Volume 13 Issue 21
Originally issued as H1

Global Journal of Human Social Science
Interdisciplinary
Volume 13 Issue 1 Version 1.0 Year 2013
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

# Challenging Factors and the Role of the Family towards Children's Literacy. Case of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

By Duruamaku-Dim J.C, Anero Nnamdi & Arikpo A.
*University of Calabar Calabar, Nigeria*

*Abstract* - The study examines the barriers towards the roles of the family in child's literacy. It adopted an 11 item questionnaire known as FACHIL as the main instrument. 532 pupils whose age range from 8-13 years were the respondents. The instrument was validated by colleagues who are experts in the area of study and a test retest exercise whose result was 0.75 was adopted to ascertain the instrument's degree of reliability. Percentages, means and chi-square were used to analyze the data. It established that there is literacy skills among the pupils. Employment and collaboration with teachers as well as teaching and studying with the children were found to be credibly carried out by the families as their roles towards the child's literacy. Although parents' literacy level, absence of family library, commitment by parents to examine the children's book were found as limiting factors. Gender and the nature of schools attended by children were considered to hold significant influence on the child's literacy level. It was recommended that mass enlightenment is needed to enable the families to effectively discharge their functions.

*GJHSS-H Classification : FOR Code: 130204*

*Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of :*

© 2013. Duruamaku-Dim J.C, Anero Nnamdi & Arikpo A. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non commercial use, distribution, and reproduction inany medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

# Challenging Factors and the Role of the Family towards Children's Literacy. Case of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Duruamaku-Dim J.C [α], Anero Nnamdi [σ] & Arikpo A. [ρ]

*Abstract* - The study examines the barriers towards the roles of the family in child's literacy. It adopted an 11 item questionnaire known as FACHIL as the main instrument. 532 pupils whose age range from 8-13 years were the respondents. The instrument was validated by colleagues who are experts in the area of study and a test retest exercise whose result was 0.75 was adopted to ascertain the instrument's degree of reliability. Percentages, means and chi-square were used to analyze the data. It established that there is literacy skills among the pupils. Employment and collaboration with teachers as well as teaching and studying with the children were found to be credibly carried out by the families as their roles towards the child's literacy. Although parents' literacy level, absence of family library, commitment by parents to examine the children's book were found as limiting factors. Gender and the nature of schools attended by children were considered to hold significant influence on the child's literacy level. It was recommended that mass enlightenment is needed to enable the families to effectively discharge their functions.

## I. Introduction

The Importance attached to the child's education in Nigeria and other countries is shown through the introduction of several programmes. The government at both national and international levels welcomes support from individuals, families, group's communities, non-governmental agencies etc. in ensuring that the child receives the best education. Education to most people can be summed to mean the acquisition of reading, writing and arithmetic skills. The axiom may be based on the fact that literacy is a catalyst for overall human and societal development. Similarly, Brooks-Grum, Berlin and Fulgni (2000) uphold that parents are catalyst of change in programmes that affect the child. Literacy is indeed a killer of ignorance, promoter of good health, economy and accounts for effective social and political participation. Going by the above account, one may be correct to say that it is a serious business that needs not to be toyed with. This remark is relevant because not all concerned may have given it the required attention. It is almost obvious that The roles of the family, school, community, government and others do not need to be over emphasized. It is not in dispute that many agents are responsible for the child's overall development. But the fact that the family is the first point of call by the child puts the family as the foremost agent in promoting quality education for the child. To what extent, the families realize this, remains an issue to be explored. It is therefore necessary to mount a study targeted at establishing the roles of the family in the acquisition of the child's literacy. In this connection Ezekiel-Hart and Adiele (2008) explain that:

> No matter how highly qualified the teachers are, and no matter how sophisticated the infrastructure, the quality of preparation given to students (inputs) from the family play significant role in determining the end products of the school system. Until the family is able and willing to perform their school roles effectively, not much would be expected from the school in the overall attainment of quality education. For the education system to guarantee quality and sustain it, parents must ensure that the children they bring to school are qualitative enough… This can only be meaningfully achieved when parents demonstrate willingness to take responsibility for the education needs of their wards.

One way family need to participate in providing the educational needs of their children is by encouraging them to acquire literacy skills. Robinson-Pant's (2003) report, no one may say that youth literacy in sub-Sahara Africa where Nigeria belongs has done well hence literacy attainment among children in Nigeria may not significantly improve before 2015. considering the above report and the fact the family is best described as a key player in both individual and national development; because it is what the family gives out that the society uses; it means that if the family does not consciously participate in imparting literacy skills among children, the future generation may operate without adequate literacy skills which may lead the society to operate in the dark. Perhaps it is on this not that Oye tunde and Muodumogu (2008) sought to find out the ways parents involve in their children's literacy development using the following as criteria:

1. To read to children;
2. Parents acting as literate models through reading of books, magazines, newspapers etc.

*Author α : Department of Curriculum & Teaching Faculty of Education University of Calabar Calabar, Nigeria.*
*E-mail : abamarikposfso@yahoo.com.*
*Author σ : Department of Primary Education Studies Faculty of Education Rivers State University of Education Rumuolumeni, P.M.B. 5047 Port Harcourt, Rivers State.*
*Author ρ : Department of Curriculum & Teaching Faculty of Education University of Calabar Calabar, Nigeria.*



© 2013 Global Journals Inc. (US)

3. Fosters literate rich homes by providing books, magazines, newspapers for children;
4. Provision of literate materials such as papers pencils and crayons; and
5. Talk and listen to children.

In addition to Oye tunde and Muodumogu's idea, some other ways may be:

i. Engage a teacher to teach literacy skills in the home;
ii. Teach literacy skills at home by either parents or older siblings;
iii. Provision of a reading corner or library in home; and
iv. Collaborate with the children's teacher in teaching literacy skills.

## II. Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study shall include but not only restricted to:

i. Establish the proportion of children that have acquired different kinds of literacy skills;
ii. Determine if the nature of school (private or public) affect the acquisition of literacy skills among children;
iii. Determine if the child's acquisition of literacy skills differ according to their gender;
iv. Examine the extent, family or parents participate in various ways in carrying out the role of teaching literacy skills among children.

## III. Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the following research questions emerge:

1. What proportion of children possesses the different forms of literacy skills?
2. What are the ways parents participate in teaching literacy skills among primary school children?
3. What are the barriers encountered by parents or families in teaching literacy skills among primary school children?
4. How does the nature of school attended by pupils influence their literacy skills?
5. How does pupils gender influence their literacy skills?

## IV. Hypotheses

The following postulations are made for this study:

1. The gender of pupils does not significantly influence literacy skills among the pupils;
2. The nature of school (private or public) attended by pupils does not significantly influence the literacy among the pupils.

## V. Significant of the Study

Since acquisition of literacy skills among all category of persons is an essential element for life. It is hoped that the findings of this study shall enhance it through the following ways:

i. The schools shall be made to take the business of teaching literacy skills serious by engaging teachers to participate in workshops; and
ii. The families or parents shall be made to appreciate their roles as well as deduce the ways to overcome the barriers which militate against their teaching children literacy skills. This shall be achieved through enlightenment campaigns from various agencies.

## VI. Methodology

The study had pupils in primary 3-6 whose age range from 8-13 years as the subjects of the study. It had a sample size of 532 drawn from both the private and public schools. There were 232 male and 300 females and there were 140 from the public and 392 from the private schools. A total of 540 questionnaires were administered but 8 were wrongly filed, therefore 532 were used for analysis. To successfully reach the subjects, the researchers' employed the services of 5 research aids who are undergraduates from higher institutions in Nigeria. Before engaging them, the researchers had administered a test retest exercise to 40 pupils. This exercise took place under two weeks. The data generated was analyzed with Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient that gave a result of 0.75. Considering the result, the instrument was judged to possess a good degree of reliability. A questionnaire titled "Family and Child's Literacy (FACHIL)" constitutes the basic instrument. It's validity was carried out by giving to experts whose inputs may have accounted for the high reliability level of the instrument. It initially had 16 items and in course of its validation 5 items were expunged and it was finally made up of 11 items. The items dealt with different variables such as literacy skills of pupils, nature of pupils' schools, gender of pupils, various roles of families in teaching literacy skills among pupils and the barriers militating against the families in carrying out their roles. The questionnaire had two forms of responses. Yes and No was used to determine the proportion of pupils that possess different literacy skills. Considering the age and level of the pupils, the questionnaire was 3-point Likert scale of Strong Yes (3-point), Yes (2-point) and No (1-point).

Accidental sampling technique was adopted in selecting the subjects. This was used because the questionnaire was administered on the subjects at the homes, schools, streets, markets, churches and many other places. And it gave the opportunity to interview children from different backgrounds. The study took place in Port Harcourt City, Nigeria; the capital of one of the richest oil producing states in Nigeria.



© 2013 Global Journals Inc. (US)

## VII. Data Analysis

Various statistical tools were adopted in analysing the data collected. The tools are as follows:

1. Simple percentages was adopted to determine the proportion of pupils that possess different literacy skills;
2. Means was adopted to determine the roles and barriers of parents or families in teaching literacy skills among pupils;
3. Chi square was used to determine if gender and the nature of schools attended by pupils influence the acquisition of literacy skills.

## VIII. Results and Data Presentation

*a) Research Question One*

What proportion of children possesses different forms of literacy skills?

*Table 1 :* Responses to the proportion of pupils that possess different Forms of literacy skills

| Literacy skills | % or Number that possess the skill | % or Number that do not possess the skill |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | 424 or 80% | 108 or 20% |
| Writing | 372 or 70% | 160 or 30% |
| Arithmetic | 348 or 65% | 184 or 35% |

The table above shows that 80% or 424 out of 532 pupils can read, 70% or 372 out of 532 pupils can write and 65% out of 532 pupils can solve simple Arithmetic. On the other hand, 20% or 108 out of 532 pupils cannot read, 30% or 160 out of 532 pupils cannot write while 35% or 184 out of 532 pupils cannot solve simple Arithmetic.

*b) Research Question Two*

What are the ways parents participate in teaching literacy skills among primary school children?

*Table 2 :* Responses to the ways parents participate in teaching literacy among primary school children

| S/N | Items | X | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Employment of home teachers | 1.90 | Accepted |
| 2 | Parents or older ones engage in teaching children | 2.08 | Accepted |
| 3 | Co-operation between parents and teachers in teaching the child. | 1.72 | Accepted |
| 4 | Parents or guardians studying or making children to read before them. | 1.59 | Accepted |

Teaching of children by parents or older ones, co-operation between parents and teachers in teaching the child, employment of home teachers and parents or guardians studying or making children to read before them with 2.08, 1.72, 1.90 and 1.59 respectively as means are considered the various ways families get involved in teaching literacy skills among primary school pupils.

*c) Research Question Three*

What are the barriers encountered by parents or families in teaching literacy skills among primary school children.

*Table 3 :* Responses to barriers encountered by parents or families in teaching literacy skills among primary School children

| S/N | Items | X | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Parents job do not give them time to teach literacy skills among their children. | 1.90 | Rejected |
| 2 | Commitment by parents to examine their pupil's books and make inputs or corrections. | 2.00 | Accepted |
| 3 | Literacy level of parents. | 2.19 | Accepted |
| 4 | Provision of literacy or reading corner in the homes. | 1.66 | Accepted |

Lack of library at homes, literacy level of parents and lack of commitment by parents with mean scores of 1.66, 2.19 and 2.00 respectively are considered barriers to the teaching of literacy skills to children by parents.

*d) Hypothesis One*

Test of influence of gender on the literacy level of primary school pupils.

*Table 4 :* Test of influence of gender on the literacy level of primary school pupils

| Variables | N | df | Calculated $X^2$ | Critical $X^2$ | Level of sig. | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Males<br>Females | 232<br>300 | 1 | 12.6 | 3.84 | .05 | Rejected |



© 2013 Global Journals Inc. (US)

Since the calculated chi of 12.6 is higher than the critical chi of 3.8 at.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis stands rejected. Therefore gender influences the literacy level of primary school pupils.

*e) Hypothesis Two*

Test of influence of the nature of school (private and public) on the literacy level of primary school pupils.

*Table 5 :* Test of influence of the nature of school on the literacy level of primary school pupils

| Variables | N | df | Calculated $X^2$ | Critical $X^2$ | Level of sig. | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Private school | 392 | 1 | 11.34 | 3.84 | .05 | Rejected |
| Public school | 140 | | | | | |

An interpretation of the table above shows that chi calculated value of 11.34 is greater than the chi critical value of 3.84 at.05 level of significance. As a result the null hypothesis is hereby rejected and it may be declared that the nature of school significantly influences that literacy level of pupils.

## IX. Discussion and Implications

One of the findings of this study claims that 80%, 70% and 65% of the children can respectively read, write and solve simple Arithmetic. This discovery may be surprising to many because there seem to be general assumption that there is poor level of literacy among women and children in Nigeria (Robinson-Pant, 2003). On the other hand, one is forced to believe the findings because about 74% of the children used for study were drawn from private schools. In Nigeria the notion that the private schools is better than the public schools is yet to be disputed; just as Uzoeshi and Asuru (2005) asserts that:

Those who attended pre-primary school were more successful in school, with a high percentage of high school grades… Most nursery schools in Imo State operate at a high standard due to the fact that they are owned by private individuals who monitor the activities of both the teachers and pupils.

Going by this trend of thought, one considers the issue of monitoring to be double barrelled; because just as the proprietors monitor teachers and pupils so do the parents monitor the progress of their children by employing home teachers, indulge in teaching them, co-operate or collaborate with the teachers and studying with them. No doubt, if the parents actively participate in the above activities it may account for attainment of literacy among children. And this will imply that there is growing awareness among the Nigerian public for families or parents to be meaningfully involved in their children's literacy and that the school may not do it all alone.

If the family takes the credit of ensuring high level of literacy among the children, it means that certain factors which may inhibit effective literacy skills may not be found. Adamu (2008) identified disunity and quarrels between parents or among siblings, broken homes; care and attention at home etc. as factors that may account family problems in attaining literacy among children. Although he listed use of cane by teachers, absence from school, irregular attendance of teacher, often change of school by children, overcrowded classrooms and many more as school related factors.

Going by the findings of this study, parents seem to actively participate in the teaching of literacy skills among their children. This does not imply that they may not be limited by some factors identified by Adamu and perhaps other factors such as literacy level of parents, commitment of parents to examine their children's books and make corrections or inputs as well as provision of library or reading corners in their homes. If the findings of this study should be granted correct it means that there is poor reading culture in most families hence there seem to be illiterate parents, absence of library in homes and lack of commitment to teach literacy skills to the children. Although the children did not consider the nature of their parents job as a source of barrier but evidence are bound to show that some parents leave the house early and come back late or operate off-shore and on-shore jobs.

The study extended its tentacles to examining if nature of school and gender of the children influence the attainment of literacy among children. In affirmation to the common notion that private schools are better than public schools; the study upholds that the nature of school attended by children exerts significant influence on the literacy skills of the children. This suggests that those who attend private schools are academic superiors to those who do not and may be richer for future education. In a similar vein, it is understood that gender exerts significant influence on the children in terms of acquiring literacy skills. This finding seems to accredit the belief that girls are better in oral or English language than the boy; just as is said that the boys are better than the girls in Arithmetic or Mathematics. This simply means that gender plays a role in the type of skill an individual acquires.

## X. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Primary school pupils in the city of Port Harcourt possess literacy skills;



© 2013 Global Journals Inc. (US)

2. Families participate in making children acquire literacy skills by teaching them, co-operate with the teachers, engage home teachers as well as making the children to read before them;
3. Factors which pose problems to the families' participation in their children's literacy skills are lack of library at homes and literacy level of parents and lack of commitment by parents;
4. Gender of pupils holds significant influence on their acquisition of literacy skills;
5. The nature of schools attended by children significantly influences their literacy skills.

## XI. Recommendations

Following the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

The families need to be encouraged through mass enlightenment campaigns which may be sponsored by NGOs or other agencies on the need for families to have a library, teach children themselves, employ a home teacher, collaborate with their children's teacher as well as show commitment to the academic needs of the children.

## XII. Suggestions for Further Readings

Following the findings of this study, further studies are needed in the following areas:

1. The literacy level of primary school children in the rural areas need to be ascertained since the study was city based and those sampled were all drawn from the city.
2. The literacy level of primary school children in the public schools need to be ascertained because the sampled subjects were drawn from the public primary schools.
3. There could be need to carry out a comparative study on the literacy skills between the pupils in the private and public schools as well as the urban and rural schools.

## References Références Referencias


1. Adamu, Z.L. (2008). Learning disabilities: A Psychological perspective. A paper presented at a Conference organized at University of Port Harcourt by the *Association of Child Development and Communication Disorder, Nigeria* on 23rd -26th June, 2008.
2. Brooks-Gunn, J., Berlin, L.J. & Fuligni, A.S. (2000). Early Childhood Intervention programmes: What about the family? In J.P. Shonkoff, S.J. Meisels (Eds). *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention (*2nd ed). New York: Cambridge University Press.
3. Ezekiel-Hart, K. and Adiele, E.E. (2008). Family life: A key component of quality education. A paper presented at the 20th Annual Conference of the *Association for promoting quality education in Nigeria* (APQEN) Held at Federal College of Education Technical Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria.
4. Lauglo, J. (2001). Engaging with adult: The case for increased support to Adult Basic Education in Sub-Saharan African. Washington: *World Bank African Region Human Development Working Papers Series.*
5. Oyetunde, T.O. and Muodumogu, C.A. (Parent's involvement in their children's literacy development: Findings and implications for building effective home school partnerships. A paper presented at a Conference organized by the *Association of Child Development and Communication Disorder, Nigeria* held at University of Port Harcourt, 23rd -26th June, 2008.
6. Robinson-Pant, A. (2003). Overview of learning programmes for literacy and more general life/vocational skills for women. A paper produced for UNESCO EFA Monitoring report team. http//:www.com Retrieved 14th May, 2009.
7. Uzoeshi, K.C. and Asuru, V.A (2005). The influence of pre-primary school education on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Orlu Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. *The Childhood Education Journal of Association of Teachers in Childhood Education*. 1 (1), 17.




© 2013 Global Journals Inc. (US)

This page is intentionally left blank

© 2013 Global Journals Inc. (US)