

Theory and Practice in Child Development

https://tpicd.org

E-ISSN: 2791-9943

Volume: 4 Issue: 2 2024

pp. 47-67

Impediments of Parents' Involvement in Supporting Literacy Skills Development among Pre-Primary School Children in Tanzania

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Article Info

Received: July 2, 2024

Accepted: September 27, 2024 Published: December 30, 2024



10.46303/tpicd.2024.10

How to cite

Machumu, J., Seni, A. J., & Machumu, H. J. (2024). Impediments of Parents' Involvement in Supporting Literacy Skills Development among Pre-Primary School Children in Tanzania. *Theory and Practice in Child Development*, 4(2), 47-67.

https://doi.org/10.46303/tpicd.2024.10

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ABSTRACT

A child's intellectual, social, and emotional welfare is significantly impacted by the engagement and parenting style of their parents. This paper investigates the obstacles parents face in developing literacy skills among pre-primary school children in Tanzania. The study was conducted in six districts of Tanzania. Using a purposive and snowball sampling strategy, 67 parents—29 men and 38 females—were included in the study. This study used a qualitative technique, with a case study design for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Data was gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs) and observation. Trustworthiness was realized through credibility, dependability, conformability transferability. Informed consent was considered, and researchers adhered to the research enterprise norms and principles, by keeping and treating all responses from respondents with high confidentiality. The findings were analysed thematically, yielding several sub-themes. It was discovered that there were various barriers preventing parents from participating in promoting literacy skills development of pre-primary school children. Ultimately, the study suggests that parents should be capacitated with appropriate methods to encourage the development of reading skills in pre-primary schools, as it is critical for parents to support learning both in preschool settings and at home.

KEYWORDS

Parents' involvement; literacy skills; pre-primary school; preschoolchildren; literacy skills development.

INTRODUCTION

In pre-primary school and the formal education system in general, literacy skills indicate whether learning has taken place or not. As they attend school, children should demonstrate competence as they interact with various materials in the course of continuing with other levels of early learning (Anderson & Sayre, 2016). The acquisition of literacy skills begins soon after birth as the child starts to interact with parents and other people around him or her (Mabagala & Shukia, 2019; Sonnenschein et al., 2021). Developing literacy skills is important in enabling the child to learn successfully and achieve better academic results (Leroux et al., 2023). Developing early literacy abilities in children is an uphill battle that involves early involvement by parents and the community around them (Crystal, 2018) to make sure that children are exposed to these skills prior to formal education (Anderson & Sayre, 2016; Zephania, 2018). Moreover, parents are considered to be the first teachers and socializing agents for pre-primary school children, and they are caregivers who provide a nurturing environment where a child can feel safe and excel well in further academic circles. They also provide essential needs such as teaching and learning materials like books and writing materials. Other parents' roles include assisting the children when at home by teaching them how to pronounce, write and count numbers all of which contribute to the development of print awareness and written language, which motivates the child's active learning (Simonds, 2012). Parenting, helping with homework, interacting with school, volunteering at school, and engaging in school decision-making are the five elements of parental engagement that are necessary for literacy development among children (Kurtulmus, 2016). Therefore, parents who engage in parenting skills like literacy and numeracy are considered protagonists in their children's literacy. Furthermore, parental involvement refers to many various activities and practices at home or in school, including parental ambitions, expectations, mentalities, and views on their child's education. (Stutzel, 2019; Leroux et al., 2023).

Globally, there is a gap in how parents foster literacy skills development in preschoolaged children (Easton, 2014). Without parent's or siblings' involvement in literacy practices at home, children may face several difficulties in developing literacy skills and academic achievement (Simonds, 2012). Likewise, the United States Department of Education (2015) adds that during literacy practices at home, parents may read to or draw for children and use some structured ways of involving these children in the book. Parental involvement in literacy practices with pre-primary children can greatly impact children's literacy and learning abilities as it enhances their academic achievement and improves their performance during their progress to higher levels of education (Clark, 2009).

Parental involvement significantly influences the academic achievement of pre-primary schoolchildren (Machumu, 2019). In the context of this essay, parental engagement refers to the act of parents or other carers, such as grandparents, aunts, or uncles, becoming involved in their children's education. To enhance students' social, emotional, and academic development,

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parents and teachers typically work together in a partnership. (Machumu, 2019; Mujtaba et al., 2024). Parental involvement in supporting the literacy practices of children at home is affected by factors such as ethnicity, family per capita income, and education (Leroux et al., 2023). Furthermore, compared to their colleagues with lower education levels, parents with higher education levels are more likely to be involved in school-related concerns. Similarly, parents with higher education typically assist their pre-primary children regularly at home with schoolrelated issues. In the United States of America (USA), there were some initiatives, such as the "Early Reading First" programme established to involve parents in reading practices for enhancing reading skills development among their children before formal schooling (US Department of Education, 2015). The U.S. Department of Education funded the Early Reading First initiative (ERF) to create a model known as "Pre-school Centres of Excellence" that improves the early language reading and writing skills of low-income preschoolers (Mabagala & Shukia, 2019). The Australian Department of Education, Science, and Training once again brought attention to the fact that a large number of preschoolers were enrolled in the formal education system while not having the requisite literacy skills. To avert accepting students with low literacy orientation, DEST (2005), adds that the Australian government launched different home-based literacy learning programs, such as "Closing the Gap Programme" (Harrison et al., 2012) in which parents and siblings, at home, are involved in literacy practices to help their preprimary school children acquire sufficient literacy skills before beginning formal education. According to DEST (2005), the Closing the Gap Programme has successfully helped the enhancement of literacy skill development in pre-primary school children before the beginning of their formal education system.

In Africa, literacy skills development among children is alarmingly low (Basil, 2023; Machumu, 2019; Twaweza, 2019; Zephania, 2018). However, some countries, such as Uganda, Zambia and South Africa, have taken some initiatives to make sure that children begin formal education with the required literacy skills (Nakijoba et al., 2024; Zephania, 2018; Syomwene, 2022). In South Africa, some teachers inform parents through meetings about their role in literacy practices at home to support literacy skills in their children (Mabagala & Shukia, 2019). Due to that initiative, these parents have children performing better on literacy tests at school. As per Kasakula's (2022) research, the implementation of collaborative partners' strategies enabled early literacy instruction in many Zambian schools, with family engagement being made possible. According to Zimba (2012), preschool teachers lacked an appreciation for the development of literacy, which prevented them from providing contexts and activities that would effectively improve nascent literacy skills. In Tanzania, research studies disclose that literacy capacity among pupils at school is poor and is associated with poor parental involvement in supporting literacy skill development among pre-primary school pupils (Machumu, 2019; Mmasa & Anney, 2016). The low level of children's literacy competency is attributed to teachers not performing their work properly in developing the same (Hakielimu, 2015). The inability to read is because children's relatives, including parents, rarely involve

themselves in literacy practices such as reading and drawing with their children (Ngorosho, 2006). Therefore, school-based initiatives taken by the government and non-governmental organizations alone have not helped to deal with the poor literacy skills of children in Tanzania (Twaweza, 2019; Zephania, 2018). Additionally, Kato (2018) found that parents have a significant influence on the development of spoken language and vocabulary as well as confidence-boosting activities by employing various learning resources at home. If obstacles hindering parents' involvement on children's literacy skills remain unchecked, it may lead to negative consequences for the development of literacy skills among children, including but not limited to the inability to read, write, and count. It may also cause poor schooling foundations among the children

Given the foregoing, this study aimed to explore the barriers that prevent parents from being involved in helping their pre-primary school children in six Tanzanian districts develop literacy skills. This study specifically sought to identify the impediments preventing parents from being involved in their child's pre-primary school literacy skill development and to offer solutions for removing such impediments. The data collection process was guided by the following research questions: (i) What are the impediments that hinder parents' involvement in supporting literacy skills development? (ii) What are the best ways that can be adopted to overcome the impediments that hinder parents' involvement in supporting literacy skills development? The study contributes knowledge to the existing literature about literacy skills development among pre-primary school children. Likewise, the study stimulates further research on children's literacy skills development in other regions and generates information for different educational stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, and the government, on the importance of literacy skill development for pre-primary school children. In this regard, the knowledge contributed may help parents and teachers create an educational environment that will promote literacy skills development among children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory base

This study applied the Epstein theory (Epstein, 1996), often known as the theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence. Epstein's theory is the most widely accepted and validated theory of parental participation and student performance (Manilal & Jairam, 2023; Newman et al., 2019). Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence was developed by Joyce Epstein in 1996. Epstein theoretical framework emphasizes the interplay between three major aspects: the family, school and community. With the support of parents, the child's literacy skills and learning competency are developed in three mutual working contexts (Manilal & Jairam, 2023). That is, partnerships between school, family (parents) and community should be established for children to excel in their early learning process. According to Spreeuwenberg (2022), family (parent) involvement in their children's education can widen a child's classroom (pre-primary school) experiences to real-life (society) activities that ensue at home.

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However, it should be considered that for successful literacy skills development among pre-primary school children, neither schools nor family and community work in isolation. That is, learning communities among three perspectives (cf. family, schools and community) should be established. This framework was selected because it offers a fitting justification for the impacts of community, school, and parent interactions. The premise also recognizes the role that parents play in the home, which includes creating a setting that encourages and supports educational endeavours and activities (Manilal & Jairam, 2023; Spreeuwenberg, 2022). The approach acknowledges that the home, school, and community are the three main environments in which children learn and develop and that these contexts can be strengthened or weakened. In order to strengthen ties between families, schools, and the community, the theory focuses on how these three entities interact and communicate, or form partnerships. It is in this mutually shared objective, and parents supportive of children produce the greatest and most positive effects on the child's literacy skills development (Harris, 2014). It outlines six types of home involvement behaviours, including shared decision-making within the school, positive home conditions, home learning activities, communication and involvement at school, and community partnerships (Sonnenschein et al., 2021). Epstein's theory has several advantages, including its belief in traditional notions of parental participation and its acceptance of parents' roles at home, which include supporting educational aspirations and creating an environment in which educational pursuits are embraced and encouraged. Martinez (2015) used Epstein's theory of parental engagement to demonstrate that the six types of parental involvement have an immediate impact on children's academic performance and emotional well-being. Furthermore, the study by Bailey (2017) found that the six types of parental involvement have a direct impact on students' success in terms of school progress.

In this study, Epstein's theory was used to create a fundamental framework for understanding parents' involvement in encouraging their children's literacy skill development; it highlights the potential value of collaboration. Schools, families, and communities must collaborate to have the greatest impact on the children for whom they bear responsibility. However, it's also important to consider Epstein's theory's shortcomings as provided by Bower and Gryphon (2011); first, schools must continue to provide parents with solutions that they can apply at home. This suggests that instructors cannot rely on parents supporting their children in schools where parental involvement is low unless the teacher provides them with a plan for doing so. Second, the current structure of the school defines the parent's position in the decision-making process, ensuring that parental involvement is determined by the school's policies rather than those of the family. Consequently, Epstein's theory was chosen to inform the study.

Pre-primary education in Tanzania

In Tanzanian formal education begins with pre-primary education (TIE, 2016), which is also known as early childhood education and care. Although an early childhood education provision has been taking place in Tanzania, its full integration into basic education awaited until 2014,

with the introduction of the Education Policy (MoEST, 2023; TEN/MET, 2018). Pre-primary education is essential for setting up a child's future academic path. It develops critical abilities and competencies that get children ready for elementary school. Pre-primary education is intended to offer a comprehensive, kid-centred learning environment (Shukia & Marobo, 2024) whereby parents' involvement in developing children's literacy skills is a central focus (Aderson & Sayre, 2016; Basil, 2023). The development of children's bodies, minds, social skills, and emotions is one of the primary goals, and in this stage parents' involvement paves the success of their children's education. With parents' support children should acquire a variety of competencies and skills by the time they reach pre-primary school (Mujtaba et al., 2024). These competencies and skills include fundamental numeracy and science comprehension, early life skills, health awareness, language and communication abilities, and cultural awareness. Recent developments in policy and practices indicate that in 2023, the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) announced a new pre-primary curriculum and syllabus, as was expected given the ongoing reform and evaluation of the 2014 education policy. Curriculum reform for pre-primary, primary, secondary, and teacher colleges began in 2022. TIE, a parastatal body under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST), is in charge of designing and developing curricula, as well as teaching and learning materials for pre-primary, primary, secondary, and teacher education levels (Anderson & Sayre, 2016; Basil, 2023; Mabagala & Shukia, 2019). Moreover, by strengthening fundamental skills and competencies, it gets preprimary school children ready for primary school education. As established in Tanzania's education policy 2014, pre-primary school education envisions promoting pre-primary school children's physical, mental, social, and emotional growth (MoEST, 2014); the primary focus of pre-primary school education is on teaching practical life skills, or early life skills; the curriculum aims to educate preschoolers about environmental and health issues (MoEST, 2023; TIE, 2016). Additionally, pre-primary school students are taught science inquiry, basic numeracy skills, and technology awareness. Moreover, pre-primary education emphasizes cross-cutting themes (including gender, environment, and disability) and integrates teaching, learning, and assessments based on child-centred approaches. In light of the aforementioned, parental involvement in helping their children develop their literacy abilities fosters a love of learning, and any obstacles to this involvement should be addressed and closely examined.

Literacy skills development and parental involvement

Literacy can be conceived as a basic skill, including decoding and encoding the sounds (phonemes) and words (lexemes) of language (Jesson, 2020). This definition links literacy to the social use of language, meaning that literacy is the process through which a society creates and communicates messages, learns, and engages in debate (Jesson, 2020). Building literacy skills among pre-primary school children begins early even before landing at school (i.e., at the family level). That is, parents at home should engage in developing both foundation and conventional literacy skills in their toddlers; these are also known as early literacy skills. (Hadley & Dickinson, 2020; Raising Children Network, 2023). For toddlers to excel in learning parents' involvement in

tpicd.org TPICD 2024, 4(2):47-67 developing early literacy skills about sounds, words and language, communicating and socialization through singing songs, playing with rhythms and drawing is necessary (Bosil, 2023; IAEEA, 2014; Leroux et al., 2023). Studies establish that most literacy skills can be developed among toddlers with support from parents through everyday activities like singing, talking and playing games (Kato, 2018; Rand & Morrow, 2021; Zimba, 2012). Further, writing, phonological memory, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, quick automatic naming of letters or numbers, quick automatic naming of objects or colours, and phonological awareness are all considered to be among these competencies and talents (NELP, 2008a; 2009b).

In the context of this study, literacy development among preprimary children is the process of learning words, sounds, and language in pre-primary school that requires the support of both teachers and parents. Children gain literacy skills so they can write and read with confidence, which eventually helps them master communication skills (Learning Without Tears, 2021; Rand & Morrow, 2021). Evidence about literacy development skills suggests that there are five stages of literacy development: (a) emergent literacy, the preliterate stage that begins when a child starts school (Nakijoba et al., 2024); (b) alphabetic fluency, which starts at the beginning of formal schooling and lasts until the child is approximately eight years old (Fellowes & Oakley, 2019; Hadley & Dickinson, 2020); and (c) learning words and patterns (Kurtulmus, 2016; Raising Children Network, 2023); (d) intermediate reading which entail that children will begin to read more complex texts (Stutzel, 2019); and lastly (e) advanced reading being able to read and comprehend complex texts (Girolametto et al., 2012; Puranik et al., 2018). All these can be attained with parental involvement. Contrary, in pre-primary schools, parents, caregivers, and caretakers' involvement with their children's education varies from parent to parent. There has been a concern that parents do not participate in their children's education and henceforth poor literacy skills development. However, several obstacles need to be examined when looking at parental involvement. Parental involvement pertains to the involvement, encouragement, and participation of parents in their children's education both at home and at school (Llego, 2022). Accordingly, scholars who investigate parents' involvement in education define involvement in many ways: from explaining to kids the value of education (e.g., by having a conversation with them about what they are learning in school) to offering homework assistance, interacting with teachers, and even volunteering in the classroom (Brossard et al., 2020; Llego, 2022; Machumu, 2019). Thus, parental involvement in their children's schooling encourages the growth of their literacy abilities, and any obstacles obstruct this process. This study fairly reveals the problems that prohibit parents from being involved in helping their pre-primary school-aged children develop their literacy abilities and offers strategies for overcoming such impediments.

Impediments hindering parents' involvement in literacy skill development

The amount and kind of parental involvement in their children's education may be influenced by a plethora of circumstances. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995; 2005), two main contributing variables make up the parental participation model that is widely accepted in

the research. Parent factors are the first of these; they comprise sociodemographic characteristics as well as other, more dynamic variables, such as parental attitudes, and so on. School factors, which include more dynamic variables like teacher behaviour and status characteristics that define schools, make up the second contributing factor. Parents view life circumstances as the primary impediment to their participation in supporting the development of literacy skills in pre-primary pupils (Harris, 2014). These include parents' low academic abilities, the expensiveness of the materials needed for parents to engage in literacy practices, and insufficient time for parents to engage in literacy practices with their children. Harris (2014) adds that poor school-community relationships make parents uncomfortable to attend and volunteer for school activities, through which they can learn effective ways of involving themselves in promoting the development of reading and writing skills among preschoolers (Ngorosho, 2011). Likewise, working-class and low-income parents relentlessly struggle to engagement in their children's basic education (Kim, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). Trotman (2001) reveals that schools should exercise the open-door strategy of engaging parents to improvement their children's literacy practices. Consequently, schools and the government at large do not recognize parents as the first teachers who can assist in the advancement of literacy skills in kids before formal education.

Sometimes, parents believe that the task of developing pre-primary children with literacy skills belongs to teachers alone (Zephania, 2018). According to Stutzel (2019), hurdles to parental involvement can be classified into six primary categories: contextual issues, language challenges, and cultural perspectives on appropriate obligations for teachers, parents, and kids. Other barriers include families' lack of comprehension, families' lack of awareness about how to assist children with academic work, and issues of exclusion and prejudice. Likewise, current research has shown that practical issues including time restrictions from working outside the home and parents' experiences with the practice of participating in school-based activities are among the barriers to parental involvement (Nakijoba et al., 2024). Given the above, the impediments that hinder parental involvement in enhancing the reading skills of preschool pupils, including gender stereotypes, traditional beliefs, and a lack of government support towards parents, especially through motivating them to engage themselves in enhancing literacy skills for their children (Bodunrin et al., 2021). Furthermore, poor parental educational background, school-age students with complex communication needs, and differences in parents' experiences among others are the encounters of parents engaging their kid's literacy skills development (Bosah et al., 2020; Leroux et al., 2023).

A study by Mghasse and William (2016) pointed out the negligence of parents as one of the obstacles to access and participation for pre-primary school children. He argued that some parents neglect pre-primary education for young children. As such, this concern negatively affects parents' engagement in assisting literacy skill advancement among preschool children. On the other hand, a study conducted in Nigeria by Bodunrin, et al. (2021) revealed that some parents claimed that books were not available at home for them to teach their children how to

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read. They also lack expertise in some important subjects among parents. Furthermore, parents complain that their busy schedules hinder them from helping their children learn how to read (Bodunrin et al., 2021).

Overcoming impediments hindering parents' involvement

Studies addressing predicaments facing parents' involvement in fostering literacy skill development have found that multiple solutions can be employed to surmount the challenges impeding parents' involvement in supporting the development of literacy skills (Liu & Gao, 2022). According to scholarly strategies, teachers can involve parents in their children's literacy development by assigning reading and writing assignments, assigning homework, providing reading and writing materials, and using storytelling and singing as pre-reading activities (Leroux et al., 2023; Syomwene, 2022). In Nigeria, for parents to make the teaching of reading easier, they buy textbooks and instructional materials to use at home (Bodunrin et al., 2021). Of the trends that Clark (2009) highlighted about the involvement of fathers, Basil (2023) recommended that higher levels of parental involvement in their children's reading include spending a lot of time reading with them and keeping an eye on and evaluating their reading. On the other hand, the author also points out that children frequently believe that their mothers are the ones who taught them to read and all literacy skills. It could thus be said that reading is one of the most sensitive aspects of parental support and contributes greatly to reading achievement (Anderson & Sayre, 2016). Parents also contribute to language comprehension, interest, attitudes towards reading, and class attentiveness (Kimaro & Machumu, 2015; Koch, 2018; Nakijoba et al., 2024). Providing reading materials like books, periodicals, and newspapers and emphasising the value of reading as a worthwhile pastime are only two ways that parents can support their children's reading abilities. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IAEEA, 2014) makes the case that developing trustworthy relationships between families and teachers is essential for fostering a positive relationship between parental participation and children's literacy development. Therefore, trust is necessary for vulnerable cooperation, therefore parents and teachers should have it as well. They should also be willing to take risks because they believe the other party to be trustworthy, honest, open, and competent (Bosah et al., 2020).

METHODS

This study opted for a qualitative approach since parents' involvement in supporting the development of literacy in pre-primary school children is a social phenomenon whose investigations require in-depth information from participants' perspectives. Precisely, the study employed a single case study design, which allowed the use of parents' involvement in literacy skills development as a case to further understand and investigate the phenomenon, population, or general condition. The study was conducted in six rural districts of Tanzania. In this case, to inquire about how parents in rural settings supported the literacy development of their children was central to the study. The total sample for this study was 67 parents of pre-

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primary school children, of whom 29 were males and 38 were females (see distribution in Table 1), obtained through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. In each district, two focus groups were conducted for parents based on a single school. The process begins by initially sampling a parent with a child at the pre-primary school level. A sample parent was endorsed by the head of the school. A sampled parent revealed the whereabouts of other parents who had pre-primary school children and they were included in the study. The total number of parents included in the study was based on the point of saturation and having a balance of participants disaggregated by gender to capture the perspectives of fathers and mothers.

Parents were purposefully sampled because they were the key targets of the study. Data for this study were collected through FGDs and observation methods. The FGD method helped the researchers get in-depth information by asking parents about the impediments which hinder their involvement in supporting literacy skills development and their suggestions on ways to overcome them. The FGD sessions took place at the premises of pre-primary schools, and participants felt comfortable and free to share their views. In due respect, FGDs were heterogeneous, as they included male and female parents. To reduce power dominance throughout the conversations, researchers mediated the sessions. The data was analysed using thematic analysis in three primary steps as suggested by Ezzy (2002): coding, developing themes, and arranging and prepping the data straight from the field. As findings from the field were gathered, themes were inductively developed. Themes were then confirmed by rereading the transcripts and connecting them to the information jotted down in notebooks. Before the analysis, researchers acquainted themselves with the data by listening to audio recordings of the FGD sessions. A verbatim transcription of the FGD sessions was then created. Trustworthiness was assured through credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability.

Moreover, credibility was achieved using different methods of data collection method (triangulation) particularly FGDs and observation, while dependability was made possible through the documentation of all processes in detail, which was then shared among the researchers to help evaluate the processes and confirm dependability. Furthermore, confirmability was assured by the researcher being reflexive and illustrative of the findings so that interested people could check on their accuracy, while transferability was maintained by ensuring the wider applicability of the findings through a thick description. Informed consent was considered, in which the researchers offered fair explanations regarding the objectives and purpose of the study to the research participants. Participants were then contacted to enquire about their desire to participate in the study and to provide written consent. In addition, the researchers treated all respondent responses with the utmost confidentiality, in accordance with the standards and values of the research industry. All private information was released to the public while maintaining anonymity. Thus, the use of the term parent was employed to ensure confidentiality and avoid personal harm to participants. Parents were further distinguished from one another by using alphabetical letters and numbers such as A1, B1, C1,

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D1, etc. This strategy strengthened rapport and made respondents share information with the researchers without fright of being disclosed.

Table 1.Distribution of participants by gender, localities and FGD groups

S/N	Districts	Involved	FGD & Participants		Gender		FGD session
		pre-					Label
		primary	FDG No.	Number of	Female	Male	
		school(s)		participants			
1	Bunda	1	Group 1	6	7	4	A
			Group 2	5			В
2	Butiama	1	Group 3	7	6	6	С
			Group 4	5			D
3	Shinyanga	1	Group 5	7	6	4	E
			Group 6	3			F
4	Kilosa	1	Group 7	5	5	6	G
			Group 8	6			Н
5	Mvomero	1	Group 9	5	7	4	1
			Group 10	6			J
6	Misungwi	1	Group 11	5	7	5	K
			Group 12	6			L
	Total	6		67	38	29	

Key: FGD = Focus group discussion

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impediments hindering parents' involvement

The findings, which were gathered through interviews with parents, revealed the following impediments hindering parents' involvement in supporting literacy skills development among pre-primary school children in the studied primary schools:

Economic activities

Parents involved in the study said that different economic activities were among the major impediments hindering parents' involvement in supporting literacy skills development for preprimary school children in the study location. Peasant agricultural activities, which include cattle keeping and petty businesses such as selling drinking water, fruits, and tomatoes, denied parents the opportunity to support their children with reading and drawing skills. In an FGD session A, one of the research participants, parent D1, had this to say:

I like to help my children develop the skills required, but this becomes very difficult for me to practice as I have no time to stay and share with them. This is because my economic activities consume much of my time. My family depends on my petty businesses, such as

selling potatoes and vegetables at the bus stand downtown (FGD session A, parent D1, 2022).

Likewise, another participant, parent D1, when responding to the question that asked him to explain the impediments hindering parents' involvement in supporting literacy skill development among children added the following:

The problem is a lack of time to assist our children with schoolwork. We have sent them to school; our task is to buy all school requirements; and I am busy with my business. I need more time to struggle for my family. I hope teachers are the best ones, and it is their profession; they can help our children acquire the needed skills (FGD session B, parent B1, 2022).

Affected by economic hardship and lack of teaching and learning materials, a parent posits that: "...the lack of children's books in my kids' schools and my limited financial resources prevent me from providing all the teaching and learning resources my kids need to improve their reading abilities and social skills. I did, however, succeed in purchasing one book to aid in the development of literacy skills. Many educational resources should be Stocked in my home, but this will cost money...' (FGD session J, parent N1, 2023).

As revealed by the parents' assertions in this study, a lack of formal employment opportunities made most of the parents engage in different informal income-generating activities that also consumed a lot of time. Consequently, parents lacked enough time to support their children's literacy skills. A critical analysis of the economic activities of most parents in the study location suggests that the majority of them fall into poverty and have low social and economic status. This observation concurs with that of Reid et al. (2023) who found that diverse family arrangements exist within rural school areas, which often resulted in social, economic and structural impediments for early intervention to involve parents in assisting kids develop literacy skills.

Parents' level of education

The study revealed that some of the parents were not educated, and thus, were not able to read or write. Hence, they failed to help their children develop literacy skills such as reading and drawing. Parent "K1", when asked about the impediments hindering parents' involvement in supporting literacy skill development among children, had the following to say:

One of the challenges hindering us from supporting our children's literacy skill development is that we do not have enough education on how to support literacy skill development. I have never been to school; how can I manage to support my child's literacy skills development? (FGD session C, parent K1, 2022).

The contention by parent 'K1' reveals that parents were ready to support their children's literacy skills, particularly reading and drawing, but they were not able to do so due to the limited literacy skills they had. Following that pre-primary school children whose parents had limited literacy skills had a disadvantage in acquiring these skills. These results are consistent with those of Larocque et al. (2011), who contend that parents' educational backgrounds can

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make it more difficult for them to get involved in their kids' academic success since they may not value education because of their own educational experiences or lack thereof. They may avoid going to school if they have little or no education, which may be related to their inability to criticise instructors or institutions since they feel inadequate (Lansford, 2020). Studies have also shown that parents who are educated enable their children to become successful in their studies compared to parents who are not educated (Kimaro & Machumu, 2015). On the same question, we had the following responses from parent M1 who disclosed the following:

Though my primary education level isn't a sufficient factor, I expected to hear from the school leaders and teachers about how to help my children become more proficient in numeracy, singing and drawing, since some of the fundamental skills they had learned by then had changed significantly (FGD session J, parent M1, 2023).

A critical analysis further reveals that the education level of parents was not sufficient to explain why the parents failed to assist their children with literacy skills such as drawing since drawing is a talent and, individual variances in intrinsic aptitude occur, for example, and high ability levels are associated with a strong drive to excel in a certain area, a strong interest in that domain, and a motivational component (Syomwene, 2022). The findings indicate that economic activities take a considerable amount of time for parents; hence, some do not meet the school requirements of their children. This is contrary to the tenets of the theory of parental involvement, which entails the need for a mutually supportive environment and positive home conditions, home learning activities, communication, and involvement at school and in community partnerships (Manilal & Jairam, 2023).

The findings from FGDs with parents informed us that most of the parents were occupied by family responsibilities, such that they failed to support literacy skill development among preprimary school children. As mentioned by these parents, family responsibilities such as taking care of children, preparing food for the family, washing the family's clothes, and handling cases of illness denied parents the opportunity to involve themselves in the literacy skills development of their children. The data collected via observations also attested to the preoccupation of parents with various income-generation activities. Parents were observed to have a tight schedule, spending a toll of their time on peasantry work or doing petty business, which deprived them of the time to assist their children in literacy development. Since parents were largely concerned with different family responsibilities at the expense of supporting their children to develop literacy skills. Consequently, pre-primary school children whose parents were busy with family tasks other than supporting their literacy skills had low competence in such skills (Steiner et al., 2022).

Parents' beliefs on their involvement

The findings obtained from FGDs with parents indicated that their beliefs were a factor that determined their effective involvement in supporting literacy skills development in pre-primary schoolchildren. Parents viewed their role in supporting their children's literacy skills development as crucial and that their role was to provide children with school requirements

and take them to school, which, seemingly, takes over other responsibilities for their education. These parents viewed literacy development as the teachers' role alone. When asked about the impediments hindering parents' involvement in supporting literacy skills development, one of the participants, parent A1, had the following to disclose:

Many parents do not know if they are also responsible for supporting the development of literacy skills in their children. They believe that it is not their role to support literacy skills development; it is, rather, the teachers' role. Their part is to send the children to school and buy enrollment materials such as exercise books, pens, rulers, rubber, sharpeners, and uniforms, and not otherwise (FGD session D, Parent A1, 2022).

On the other hand, during FDG session E, one of the parents, parent "F1" when asked about his/her beliefs on their involvement in children's literacy skills development, had the following to reports:

I believe that parents have a role in their children's education; they are required to support them with teachers' collaboration. Parents have a chance to support their children at home when they have a chance to do so; unfortunately, many parents see that it is not their role to support children's literacy skills development (FGD session E, parent F1, 2022).

The expression by parent "F1" reveals that some parents are less aware of their role in supporting the literacy skills development of their children, while others are aware. It also shows that parents depend on schools as places where their children may go and acquire literacy skills such as reading and drawing. The study noted that families that depended on schools as the only place for developing literacy skills had children with limited literacy skills. This observation concurs with Nakijoba et al. (2024) who said that parents may have a negative view of school based on their own experiences and backgrounds.

Parents overall psychological

The findings attained from FGDs with parents revealed that their overall psychological resources, which include poor physical and mental health, were impediments to parents' involvement in supporting literacy skill development. Parents argued that when they were ill, they could not manage to help their children develop different literacy skills since most of the time they were struggling to get medical treatment and related services. Revealing her views regarding the question on the blockades hindering parents' involvement in supporting literacy skills development, parent "L1" said the following:

Some parents are eager to help children develop literacy skills, but they fail to do so because of poor physical and mental health. They need some help to sustain their lives. It will be difficult for them to effectively support literacy skills development among children (FGD session F, Parent L1, 2022).

In connection with the above narrative, another parent has the following concerns:

I have never felt comfortable since the death of my dear wife last year. Psychological inadequacy also consumes me. Helping these motherless twins was her evening task after

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work at the office. Hence, I have found it quite difficult to oversee and fulfil their regular requests to assist with the development of their literacy abilities at home. I thought I needed support (FGD session K, Parent A2, 2023).

Likewise, the assertion by parents "L1" and "A2" indicates that parents were able to support literacy skills development in their pre-primary school children, but they were limited by the poor physical and mental health they had together with family matters; hence, children in these families rarely developed their literacy skills, particularly reading and drawing.

Overcoming obstacles hindering parents' involvement

The study found that there are various ways to overcome the impediments hindering parents' involvement in supporting literacy skill development among pre-primary school children.

The findings gathered through FGDs with parents revealed that educating parents on the importance of having learning materials at home could be a useful way to overcome the impediments which hinder parents' involvement in supporting literacy skills development among pre-primary school pupils. They stated that sending children to tuition centres can be a way of overcoming the impediments and parents' commitment to assisting children in literacy skill development. Parent B stated that:

Honestly, it is important for parents to be educated on the importance of having learning materials at home. This will help pupils to study at home with or without the assistance of the parents; pupils can bring friends around and start reading the materials available at home; and this will help pupils to develop their literacy skills only by learning materials that are available at home (FGD session G, parent H1, 2022)

Also, when parent E was asked about ways to overcome the impediments of parental involvement in supporting preschool children's literacy skills development, he had this to say:

We parents need to be committed to the academic achievement of our children. If we are literate, then we need to have a specific time that will be special for teaching children at home. Illiterate parents, can send their children to tuition centres or insist their children learn, and by buying learning materials, this will help to show that parents have been involved in the literacy skill development of the child at home (FGD session H, parent J1, June 2023)

It is, thus, crucial to teach parents the importance of supporting numeracy skills in their pre-primary school children, as revealed in the findings of this study. However, teaching them the importance of education could not be sufficient. To this effect, Bosah et al. (2020) observe that the efforts focused on some aspects of literacy—for example, training parents to teach specific reading skills to their children—are more likely to be effective than the efforts focused on other aspects, such as encouraging parents to listen to their children when reading.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to unearth the impediments hindering parents' involvement in supporting literacy skills development among pre-primary school children and suggest ways to

overcome identified impediments. Moreover, a closer look at the findings and discussion presented in the previous section warrants the following conclusion. First, for success in parents' involvement in literacy skills development among pre-primary school children, the following impediments should be taken aboard: different economic activities, parents' level of education, family responsibilities and parents' beliefs. That is, these are the impediments to effective parents' involvement in supporting literacy skill development. Second, to effective parents' involvement in supporting children's literacy skills development parents should be informed about their roles on the first visits to schools and remain the same as time goes on. Parents need to be aware of the importance of early childhood education to their children. The ways suggested to overcome the impediments hindering parents' involvement in supporting literacy skills development among pre-primary pupils include educating parents on the importance of having learning materials at home, parents' commitment to assisting the development of children's literacy skills and sending pupils to the tuition centres. The study's conclusions make it clear that, for parents to support their children at home, the school administration, children's social welfare, and civil organisations must educate them about the value of their involvement in helping their children develop literacy skills.

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