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# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOME LITERACY PRACTICE AND READING INTEREST DEVELOPMENT AMONG PRIMARY 1 SCHOOL CHILDREN IN AWKA: MODERATING ROLE OF PARENTS/CAREGIVERS EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

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## ABSTRACT

*The study examined the moderating effect of parental educational background in the relationship between frequency of parent home literacy practice (conceptualized in two dimensions; parent teaching and shared reading) and children's development of interest in reading as they advance in later school age. Sample for the study consist of N = 78 children; 42 girls (53.85%), and 36 boys (46.15%) in primary 1 classes, who were randomly selected from 2 privates and 1 public primary schools in Awka,; age ranged from 4 to 6 (mean age = 4 years; SD = 1.03). Three measures were employed for the survey namely: parent teaching scale, shared reading scale, and reading interest scale. Assessment of children's home literacy practice, and reading interest were made through their mother. Moderated hierarchical multiple linear regression statistics were utilized for the data analysis using SPSS, version 23. Result indicated that shared reading and parent teaching were positively and significantly associated with children reading interest, and these relationships were moderated by parent's educational background: children from parent with high educational background do engage more in home literacy practice (shared reading and teaching) with parent and show more interest in reading than children from parents with low educational background. Conclusion and recommendation were made based on the finding.*

**Keywords**: home literacy practice, shared reading, parent teaching, reading interest, and educational qualification

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## Introduction

Naturally, every child has the tendency to behave in a way that indicates reading interest when you observe them closely (Pezoa et. al., 2019). The differences they shown in reading later in life dependent on the extent of the literacy environment they were exposed to early as a child. Studies have indicated the importance of developing interest in reading; associating it with children's language and vocabulary skills development, as well as knowledge of printed conventions and subsequent future academic achievement (Dong & Chow, 2022; Niklas et. al., 2020; Silinskas, et. al., 2020; Pezoa et. al., 2019; Carroll et al., 2019; Farrank & Zubruck, 2012). Given the importance of acquiring reading skills, especially in today's high demanding literacy global environment, the need to explore individual and environmental antecedents, as well as understanding their mechanisms in predicting children reading interest becomes necessary now than ever.

Mounting research evidences suggest that home literacy practices, especially parents/caregiver's shared reading time with their children or teaching the children when they are small, are among the most significant antecedent of children imbibing a reading habit or showing interest in reading as they advance in life (Lau & Richard, 2021; Zgourou et. al., 2021; Lonigan, & McQueen, 2015; Malin, Cabrera, & Rowe, 2014; Broody & Diamond, 2012; Roberts et al., 2005, Sénéchal, 2006; Frijters et al., 2000). While, extensive research has been made on antecedents of reading interest, the mechanism of the boundary condition relating to the inevitable differences in children literacy environment in term of parent/caregiver's educational background as moderating factor has not been explored

In the foregoing, we argued that when discussing children, their literacy activities, and reading habits, the role of parental/caregiver's academic background should not be undermined. Parents/caregivers may differ in their abilities, potentials and experiences in creating a literacy environment for their children. Meanwhile, shared reading and teaching require that the person has certain level of knowledge. Therefore, differences in parental/caregivers academic background are likely to play a moderating role. We tentatively argued, that, parents who have high or strong educational background may more likely have a better knowledge, better experience, and will equally be more likely to provide better literacy activities for their children than parents with low or no educational level or background. Overall, study on the moderating effect of parental education in the relationship between home literacy practice and reading interest has not been explored by any study to the best knowledge of the researchers. Therefore, the current tends to examine the moderating role of parental educational level in the relationship between home literacy practice and reading interest

development in primary 1 school children in Awka, aged 3 to 7 years.

**Literature Review and Hypothetical Development**

**Parent-children home literacy practice and children reading interest**

Telling stories, sing alphabet letters, shared storybook reading, teaching children how to read, spell, and write letter words and numbers; all reflect home literacy activities that may likely provides a unique context for children's reading interest (Montag, Jones, & Smith, 2015). Putting all these factors into consideration, this study conceptualized home literacy practice as two dimensions; parent/caregivers/older siblings teaching, and shared reading with, the children. There is converging evidence for the association between parents' literacy practices (such as shared book reading or teaching of letters words, and numbers) and the early interest children show in reading. Based on longitudinal design studies conducted in Europe, home literacy activities such as shared reading and parent teaching prior to formal schooling of a growing child at kindergarten (aged 4 to 7) have been found to be positively associated with their development of language ability, reading comprehension, independent reading, and reading interest at the end of Grade 1 (Lau & Richard, 2021; Pezoa et. al., 2019; Hume, Lonigan, & McQueen, 2015; Malin, Cabrera, & Rowe, 2014; Sénéchal, 2006). In Awka state, Nigeria, Chigbo-Obasi et.al. (2022) also found a significant positive correlation between home literacy practice and reading interest of children in nursery schools. Given these theoretical postulations and empirical evidences, we therefore expect that teaching of children and shared reading between parents and children will likely predict reading interest in this study conducted, hence the following hypotheses

- ✓ Hypothesis 1: Shared reading with children early in life will have a significant positive relationship with children's reading interest development in later formal schooling age.

- ✓ Hypothesis 2: Parents/caregivers/elder siblings teaching the children prior to formal schooling will have a significant positive relationship with children's reading interest development in later formal schooling

**Parental Background as a moderator**

Of all studies conducted so far, studies that examined moderating role are very few, and none has ever considered parents'/caregivers' educational level. Meanwhile, shared reading or teaching may require caregivers to possess certain level of knowledge in order to read the text and to engage in verbal exchanges with their children. Thus, the quantity and quality of shared reading may potentially be undermined by caregivers' proficiency in knowledge and quality of understanding the reading comprehension to be able to explain the printed meaning to the child. Thus, the parent/caregivers educational background should have the potency of affecting children reading interest differently.

**Aims/ Objective**

The present study, therefore, tends to expand knowledge on reading interest by examining relationship between home literacy practices (shared reading and teaching) and primary 1 child's reading interest development, and further explored the moderating role of parental background which no study in Sub-Saharan has ever considered.

Generally, the study is guided by the following research questions and corresponding hypothesis:

**Research questions:**

- ✓ Is there a relationship between shared reading and children's reading interest?
- ✓ Is there a relationship between parent teaching and children's reading interest?
- ✓ Is parenting educating background moderate the relationship between HLP and RI

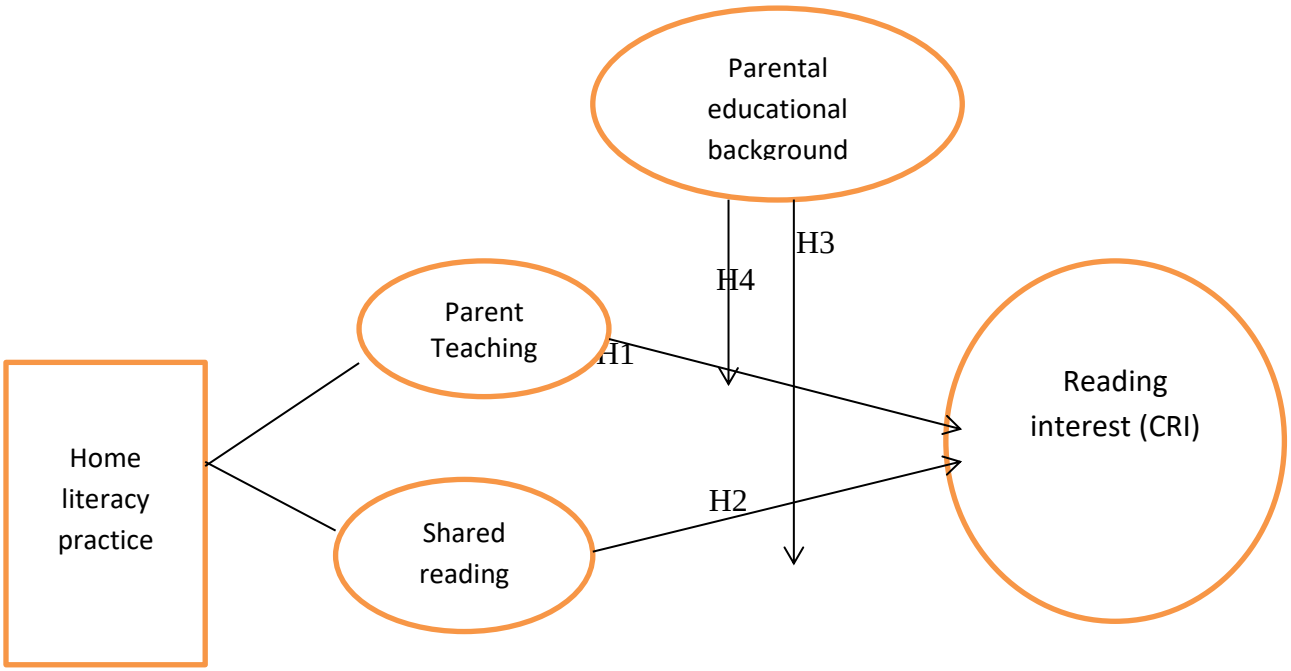



Figure 1: Conceptual model of the moderating role of parental educational background in the relationship between home literacy practices and reading interest of primary 1 children in Awka, Nigeria.

**Hypotheses**

- ✓ Shared reading with family members (whether parents / older siblings / caregivers) at early age will positively correlate with children's reading interest as they grow in their later school age.

- ✓ Teaching the children at their early age at home (whether by parents/older siblings/caregivers) will positively influence their reading interest in their later school age.

- ✓ Parental educational background moderates the relationship between home literacy practice and children's development of reading interest in their later school age.

**Design /Method /Approach**:

The study is a quantitative, cross-sectional design that utilized a retrospective based question (item) method of data collections through the mothers of the target children sample. Sample for the study comprised 78 children, 42 girls (53.85%), and 36 boys (46.15%) in primary 1 classes, randomly selected from 2 privates and 1 public primary schools in Awka, with majority of them (76.92%) coming from private school, age ranged from 4 to 7 (mean age = 4.05 years; SD = 1.03). These children were assessed on the variables of interest through their mothers. The questionnaire copies were sent through the teachers of the children to their mothers.

All the mothers reported on their educational attainment and the distribution was as follows: 22 were SSCE/WASCE holder, 21 were HND/B.Sc. holder, 11 had OND, 10 went to secondary school up to JSS 3 and stopped, 6 had first school leaving certificate (FSLC), 5 had master degree, and 3 had Ph.D. With respect to their occupation, greater number of them were civil servant, 60 (58.87%) were traders. Mothers also reported on family composition: 96.1% of the children lived in families with two parents. The number of children in a family ranged from one to 8 (M = 2.44, SD = 1.20). In terms of the language spoken in the family, all children lived in families where Igbo and English language was spoken at home. The sample was therefore highly homogeneous in ethnic and cultural background.

A micro-level data from 78 mothers of primary 1 children responses randomly obtained from two private and one public primary one classes

**Formal consent**

The mothers were told that participation is voluntary, assured that they response will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this work. However, they were pleaded to fill the questionnaire carefully and sincerely, and return them back to the teachers in the school. At the end, all questionnaires distributed were returned (100 percent return rate) and all were properly filled (100 percent valid response rate).

**Measures**

We feel that primary 1 class children may still be too small to be able to express themselves very well; therefore, we used parent-reported information. For the instruments, we developed items for the three measures curled from the past studies. The measures include; (1**) reading variable scale**, one example item sample is "How frequently is this your child attempt looking into any children's book at home?", (2) **shared reading scale,** item sample is "When your child was attending Kindergarten, how often did you (or someone else in the family) read books (do assignment together), recite

poems, tell stories, to him or her or together with your child?", and (3) **parent teaching scale,** item samples are ""When your child was attending Kindergarten, how often did you (or someone else in the family) teach him or her how to: (i) read letter words?" (ii) spell letter words? and (iii) write words, or (4) read numbers. All the variables were measured on 5-likert response of: 1 = not at all; 2 = rarely; 3 = once or twice a week; 4 = several days a week; 5 = once a day/daily. Overall, the average scores of all the items for each variable were created and used for assessing each of the variables' construct holistically. High scores indicate high level of each of the variable home practice whereas low score show their low home practices on the variables.

Finally, we assessed **parent educational background** by asking parent their educational qualification with 9 scale options: 1 = do not attend primary school, 2 = attend but do not finish primary school, 3 = FSLC holder, 4 = WASSCE/SSCE/NECO certificate holder, 5 = OND holder, 6 = HND/B.Sc Holder, 7 = Master degree holder, 8 = Ph.D. holder, 9 = A professor.

**Control variables:**

We expect that mother's age, parental and occupation may l have a serious extraneous effect, and we therefore entered them as covariates or as controlled variable and control their effect by means of statistical analysis.

**Statistics**

Data were analyzed using SPSS software package, version 23. Descriptive and correlation statistics were employed to answer the research questions, and moderated hierarchical multiple regression statistics model were utilized to test the hypotheses.

**Presentation of Results**

**Table 1:** cronbach alpha reliability and Zero-order correlation analysis showing relationships among the variables

| Variables | M | S.D | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1-Gender (c) | 1.26 | .50 | - | | | | | | | |
| 2 - Age (C) | 4.36 | .82 | .18 | - | | | | | | |
| 3 - Age (M) | 38.15 | 3.58 | .13 | .14 | - | | | | | |
| 4 - PEB | 5.25 | 1.30 | .12 | .13 | .13 | - | | | | |
| 5 - MOCC | 3.90 | 2.17 | .15 | .15 | .13 | 18* | - | | | |
| 6 – RI (p1) | 3.71 | 1.16 | .11 | .19* | .16* | .28** | .22** | (.81) | _ | |
| 7 – SR(k) | 3.8 | 1.42 | .13 | .18* | .08 | .30** | .31** | .54*** | (.88) | |
| 8 - PT (k) | 3.8 | 1.41 | .14 | 16* | .17* | .33** | .48* | .61*** | .68*** | (.79) |

*, *** = p< .001, ** = p < .01, * p < .05,*

Key: N = 78. Cronbach's alpha (α) for the scales are reported in parenthesis along the diagonal. Children's gender, Age (C ) age of the children, age (M ) age of the mother (age were coded in years). Parental Educational Background (PEB), SR(k) = shared reading in kindergarten, PT(k) Parent teaching in kindergarten, and RI(p1) Reading Interest in

primary 1, all were coded such that higher scores indicated high performance on these variables

As shown in the correlation analysis results (table 1), children's gender and children's age had no significant link with any of the main variables. Mother's age was positively correlated with children's interest in reading (r = 0.19), parent-child shared reading (r = 0.18), and parent teaching (r = o.16), and all were significant at p < .05. However, the four main variables were significantly correlated with one another. As shown in in regression analysis result (table 2), mothers' reported frequency of shared reading (β = 0.54, p < .001), and frequency of parent/caregiver's teaching (β = 0.61, p < .001) during children kindergarten strongly predicted children reading interest in their later school year in primary 1. Further explication of the results revealed that parent teaching accounted for more percentage variance (30.0%; $R^2$ change = 0.30) in children reading interest outcome than shared reading variable, which accounted for 23% variance in reading interest ($R^2$ change = 0.23). However, these variances contributed by these two predicting variables were found to be positively significant; F (1,73) = 28.65, p < .001 for shared reading, and F (1.73) = 37.85, p < .001 for parent teaching.

Table 2: The moderating roles of Parental Educational Background in the relationship between HLP (Shared Reading & Parent Teaching) and Reading Interest

| Variables | step1 | step 2 | step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 0,11 | 0.12 | 0,11 | 0.10 | 0.11 | 0.11 | 0.12 |
| Occupation | 0.22* | 0.22* | 0,21* | 0..22* | 0.28* | 0.22* | 0,22* |
| SR(k) | | .54*** | .48*** | 0,69*** | | | |
| PEB | | | 0,28*** | 0.75*** | | | |
| SRxPEB | | | | 0.84*** | | | |
| PT(k) | | | | | 0.61*** | 0.54*** | 74*** |
| PEB | | | | | | 0.28*** | 0.88*** |
| PTxPEB | | | | | | | 0.96*** |
| $R^2$ | 0.08 | 0.34 | 0.38 | 0.22 | 0.41 | 0.45 | 0,34 |
| $R^2$ change | 0.08 | 0.23 | 0.21 | 0.18 | 0.30 | 0.33 | 0,25 |
| F-change | F(3,74) = 2.96 | F(1,73) = 28.65** | F(1,72) =26.31*** | F(1,71) =17.54*** | F(1,73) = 37.85* | F(1,72) =3955*** | F(1,71) = 29.53*** |
| F-value | F(3,74) = 2.96 | F(4,74) = 16.72** | F(5,72) = 10.60*** | F6,71) =8.32*** | F(4,73) = 21.57* | F(5,72) = 24.78 | F(6,71) = 19.84** |

****p < 0 .001; **p < 0 .01; *p < 0 .05*

**Moderation Effect (hypotheses 3a and 3b)**

Also, in the same table 2 of the moderated hierarchical regression analysis, results revealed a statistically significant interaction between shared reading and parental educational background (β = 0,84, p < .001) and also between parental/caregiver's teaching and parental educational background (β = 0.96, p < 0 .001), in predicting children reading interest. Both findings imply that parental education had strong moderating effect on the relationship between shared reading and children reading interest on one hand; and between

parent/caregiver's teaching and children reading interest on the other hand. Graphically (figure 1 and 2), the result further explained that these relationships were moderated in such a way that they become stronger for parent with high or strong educational background than for parents with low educational background.

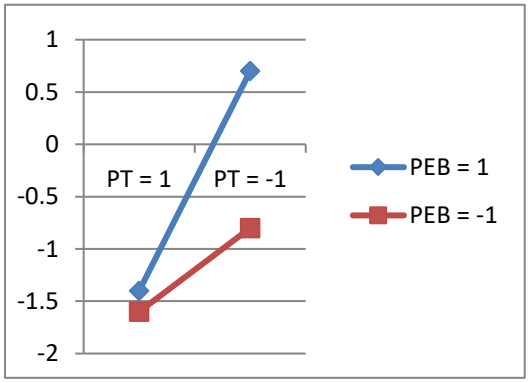



FIGURE 1

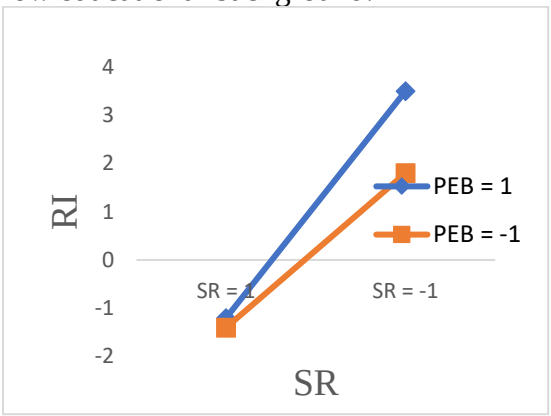



FIGURE 2

*Graphical representation of the moderating role of in the positive relationship between persuasive mapping (Hypothesis 3), organizational stewardship (H4) and proactive idea implementation*

**Discussion of Findings**

The study investigated whether home literacy practices such as frequency of parent shared reading with children and parent teaching the children would predict children's interest in reading, here called reading interest. First, findings revealed that frequent of shared reading with children at home when they are young is significant for nurturing children's interest in reading early in life; as the current study found positive association between the two variables. Secondly, the study also revealed that frequently teaching the children by family members (whether mothers, older siblings, and caregivers) prior to formal schooling was also relevant for children development of reading interest in later school years; as the current study found positively associated between parent teaching and children's reading interest. These two findings are in line with the previous studies (Silinska et, al., 2020; Dong etal., 2020; Niklas et. al., 2020; Silinskas, et. al., 2020; Pezoa et. al., 2019).

Further we explored a new direction of knowledge by investing moderating effect of parent educational level in the relationship between home literacy practices (shared reading and parent teaching) and reading interest development of the young children. As expected, the study indicated that children's parental educational background has a strong moderating effect on the positive impact of shared reading with children and parent teaching on children reading interest. Children from parent with high educational background engage more in home literacy practice (shared reading and teaching) induced by their parent and show more

interest in reading than children from parents with low educational background.

**Implications of the study**

The findings of this study extended knowledge by providing new model of HLP and reading interest knowledge. It contributes to further understanding of the boundary condition in the relationship between home literacy practices and reading interest, and husbands a theory that differences in parental educational backgrounds affect children home literacy and their reading interest development differently; with children from parents with high educational background engage more in home literacy practice and subsequently show more interest in reading than children from parents with low educational background. Practically, the study proved that parents with high level of education have more knowledge and capacity to provide quality and quantity of home literacy practice that tend to increase reading interest habit among the young children than parents with low level of education.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the followings are recommended:

1. Parents should imbibe the habit of teaching the children at home when they are young
2. Parent should encourage older siblings to form a habit of shared reading with their younger ones
3. Parents with low educational background need to be enlightened on the need for home teachers for their young preschool children.
4. Government/non-governmental agencies should organize workshop and seminars on need for home literacy practice for their young children
5. The workshop should target parents especially those with low educational background.

**Limitation**

The study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature of the study precludes causal inferences. The information about home literacy practice and parental educational background was only assessed via parental survey and thus may be biased due to social desirability. The scope of the study was small, and was not statistically the true representation of Nigeria children of the age considered in this country, thus, may not encourage for generalization of the result to large population of Nigeria children.

**Conclusion**

Based on the finding we conclude that home literacy practices such as shared reading, and teaching the children' are important for early children reading interest development and habituation of interest in reading.

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