitful learning at school

Method

The Research was conducted on Monday, April 10 2023, involved a total of 92 participants, of whom 80 were parents and 12 primary school teachers from four primary schools in Morogoro region. Among the 80 parents, 40 were conveniently selected and involved in the interview while all 80 parents were involved in the FGD. The data to answer the research question were collected using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and documentary review. The parents whose pupils were in class one and two were selected to be involved in focus group discussion. Interviews and focus group discussion were conducted in Kiswahili, which is the medium of instruction in public pre-primary schools in Tanzania. The data collection process was done after pre-primary pupils had left the classes to avoid interfering teachers in the teaching process. Most of the interviews and FGD lasted for about 45 to 60 minutes. The interview proceedings were audio-recorded upon participant's consent for preservation of the participants' actual words.

Documentary review was employed to obtain data from documented sources such as Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 1995 and 2014. Other documents included the syllabi for pre-primary and primary education 2014 were reviewed to find out the relevance of what learners learnt in pre- primary and primary school level. The schemes of work and lesson plans prepared by teachers in class one and two were reviewed to find out if the strategies used reflect the curriculum. Finally, other documents included learner's books and children exercise books. The researcher critically examined and took notes on important information which helped to establish the home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing skills to young children.

The data collected using interview, focus group discussion and documentary review were analysed using thematic analysis approach. In this regard, Nature themes were first inductively derived from research questions and insights from the theoretical framework that guided the study, and previous literature related to the subject

investigated. This approach allowed unanticipated themes to emerge but also helped to determine whether the deductively derived themes were supported by the data from the field. A list of themes from each participant's verbatim transcript was made. Then, a cross-case analysis natural topics with a determined starting point and ending point to look at one variable as the focus was done. Similar themes were clustered together before writing the report.

Results and Discussion

Home Factors Affecting Children's Acquisition of Reading and Writing Skills

This part presents and discusses home factors affecting children acquisition of reading and writing skills in Tanzania. During the interview with parents, the following factors affecting children acquisition of reading and writing skills were reported.

Parents Related Factors

The findings revealed that the major factors affecting children's acquisition of reading and writing included poor parent's follow-up and engaging pupils in family chores at home. The findings also indicated that children reading and writing skills are affected by low parents' supervision, income and education levels of parents. Correspondingly, other two factors that received a minimal attention involved poor relationship of parents as well as parents' activities (occupation). The detailed analysis is presented below.

Poor Parent's Follow-ups

The findings revealed that most of the parents were not making follows up of their children learning at school and therefore, failed to provide support to their children. During the interview with parents, it was reported that parents were not making follow-up of what their children learned at school, Therefore, they did not know the academic progress of their children at school. This resulted to poor performance in literacy skills because children had no extra support from parents that could enhance their performance in reading and writing. This was revealed when one female parent illustrated that:

Majority of parents are not making follow-up on what children learn at school because they are either occupied with family matters and forget about making fall up on children's progress at school.

According to the quotation above, lack of support and close follow-up by parents as well as other siblings at home which makes it difficult for children to reading and writing skills.

Engaging Pupils in Many Homes Activities

The findings revealed other home factors hindering the acquisition of reading and writing to young children included parents' engaging pupils in many home activities. Among the activities mentioned by parents included cooking, farming, keeping cattle and petty business. It was reported that when pupils came home from school, their parents would give them several activities to do and therefore, this was making pupils

lack an ample time to do revision of what they had learnt at school. Parents also added that when their children came from school, they don't get time to rest because they would be engaged in other home activities that usually made them become more tired thus failing to get time to engage themselves in reading and writing activities at home. For example, one male parent said that:

Children are engaged in income generating activities When you walk around the streets after school hours, you will find many children selling groundnut bananas and other fruits. How do they get time for revision? Also, when they are at home, they engage in other home activities and lack time for revision.

The quotation above by the parent reveals that not only at school do children need to learn; rather, they must also get time at home to make revision and study. But this was not done because they are were engaged in home activities which were making them become more tired and thus lack enough time to make revision and engage in other reading and writing activities.

Low Parent Education

Regarding parent's education, 14 out of 80 parents had a view that, education was another home factor affecting the acquisition of reading and writing skills to young children. It was unveiled that when parents are educated, they have awareness of what is going on and how to help their children at home. On the other side, when parents are not educated, it becomes difficult for them to help their children at home. Therefore, parent's education becomes one of the major factors which have positive or negative impact on children's acquisition of reading and writing skills. Elaborating the situation, one of the parents reported that:

I am facing difficulties to support me in reading and writing skills child because I do not know how to read and write, the activities given to our children needs someone who knows how to read and write. I also fail to know the appropriate books that could help him to learn at home.

In most cases, pupils who seemed to have good reading and writing results during documentary review, most of their parents were educated and were public servants. During the interview with one parent whose daughter was reported to perform better she had these to state:

My daughter is receiving help at home by her grandmother who is a retired teacher. Her grandmother has prepared a timetable for her and she always engaged in reading and writing accordingly after school hours.

With the above parent's statement, it can be seen that, parents who have education play an important role in helping their children develop appropriate reading and writing abilities. Parents with low or lack of education face difficulties in helping their children in reading and writing skills because of not understanding what exactly and how should they help their children.

Parents Income

The findings revealed that the income level of parents is another home factor that affects the acquisition of reading and writing of young children. On this regard, parents argued that income is related to buying of relevant materials such as books, pencils and

exercise books for children to make them revise what they have learnt. It was reported that parents who are good economically have the ability of creating conducive environment that can facilitate good reading and writing skills to their children including buying relevant textbooks, and exercise books. Further, parents reported that parents who are economically successful can also pay teachers to teach their children after school hours. On this aspect, parents were also of the view that because of poverty, children are forced to engage in different activities after school hours in order to support the economy of the family and therefore lack opportunity to engage in reading and writing activities. One of the parents asked:

I always engage in selling my labour to find money for food. The money I get is enough to fulfil the basic needs for my family. How can I get money to buy books for my children? While I have to buy food for them? I am the only fender for the family therefore; I cannot afford the burden of offering them some reading and writing materials.

This question was asked by the parent above is evidence which shows that children coming from low economy families have a great possibility of lagging behind in reading and writing skills because their parents are not able to buy them materials which can make them learn how to read and write,

Poor Relationship among Parents

It was reported that the relationship between parents also affects the acquisition of reading and writing skills of young children. The reported relationship among parents is based on the fact that, when parents are in harmony, they can work together to help their children in reading and writing skills. On the other hand, it was reported that if parents are not in good harmony, it is difficult for them to work together and develop young children's reading and writing skills. Additionally, parents talked of poor relationship between such as father and mother which was usually resulting to family disintegration and therefore making a child belong in a single parent family, something which made that one parent fail to make an effective or close follow up of her or his child's schooling progress. On this aspect, parents also reported that, most of the children were staying with their grandparents who were too old to take care of them. Also, the parents added that, most of the children who were staying with their grandparents were not performing better in reading and writing because they were not being assisted to learn at home. This assistance was not only limited to academic issues, , but it was also reported that most of the children staying with their grandparents lacked necessary materials such school uniform, school bags, shoes, exercise books and pencils something which was hindering their learning at school and a thus adversely affecting their reading and writing skills.

Parents' Activities and Occupation

The findings from six out of 40 parents were of the view that, parents' activities and occupations was also one of the home factors affecting the acquisition or reading and writing of young children. They reported that some activities done by some of the parents did not provide them with an opportunity to help their children develop their

reading and writing skills at home. Some of the parents reported that they were going to work in the morning and come back late at night when they were tired and their children were already asleep. Therefore, they lacked the time to pass through children's exercise books to see what they had learnt at school and therefore provide necessary assistance where required. On this issue, one male parent said:

I am a mechanic; I always wake up early in the morning to attend my job and get back home at late hours already tired. Therefore, it is difficult for me to get time to help my daughter in school matters. I have never passed through my daughter's exercise books, but what I always do, is to ask her sisters and brothers to help her when she fails to read or write.

With this expression, it can be argued that, parents who engage themselves in activities that make them come back home early can have time to help their children in the acquisition of reading and writing skills. On the other hand, parents whose activities force them to come back late at home do not have sufficient time to helping their children in acquisition of reading and writing skills.

Pupils' Related Factors

During the interview with parents, it was highly reported that children themselves were also the cause of poor reading and writing skills as they engage themselves in too much play and forget about school.

Engaging in Plays and Games

It was reported by the parents that most of the children liked to engage too much in plays and games with their follows when they came from school. These plays and games were making them get tired thus sleeping too early and therefore lacking time to make revision of what they had learnt at school. Further, they lacked the time to ask help from their parents or siblings what they had learnt at school but did not understand. Despite this fact, most of the parents regarded this factor as a problem related to children themselves.

Among the plays and games that were reported by parents involved playing football for boys and "rede" for girls. Therefore, it was revealed that the more children spent much time playing at home rather than studying, the more it resulted into such children's poor acquisition of reading and writing skills. On this issue parent had this to say:

Children play too much after school hours. They cannot take trouble to read by themselves unless they are supervised. Sometimes we parents lack time to supervise them due to poor learning motivation among parents.

All of the two contentions by the parents prove that parents regard children play and games at home as one of the factors that affect the acquisition of reading and writing skills. Therefore, if supervision is done and pupils get time for self-reading and writing exercises, they can develop good reading and writing skills.

Other related pupils' factors

Another pupil related factors that were reported by parents involved spending much of the time watching television and child's difficult in learning. Parents reported that children were very much interested in watching television programmes rather

than studying. On this aspect parents were of the view that if children could be spending much of their time 60 reading and writing on the same scale, they were using that time to watch television they could have good reading and writing skills. On this aspect, other parents reported that they had taken their children to remedial classes known as tuition but still they could not manage reading and writing accordingly. Therefore, from this finding, it can be said that some children did not manage to write and read because they had learning difficulties.

Materials Related Factors

Another striking home factor that was reported by parents involved lack of reading and writing material at home such as books pencils and exercise books. Parents argued that one of the home factors that was leading to poor reading and writing ability was the poor home environment which was made of lack of supportive materials that money with which to buy books and other materials Therefore, as a result pupils from such lacked the materials to make reading exercise as well as writing exercise. Apart from lack of money to buy materials, parents argued that they lacked awareness of the relevant materials which they could buy to facilitate reading and writing skills for their young children. For example, one parent said that:

I do not have money to buy books for my child; therefore, the book she receives at school is the one that she uses every day. If I were able to buy other books for making her practise writing and reading, they would assist my child in reading very well unlike she is doing now.

With this response from parents, it can be argued that pupils at home lack materials for improving their reading and writing because their parents do not have the ability to buy supporting materials for their children. Another, reason is that they are not aware of the relevant materials to buy in order improve the acquisition of reading and writing. Therefore, reading and writing abilities of young children remains at stake.

Teacher related Challenges

During the interview with parents, it was further revealed that another home factor, affecting children's acquisition of reading and writing were the result of teacher's problems at school. Parents reported that they were expecting to help their children at home relying on the directions from school. Therefore, parents reported that teachers were not giving their pupils homework which result to pupil's low acquisition of reading and writing abilities.

Home Reading Culture

During the discussion with parents, most of them agreed that home reading culture had impact on acquisition of reading and writing abilities to children. In this aspect parents argued that, many families had poor reading culture and therefore pupils/children were not interacting in reading culture environment. With that reason it became difficult for children to acquire reading and writing abilities because they were not modelled by their parents and other members in their societies.

On this regard, one parent said:

If there are no books at home and no one is engaging in reading at home, whether a Bible or Quran how do you expect a child to develop reading or writing interest? They see that this is normal life style and they grow that way.

Such argument from the FGD reveals that pupils learn from the role model and what they see. Therefore, when they see people at home involving themselves in reading and writing activities it is easy for them to engage in reading and writing activities at home. Therefore, if the home environment has good reading and writing culture it is easy for children to acquire reading and writing skills.

Parenting Style

Another home factor that was raised during the FGD was the issue of parenting. Parents reported that, some children failed to acquire reading and writing abilities because of poor parenting. It was argued that, children who were living with different parents such as step mothers or fathers were being given more chores to do at home and therefore, they lacked time to engage themselves in reading and writing activities. Parents further argued that parenting also had impacts on developing children reading and writing. Again, those children who were living with their grandparents were reported to have low reading and writing abilities because their grandparents lacked financial abilities or academic abilities to help their grandchildren. In terms of financial matters, it was reported that their grandparents had no money with which to buy materials such as books, exercise books, pens and other materials so as to reading and writing skills for their grandchildren. For the case of academic support, it was argued that most of the grandparents had low or had no formal education and therefore, lacked sufficient skills to help their grandchildren in improving their reading and writing abilities.

Parents Initiatives Employed by Parent in Improving Children's Reading and Writing Skills in Tanzania

During the interview as well as focused group discussion, it was revealed that several initiatives were being employed by parents at home in order to improve their children's reading and writing skills as presented below:

1. Regular Home Work

During the interview with parents it was revealed, that 12 parents out of 40 were of the view that they were providing regular home works to their children especially when they were coming from school as one of the means of improving their reading and writing abilities. Parents argued that when children came back from school, they immediately became engaged in writing numbers or writing what they had learnt at school. They were also reading different materials available in the home environment. This was reported to be one of the initiatives they were using in improving pupils' reading and writing at home.

Likewise, during the FGD, parents had the same view that providing works to do at home was one of the initiatives done by parents to improve the acquisition of reading and writing of their children. For example, in improving the acquisition of

reading and writing of their children parents said that; without engaging pupils/ children in regular reading and writing activities at home, it became difficult for them to develop their reading and writing skills. During the FGD one parent pointed out that:

I make sure that when my children have the afternoon lunch, they sleep and as they wake up, they find some works to do. They know, and they ask for it immediately as they wake up. This has helped my children to improve their reading and writing skills (FGD) with standard two parents.

From the explanations given by parents as well as the contention by the parents, it can be argued that, when children at home are provided with regular works to do, it is possible that they can improve their reading skills because they revise what they have learnt at school. Furthermore, providing them with home activities helps to keep them busy and thus reducing much time they spend on playing and watching television. Initiative that was addressed by parents involved inspecting pupil's exercise books when they come back home from school. On this particular regard, parents argued that inspecting pupil's exercise books helped parents understand what their children had learnt at school and the challenges such children were encountering in learning thus making them be in a good position to give them assistance where needed. During the FGD, parents argued that, inspecting pupils exercise books had several advantages such as knowing the books used in learning at school so that parents may buy for their children. For example, during the interview one parents reported that:

I always inspect my child's exercise book; I know what she has learnt. I ask her to make corrections on what she has done wrong and teachers are happy with me. But also, my child is improving because she gets assistance from home as well as school.

From the above quotations it is evident that parents are of the view that among the initiatives they take is inspecting pupils exercise book and they can yield positive results especially on reading and writing skills of young children because they get the opportunity of helping their children at home especially to areas where they have failed to understand at school.

2. Tuition

During the discussion with parents, it was argued that they use tuition as one of the strategies for improving reading and writing to young children. To them tuition was in two forms: first it involved using of teachers teaching standard one and two classes as well as other teachers teaching children in different centres. Parents were of the view that because of being busy with daily activities that is why they looked for the alternative which was taking their children to tuition centres. Others reported that they were taking their children to tuition centres and they were taking that as an initiative because they were lacking necessary skills for teaching reading and writing. Therefore, the tuition centres were regarded as places where they could be helped with developing reading and writing skills. On

this aspect, one of the parents had the following views:

I take my children for tuition because I believe there, they can get assistance of developing reading and writing. This is because they receive help from skilled and knowledgeable people than me. Therefore, I believe that they are in the best position to help my children more than I do.

With these explanations by the parent, it is revealed that most of the parents were taking this initiative because they believed that they would get an important person who would shoulder their burden after class hours. Not only that but also the issue of knowledge increase for their children in this case. This is because, some parents lacked necessary skills of helping their children develop reading and writing skills. In this context, tuition teachers became important personnel to help the development of reading and writing the young children on behalf of their parents. Apart from lack of the necessary skills in reading and writing as a reason of parent taking their children tuition centres, parents were also known to be. For example, one male parent illuminated that:

It is difficult for me to get time to sit down with children and help them to learn apart from what they get from school. Therefore, I opt to take them to tuition centres so that they may learn. Also get an opportunity to engage in learning activities than playing too much.

As the parent reported, this initiative was being taken in order to help even those parents who were busy in their activities or jobs. Therefore, parents who lacked time of helping their children fully filled this noble responsibility through engaging their children in tuition. Not only was this the case with parents but also as it was reported that children were taking too much time playing, therefore that was the reason why their parents were taking them to tuition centres to reduce the time they spent on playing therefore making them concentrate on learning how to read and write or do other relevant learning activities.

3. Close Follow up

During the interview with parents, it was revealed that one of the other initiatives parents took involved close follow up of their children at home as well as at school.

Parents were of the view that they were following the progress of their children at school in order to know how to help them. Furthermore, parents argued that they were making close follow up of what their children were learning at school in order to help them in areas in which they found their children had failed. Parents were of the view that when children are supervised by closely monitoring their progress every day it became easy for them to put much energy for themselves also and therefore improving their reading and writing abilities. On this aspect, parents argued that when pupils knew that the parents were not taking time to make follow-up on what they were learning at school they did not bother to put initiatives in learning at school as well as at home.

Not only that but also parents argued that close follow-ups helped to stop

pupil's absenteeism at school since children knew that when they arrived at home, they would be required to submit what they had learnt at school. On the other hand, parents reported that those parents who were closely following up their children's progress, it was difficult for them to improve their learning.

4. Buying Books and Other Reading and Writing Materials

Another initiative that was reported by parents during the discussion was buying literacy and numeracy books for more practices. Parents reported that they were buying books for their children as an initiative to help them practice and improve their reading and writing skills. Not only books were reported by parents as an initiative, but also other materials such as writing boards, pencils and exercise books for children to practise writing on. These materials helped children develop reading and writing abilities since as they were involved in writing as well as reading. For example, one parent said that:

I buy different materials for my children that support their reading and writing. I am also encouraged with their good performance in reading and writing.

From the claim given by the parents it can be argued that some parents were buying books and other materials as an initiative to enable their children develop reading and writing skills. However, other parents reported that they failed buy materials because they lacked money. On this particular regard, one parent reported that:

Buying books for children is one of the initiatives I could do but they are insufficient because of my economic capacity. I fail to buy sufficient materials like books that my child could use to make revision at home, this makes my child easily forget about what they have been taught at school.

As it was reported by the parent above, regardless of their economic ability, parents pointed out that buying relevant materials for their children is crucial for improving their reading and writing abilities.

5. Help from Elder Brothers and Sisters

Another initiative that was reported by parents involved requesting elder brothers and sisters to help their young brothers and sisters improve their reading and writing abilities. Parents argued that because they were busy with other activities including being tight in their jobs, they were asking the siblings available at home to make sure that they helped their young brothers and sisters studying standard one and two improve their reading and writing. Among the siblings that were reported to help young children with reading and writing involved those who were studying the upper classes such as standard five up to seven and those who studying in secondary schools. Furthermore, those children who reported to do well in class in the reading and writing skills were reported to be helped by their brothers and sisters if not their mothers. Fathers were reported to help their children very rarely on this aspect one parent remarked:

My children help each other in learning. In most cases, when I am tired my

daughters who study in secondary schools take an active role of helping their young brother. This is a good substitute of parents who are busy with family matters and fail to get time to help their children in learning.

From the above arguments given by the parent, it can be summed up that parents use the available educated siblings at home as one of the initiatives to help young children develop reading and writing abilities at home.

Discussion of the Findings

Overall, the study reveals that, parents are first teachers to children. Therefore, children's acquisition of literacy skills depended on the support provided by parents and other care givers through by making home environment conducive for children to practice what they learn at school. These, the study by (Chimombo et al, 2000) which revealed that, providing support to children including early literacy activities to children at home enables promoting children's early reading and writing literacy skills. Furthermore, the current study revealed that for children to develop reading and writing there should be cooperation between teachers and parents. These findings concur with the findings by (Epstein, 2011) which the study suggested that cooperation between teachers and parents were important because parents learnt from teachers and prepared conducive home environment for children to learn including home libraries, museums, and family resource centre

The current study further revealed that parents were engaging their children in petty businesses at home. These study findings are also revealed by (Chibombo, 2000) in his study whereby he reports that, in most of African societies child labour is one of the factors which hinder the acquisition of reading and writing skills in young children. In rural areas boys become cow and goats herders while girls spend their time in child minding their siblings. The current study revealed that children were also being engaged in petty business and domestic activities such as selling vegetables, groundnuts, and herding animals especially cows and goats.

Another home factor that was revealed was the economic ability of parents as the home factors affecting young children's reading and writing abilities in Tanzania. It was revealed that because of the parents' lack of money with to buy relevant materials for their young children it became difficult for them to make different practices and therefore lagged behind. Such findings are in line with the study by (Lehrl et al., 2013) who in their study, the themes of home environment affecting children reading and writing varied in terms of social economic status, parent's educational level and occupation, pre-school literacy and numeracy related activities as well as educational resources found at home.

On their study they came to a conclusion that the social economic status of the family had direct impact to children learning and the effects were reported to be negative to low social economic status while positive ones to the family with high social economic status to buy relevant materials for their young children it became difficult for them to make different practices and therefore lagged behind. Such

findings are in line with the study by (Lehrl et al., 2013) who in their study, the themes of home environment affecting children reading and writing varied in terms of social economic status, parent's educational level and occupation, pre-school literacy and numeracy related activities as well as educational resources found at home. On their study they came to a conclusion that the social economic status of the family had direct impact to children learning and the effects were reported to be negative to low social economic status while positive ones to the family with high social economic status (Kitta & Kapinga, 2015).

Another home factor that was revealed in this study involved children's parenting style, where it was reported that some children were living with their grandparents or were living with only single parents. It was reported that those children living with their grandparents lacked academic support as well as material support. Therefore, they lagged behind in reading and writing. Furthermore, those children who were living with single parents were reported to lack close supervision at home as well as at school and this was greatly reported to be the case with male parents, while to female parents it was reported that they lacked necessary materials to serve their children. Such results are in line with the study findings by (Mudziewana, 2014) who reported that in single parent families, the parent might not have the possibility to use time for guidance of the children's literacy development. The struggle for the survival of the parent and family took all the available time and resources. A single parent therefore cannot have the possibility to seriously support the education of the child in terms of for example, school materials and literacy coaching and interaction with the child. The consequence can be that the child feels isolated, less cared for, and as a result the literacy development can be delayed.

Likewise, the study in Tanzania by (Ngorosho, 2011) shows that family's socioeconomic situation and literacy support are important. Indicators like parents' education, house wall material, the number of schoolbooks at home and parental involvement in school homework were found to be significant predictors of reading and writing ability. Furthermore, the findings by (UNESCO, 2010) also proved that, Children in Tanzania perform poor in reading and writing skills because they are engaged in social economic activities like, farming, looking after animals, and taking care of their babies during school hours (UNESCO, 2010).

Dewey believed that, children are active being, eager to interact and explore the world. Therefore, to enable them to explore the world, encourage learning, interaction with peers, materials are necessary. (Vygotsky, 1978) added that, learning is enhanced when interacting with more knowledgeable others. The current research revealed the reality also that parents' education and the availability of materials have a great impact on reading and writing abilities in Tanzania.

From the above discussion it is evident that the current study findings are in line with other studies done in the world investigating the factors affecting reading and writing abilities of young children. Therefore, necessary initiatives/measures are to be

taken in order to improve the situation.

Conclusions

In the light of the research findings and discussion presented above, the following conclusions are made. First, parents agreed that they were required to play a key role in facilitating reading and writing of young children at home environment. Therefore, in order to improve reading and writing abilities of young children there is a need for parents, learners and teachers to work jointly in order to make sure that each individual plays his/her active role. Second, it was revealed that parents were taking different initiatives in improving reading and writing of young children. Among the initiatives that teachers were reported to take in order to improve reading and writing abilities of young children included providing regular home works, inspecting pupils' exercise books, close follow ups, tuition and requesting elder brothers and sisters help young children with reading and writing abilities. This study has three categories of recommendations: recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that parents with children in standard one and two classes should ensure that they provide assistance to their children at home in order that they may develop reading and writing abilities. This should be done by giving those activities to do at home such as reading story books as well as writing as they come from school. In this sense, education to parents is necessary in order to educate them on how they should assist and supervise their children when doing their assignments at home. Furthermore, in order to develop reading and writing abilities of young children, there should be cooperation between parents, and teachers' children themselves. Cooperation between teachers and parents is necessary as it enables teachers to direct and share with parents on appropriate measures to take in order to improve reading and writing of young children. Furthermore, schools should have enough books in order to help children coming from economically underprivileged families to access the books.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study proposes more studies to be conducted on the use of drawing in PPE. This study focused on the home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing to young children in Tanzania. However, the study adopted a qualitative approach. Therefore, another study adopting a quantitative approach is needed for generalization.

References

Adams, M.J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge,

MA: MIT Press.

- Anthony, C.J. & Lonigan, C. (2004). The nature of phonological awareness: Converging evidence from four studies of preschool and early grade school children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96, 43-55.
- Aulls, M.W. & Sollars, V. (2003). The differential influence of the home environment on reading ability of children entering grade one. *Reading Improvement*, Vol.40, 2003.
- Chimombo, J., Chibwanna, M., Dzimadzi, C., Kadzamina, E., Kunkwenzu, E., Kunje, D. & Namphota, D. (2000) Classroom, school and home factors that negatively affect girl Education in Malawi. *Centre for Educational Research and Training*. 21(3).
- Colker, L.J. (2009). Literacy development begins at home with a literate home environment. RIF Exchange Show Number 504. Context in Uganda, 1-65. *Education and Care in Tanzania*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.71265>
- Epstein, J. L. (2011). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools* (2nd ed.). Westview Press.
- Gillon, G.T. (2004). *Phonological awareness: From research to practice*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Goodman, Y. (1980). *The roots of literacy*. Claremont Reading Conference. PP 1-32.
- Juel, C. (1994). *Learning to read and write in one elementary school*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Juhudi, K. C. (2018). Family Barriers for quality Pre-Primary Education for Children with Disabilities in Tanzania: A Case of Lindi Region. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 3(1), 22 – 39.
- Kitta, S., & Kapinga, O. S. (2015). Towards Designing Effective Preschool Education Programmes in Tanzania: What can We Learn from Theories? *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6 (5) 180-185.
- Kumburu, S. (2011). The effectiveness of short-term literacy skills intervention on children at risk reading and writing difficulties in Tanzania: *A study of Grade one Children Dynamic Assessments Approach*, Abo academy University press.
- Lanter, E. (2006). *Socio-cultural theory in literacy development*. University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.
- Lehrl, S., Kluezniok, K., & Kuger, S. (2013). Quality of the home learning environment during preschool age - Domains and contextual conditions *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21(3) 420-438.
- Lonigan, C.J., Burgess, S.R. & Anthony, J.L. (2000). Development of emergent literacy and early reading skills in preschool children: Evidence from a latent variable longitudinal study. *Development Psychology*, 36, 596-613.
- Lundberg, I. (2009). Early precursors and enabling skills of reading acquisition. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 50, 611-616.
- Lundberg, I., Olofsson, A. & Wall, S. (1980). Reading and spelling skills in the first school years predicted from phonemic awareness skills in kindergarten. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 21, 159-173.
- Mbise, A. S. (1996). Papers in education and development: Pre-primary education versus primary education. *A Journal of the Faculty of Education, University of*

- Dar es Salaam*, 17(2) 39-51.
- Mielonen, A. (2009). Developing Literacy through play. *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education*, 3(1).
- Miller, P.H. (2002) (Ed.). Theories of developmental psychology. New York: Worth.
- Mligo, A. (2018). *Enhancing Young Children's Access to Early Childhood*
- MoEVT (2014) Ministry of education and Vocational Training. Educational and training Policy.
- Mtahabwa, L. (2010). Provision of Pre-primary Education as a Basic Right in Tanzania: reflections from policy documents. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 11(4) 353-364.
- Mudzielwana, N. (2014). The role of parents in developing reading skills of their children in the foundation phase. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 41(2), 253-264
- Ngorosho, D. (2011). Reading and writing ability in relation to home environment: A study in primary education in rural Tanzania. *Child Indicators Research* 4(3), 369 -388
- Presslay, B. (2013). Ontunuum library of education thought. *Journal of chemical Information and Modelling* 53 , 5-72.
- Sénéchal, M. & LeFevre, J. A. (2002). Parent involvement in the development of children's reading skill: A five-year longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 73(2), 445-460.
- Snowling, M. (2001). *Dyslexia* (2nd ed.). Maiden Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc.
- Stone, C.A., Silliman, E.R., Ehren, B.J. & Apel, K. (Eds.), *Handbook of Language and Literacy: Development and Disorders*. New York: Guilford.
- UNESCO (2010). *Educational for all, Global Monitoring report: Gender and Educational for All: The Leap to Quality*.
- UNICEF (2017). *Early grade mathematics in Nepale: Step toward a stronger Foundation*.
- UWEZO (2013). *Uwezo Tanzania Learning Assessment report* 1-60.
- UWEZO (2018). *Are our children learning? Uwezo learning Assessment in Refugees*
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of psychological processes*, Havard University Press.
- Whitehurst, G.J. & Lonigan, C.J. (1998). Child development and emergent literacy. *Child Development*, 69(3), 848-872.