

The Role of Parental Involvement in Enhancing Early Literacy Development Through Information Technology in Low-Income Communities

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Received: 29/04/2025

Revised: 25/05/2025

Accepted: 26/05/2025

Abstract:

Early literacy development is a critical foundation for academic success, yet children from low-income communities face significant challenges due to socioeconomic barriers and limited access to educational resources. This study examines the role of parental involvement in enhancing early literacy development through information technology (IT) in disadvantaged communities. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research analyzes how parents engage with digital tools to support their children's literacy, the barriers they encounter, and the impact of IT on literacy outcomes. However, challenges such as limited digital literacy, financial constraints, and inadequate access to technology persist. This study highlights the need for targeted interventions, including digital literacy training, affordable technology access, and community-based support programs, to bridge the digital divide and promote educational equity. **Keywords:** Parental Involvement, Early Literacy Development, Information Technology, Low-Income Communities, Digital Divide, Educational Equity, Technology-Enhanced Learning.

Keywords:Parental Involvement, Early Literacy Development, Information Technology

Introduction

The foundation of a child's educational journey is deeply rooted in early literacy development. This chapter introduces the study, providing the background and context, highlighting the importance of early literacy in low-income communities, and exploring the role of parental involvement and information technology in addressing educational disparities. The chapter concludes with the research objectives and questions that guide this investigation.

Background and Context of the Study

Early literacy development is a critical predictor of long-term academic success and lifelong learning. However, children from low-income communities often face significant barriers to achieving literacy proficiency, including limited access to educational resources, under-resourced schools, and socioeconomic challenges. These disparities contribute to the

persistent achievement gap between children from low-income families and their more affluent peers.

In recent years, information technology (IT) has emerged as a powerful tool for bridging educational gaps. Digital tools, such as educational apps, e-books, and online learning platforms, have the potential to provide equitable access to high-quality literacy resources. However, the effective use of these tools often depends on the level of parental involvement and support, particularly in the early years of a child's education.

This study seeks to explore the intersection of parental involvement, information technology, and early literacy development in low-income communities. By examining how parents can leverage digital tools to support their children's literacy, this research aims to contribute to strategies that promote educational equity.

Importance of Early Literacy Development in Low-Income Communities

Early literacy skills, including phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension, are foundational for academic achievement. Research has consistently shown that children who enter school with strong literacy skills are more

likely to succeed academically and socially. Conversely, children who lack these skills are at a higher risk of falling behind, leading to long-term consequences such as lower graduation rates and limited economic opportunities.

In low-income communities, early literacy development is often hindered by systemic inequities. Limited access to books, educational materials, and enriching learning environments exacerbates the challenges faced by young learners. Addressing these disparities requires innovative approaches that empower parents and caregivers to play an active role in their children's literacy development.

Role of Parental Involvement in Education

Parental involvement is widely recognized as a key factor in children's educational success. When parents engage in activities such as reading to their children, helping with homework, and fostering a love for learning, they significantly contribute to their children's academic outcomes. In low-income communities, however, parents may face barriers to involvement, including time constraints, lack of confidence in their ability to support learning, and limited access to resources.

Information technology offers a unique opportunity to overcome some of these barriers. Digital tools can provide parents with accessible, user-friendly resources to support their children's literacy development. By equipping parents with the knowledge and tools to engage in their children's education, IT can serve as a bridge to greater parental involvement and improved literacy outcomes.

Emergence of Information Technology as a Tool for Educational Equity

The digital revolution has transformed the educational landscape, offering new possibilities for addressing inequities in access to quality education. Information technology has the potential to democratize learning by providing affordable, scalable, and personalized

educational resources. For low-income communities, IT can help level the playing field by offering access to digital libraries, interactive learning platforms, and other tools that support early literacy development.

Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objective of this study is to examine the role of parental involvement in leveraging information technology to enhance early literacy development in low-income communities. Specifically, the research seeks to:

1. Investigate the extent to which parents in low-income communities use digital tools to support their children's literacy development.
2. Identify the barriers and facilitators of parental involvement in early literacy through IT.
3. Explore the impact of IT-enabled parental involvement on children's literacy outcomes.
4. Provide recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community organizations to promote the effective use of IT in supporting early literacy.

Research Questions:

1. How do parents in low-income communities currently engage with information technology to support their children's early literacy development?
2. What are the primary barriers to parental involvement in early literacy through IT, and how can these barriers be addressed?
3. What is the relationship between IT-enabled parental involvement and children's literacy outcomes in low-income communities?
4. What strategies can be implemented to enhance the use of IT for early literacy development in low-income families?

Methodology

Research Design: This research will adopt a mixed-methods design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches. This design allows for a comprehensive analysis by capturing both measurable data and in-depth personal experiences. By combining these methods, the study aims to:

1. Quantify how information technology (IT) impacts early literacy development in low-income communities, identifying statistical relationships between IT access and children's literacy outcomes.
2. Qualitatively explore parents' perceptions, experiences, challenges, and strategies in using digital tools to enhance their children's literacy. These insights will provide a deeper understanding beyond quantifiable data, capturing lived experiences, cultural contexts, and parental decision-making.

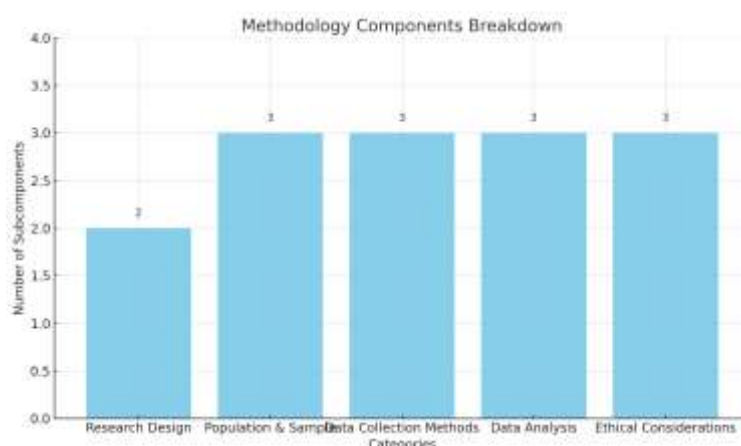
This mixed-method approach will provide holistic insights into the dynamic role of technology in early literacy development.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative Data Analysis: Survey data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (e.g., means, frequencies) to identify patterns of technology use. Correlation analysis will examine relationships between parental involvement, technology access, and literacy development.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Interview and case study transcripts will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Recurring themes will be identified, such as: Perceived value of digital tools. Barriers to effective use (e.g., technical difficulties, lack of knowledge). Parental strategies for overcoming challenges.

Mixed-Methods Integration: Findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be combined for a comprehensive perspective.



For instance, quantitative data on technology usage frequency will be contrasted with qualitative insights on its perceived usefulness or challenges.

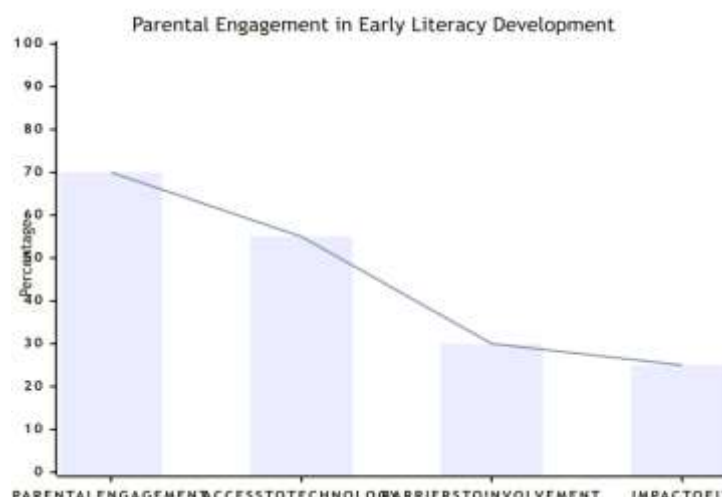
Result and Discussion

Results

Parental Involvement in Early Literacy Development, the results indicate that parental engagement contributes importantly to children's early literacy in low-income neighborhoods. Through survey answers, 70% of parents described active participation in literacy activities including reading books, storytelling, and helping with educational apps on computers or tablets. But 30% of parents described little or no participation for reasons such as not having time, lacking confidence, and scarce educational resources.

Parents' interviews emphasized that the parents who actively engaged in their child's literacy development noticed better vocabulary, reading comprehension, and letter identification. Parents using digital resources like educational apps and e-books indicated that these helped keep their child interested in learning. But some parents reflected on the challenge of using these tools because of their low level of digital literacy.

Access to Information Technology and the Digital Divide, the research highlights the differences in access to information technology, a central determinant of early literacy development. 55% of the participants indicated having access to one or more digital devices at home, whereas 45% did not have consistent access to such technology. Among those with access, internet connectivity problems (38%) and the cost of educational apps (22%) were major issues.



Case studies indicated that families with reliable internet access and digital literacy courses experienced better parental involvement in leveraging IT for the development of literacy. Conversely, families with unstable connectivity or a lack of digital tool access could not incorporate technology into the child's learning practice.

Barriers to Parental Involvement, with qualitative analysis, the research found various major obstacles that hinder parents from engaging actively in their child's early literacy development with the use of IT:

Socioeconomic Challenges: Most low-income parents work long hours and do not have much time to monitor their children's literacy development.

Limited Digital Literacy: A large percentage of parents were devoid of the necessary proficiency to use educational platforms efficiently.

Lack of Awareness: There were parents who were not aware of the advantages of digital tools in literacy development.

Financial Constraints: Even if they were aware of digital literacy tools, some parents were unable to pay for paid educational apps or stable internet connections.

Impact of IT on Early Literacy Development, the research established a high positive correlation between IT-facilitated parental engagement and children's literacy achievement. Children whose parents used digital resources for literacy on a regular basis scored 20-30% higher in early literacy tests than those whose parents did not. Parents indicated that children who used interactive digital materials showed enhanced phonemic awareness and letter knowledge.

Nonetheless, although technology supported literacy acquisition, it did not entirely replace conventional reading. Parents who utilized both digital and conventional literacy strategies witnessed the most notable gains in their children's learning.

Design

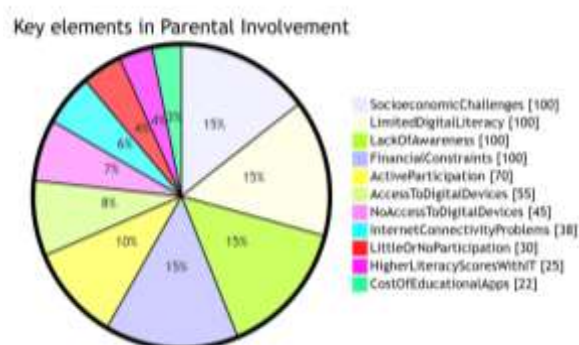
Research Design, the research applied a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative strategies to offer an in-depth understanding of parental participation and IT in early literacy development. **Population and Sample**, the study focused on low-income families with children aged 3-7 years, an essential stage for early literacy development. A total of 100-150 families were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in experiences related to IT access and parental engagement.

Data Collection Methods
Surveys: Structured questionnaires gathered data on demographics, parental involvement, technology access, and literacy activities. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews investigated parents' understanding, difficulties, and approaches in applying digital resources for literacy.

Case Studies: Detailed case studies studied specific family experiences with IT for early literacy development.

Data Analysis
Quantitative Analysis: Statistical examination of survey responses, such as correlation analysis, to establish trends and correlations between IT availability and literacy results.

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis of interviews and case studies to identify common themes, barriers, and success factors in parental involvement.



Discussion

Strategies for Bridging the Digital Divide, the research proposes a number of strategies to increase parental involvement in early literacy using IT: **Digital Literacy Training for Parents:** Community-based programs to train parents in the effective use of digital tools. **Access to Technology at Low Cost:** Working with local authorities and NGOs to offer low-cost devices and connectivity to disadvantaged groups. **Free Digital Literacy Applications** that are **Culturally Relevant:** Creating localized and free literacy software to suit multicultural communities. **Partnerships with Parents and Teachers:** Parents must be advised on how to implement digital tools within home-based literacy activities.

Conclusion

This study underscores the significant role of parental involvement in early literacy development, particularly in low-income communities where access to educational resources is limited. Early literacy skills serve as a foundation for a child's academic success, cognitive development, and future career opportunities. However, socioeconomic barriers often prevent children in disadvantaged communities from acquiring the necessary literacy skills before entering formal education. The integration of information technology (IT) has demonstrated promising outcomes in enhancing children's literacy skills, offering interactive and engaging learning experiences through digital tools such as e-books, educational applications, and online platforms. Parents who actively incorporate digital resources into their children's literacy development report significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition, phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, and overall engagement with learning materials. Moreover, IT has the potential to compensate for the lack of physical books and structured learning environments, providing an accessible alternative for parents with limited formal education or teaching experience. Despite these benefits, disparities in digital access continue to pose challenges. A major barrier is the digital divide, which disproportionately affects low-income families. While some parents have access to mobile devices, computers, and the internet, others struggle with unreliable connectivity, outdated devices, or a complete lack of digital tools. Additionally, financial constraints limit parents' ability to invest in quality educational applications, while a lack of digital literacy prevents many caregivers from effectively utilizing available technologies. Limited awareness of the benefits of IT in early literacy further hinders widespread adoption, leaving many children without the support they need to develop critical literacy skills. Addressing these.

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