ROLE OF FAMILY LITERACY PRACTICES IN CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT
OF LITERACY SKILLS IN BOTSWANA

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ....................................................................................................... iii

TABLE OF CONTENT ........................................................................................................ iii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 1

- Statement of the Problem .................................................................................................. 2
- Rationale ............................................................................................................................ 4
- Definitions .......................................................................................................................... 5
- Summary ............................................................................................................................ 5

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................. 7

- Early Literacy Development ............................................................................................. 7
- Importance of Early Literacy Development ...................................................................... 9
- Home and Literacy Development ................................................................................... 10
- Literacy Practices .............................................................................................................. 12
  - Books and reading .......................................................................................................... 125
  - Play ................................................................................................................................. 127
  - Talk and communication ............................................................................................... 127
  - Literacy resources/materials .......................................................................................... 18
  - Participation in household chores .................................................................................. 20
- Summary ............................................................................................................................ 20

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ................................................................................... 22

- Sample Selection .............................................................................................................. 23
- Sampling Procedures ....................................................................................................... 23
- Sample Size ....................................................................................................................... 24
- Instrumentation ................................................................................................................ 24
- Validity and Reliability ..................................................................................................... 25
- Data Collection Procedures ............................................................................................ 26
- Pilot Study .......................................................................................................................... 28
- Data Analysis ..................................................................................................................... 28
- Summary ............................................................................................................................ 30
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Description of Participants ................................................................. 31
What Literacy Activities do Parents and Children do in the Home? .......... 34
Reading and Writing ........................................................................... 34
Singing ................................................................................................. 35
Drawing and Coloring ......................................................................... 35
Story Telling and Recitation of Rhymes .............................................. 36
Play ....................................................................................................... 37
Household Chores .............................................................................. 37
Vacation and Outdoor Activities ....................................................... 38
Television and Educational Toys ........................................................ 39
Activities done at Home to Promote Children’s Early Literacy Skills ...... 34
Things That Parents do when Reading with Their Child ....................... 40
Discuss Pictures ................................................................................ 40
Point and Repeat Words .................................................................... 41
Mimic Characters ............................................................................... 42
Back and Forth Conversation with Preschooler? .................................. 43
What do you Normally Talk About? ..................................................... 44
Child’s Feelings .................................................................................. 44
Events of the Day ............................................................................... 34
Questions ............................................................................................ 45
Materials/Resources Families Have .................................................... 45
Materials/Resources Families Use ...................................................... 45
Other Community Places Used to Promote Children’s Literacy Skills .... 50
Park and Game Reserve ..................................................................... 51
Places of Worship .............................................................................. 51
Shopping Malls .................................................................................. 51
Restaurants and offices ..................................................................... 52
Public Library ..................................................................................... 52
Time Parents Spend Interacting With Their Preschool Children? .......... 544
Parents’ Beliefs about Promoting Early Literacy Development? .......... 588
At What Age Should Early Literacy Skills be Developed? .................... 62
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the Development of Early Literacy Skills Important?</td>
<td>633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Kind of Assistance do Parents Need?</td>
<td>688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Activities do Parents and Children do in the Home?</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which Materials/Resources do Families Have?</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which Materials/Resources do Families Use?</td>
<td>766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much time do Parents Spend with their Preschool Children?</td>
<td>788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are Parents’ Beliefs About who Should Promote Preschool Children Early Literacy Development?</td>
<td>788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges Parents face in Promoting Children’s Literacy Skills?</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance Parents need</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A</td>
<td>933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B</td>
<td>944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Questionnaire</td>
<td>944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D</td>
<td>1044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permit: Department of Home Economics Education, University of Botswana</td>
<td>1044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX E</td>
<td>1055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB Approval</td>
<td>1055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX F</td>
<td>1056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>1066</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants Demographic Information</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Materials/Resources Participants had</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Materials/Resources used</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Places visited with the child</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Activities that parents do with children</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling Tales</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Assistance Participants Need</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In the past three decades, researchers gained enormous interest in the concept of literacy development. This gave rise to a strong body of research and advocacy for development of literacy skills as early as possible. Interestingly, some researchers have identified the early years as a window of opportunity that should be seized to ensure a successful future in children’s reading and writing (Siegler, Deloache & Eisengberg, 2006).

Senechal and LeFevre (2002) reported that research in early literacy development has extended its focus to the home environment. The duo contended that the home setting has become a critical place for children’s emergent reading and writing skills. Essentially, the home provides the most primitive educational atmosphere for developing language (Hart & Risley, 1995) and providing exposure to printed text (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). Senechal and LeFevre (2002) explained that children need to have acquired literacy knowledge and skills when they begin formal education.

Thus, understanding how the home literacy environment contributes to the development of language and emergent literacy skills is critical in promoting successful literacy acquisition as well as preventing reading failure. As a result, researchers conducted numerous studies on home literacy environment, and these initial attempts
focused largely on parent-child book reading (Bennett, Weigel & Martin, 2002).

Contemporary research, however, has adopted a more comprehensive approach to examining the home literacy environment. For example, Roberts, Jurgens and Burchinal (2005) undertook a study to examine the role of home literacy practices in preschool children’s language and emergent literacy skills. The study examined four measures of home literacy practices: shared book reading frequency, maternal book reading strategies, child enjoyment of reading and maternal sensitivity.

Even though the issue of early literacy practices in the home environment has been explored extensively, very little is known about literacy practices in third world countries. Fundamentally, studies have centered on more developed countries like the United States, Australia and United Kingdom, leaving a vacuum of knowledge regarding practices in countries like Botswana.

**Statement of the Problem**

It is without doubt that previous research has underscored the importance of the role of family literacy practices in children’s development of literacy skills (Beals & De Temple, 1993; Dickinson & Tabors, 1991; Teale, 1987). The existing evidence, however, is based largely on studies that were carried out in more developed countries and few similar studies (Geiger & Alant, 2005; Mathangwane & Arua, 2006; Molosiwa, 2007) have been carried out in developing countries like Botswana. It should be noted that developed and less developed countries differ significantly economically and culturally. This variance obviously have an influence on the family lifestyles and therefore what is embraced by families in one continent or country cannot be generalized to the other
without solid evidence. Furthermore, accessibility to literacy resources is another factor that adds to the disparity. Therefore, the researcher found it worthwhile to undertake a comparable study in Botswana; a country classified as a developing country, in order to provide empirical data from a different continent so as to contribute to the existing body of research.

This move is also propelled by the fact that an overwhelming body of scholarship connects children’s early literacy experiences with later success in reading and writing. Despite increased interest in early literacy development and the influence of the home environment, the few studies conducted in Botswana focused on child rearing practices (Geiner & Alant, 2005); language and literacy issues (Molosiwa, 2006) which focused on the use of Setswana versus English language; and parents’ attitudes towards reading (Mathangwane & Arua, 2006). Even though these studies unveiled crucial information about some aspects of literacy development in Botswana, they fell short of examining what parents do to enhance children’s literacy development.

Also, none of these studies explored literacy development at an early stage, and yet research has identified the early years as critical to language and literacy development as well as important for children’s future success. Furthermore, the studies carried out in Botswana were mainly conducted in rural areas. Therefore, it is beneficial to find out the practices of the families in an urban area.

Hence this research study examined the family literacy practices embraced by parents of the University of Botswana Child study center. The study was guided by the following main research question and sub-questions:

1. How do parents promote early literacy development of children?
a) What literacy activities do parents and children do in the home?

b) Which literacy materials/resources do families have?

c) Which literacy materials/resources do families use?

d) How much time do parents spend interacting with their preschool children?

e) What are parents’ beliefs about who should promote preschool children early literacy development?

f) What challenges do parents face in promoting children’s literacy skills?

g) What kind of assistance do parents need?

**Rationale**

Despite the volume of research studies that have alluded to the importance of early literacy development, research on family literacy practices in Botswana is still scarce. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct this type of study in Botswana in order to develop effective education programs for parents. Given the deficiency of literature about early literacy in Botswana, the outcome of this study may attract the interest of more researchers to further explore other variables of early literacy development in Botswana.

This study also came at an opportune time as the Ministry of Education and Skills Development in Botswana is intending to implement the first Early Childhood Development national curriculum in the year 2010. Therefore this study may elicit important information that can contribute to the enhancement of the curriculum.

The intent of this research study was to examine the family literacy practices embraced by parents of children at the University of Botswana Child Study center. The study identified existing gaps and its outcomes will provide information to assist in the
development and implementation of parent education programs for the selected community. It is also hoped that the results of the study will sensitize the parents and all stakeholders about the importance of developing children’s early literacy skills. Further, the study provides a unique contribution to the literature by adding new information to the existing knowledge of family literacy practices and early literacy in developing countries.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study the following definitions were used:

- **Early literacy**: Refers to the acquisition of language and writing skills prior to entering formal education (Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2006).
- **Phonological awareness**: The acquisition of knowledge about the sound system of a language (Brock & Rankin, 2008).
- **Emergent literacy**: The behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes related to reading and writing that are acquired in the early years (Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2006).

Summary

Home literacy practices and how it impacts on children’s early acquisition of language and literacy skills have been accentuated by numerous research studies. Recent developments, however, have seen a considerable number of researchers extending their interest beyond book reading in an attempt to have extensive understanding of home
literacy practices and its implications on children’s language and emergent literacy development. Nevertheless, completed studies have been largely isolated to more developed countries, thus creating a void in what is known about the home literacy practices of families in third world countries. The next chapter presents the literature review followed by the methodology in chapter 3.
Early literacy research has gained the interest of many researchers over the years. This enormous interest led to a strong advocacy for development of literacy skills in the early years of life. Nevertheless, this rich volume of research has been restricted to more developed countries and has created a vacuum of knowledge regarding literacy practices in third world countries. Currently very little is known about the literacy practices in countries like Botswana. As a result, this study examined the family literacy practices embraced by parents of the University of Botswana child development laboratory. This review of literature therefore discusses early literacy development, its importance as well as highlight home literacy practices and the interplay of culture. A summary concludes this chapter.

**Early Literacy Development**

Early literacy development refers to the acquisition of language and writing skills prior to entering formal education. Language development has been perceived as a complex process that involves a series of skills and abilities (Senachal & Lefevre, 2002). The process is critical though for one to be able to speak and comprehend what others
say, as well as be able to read. Thus, language acquisition involves learning the sounds and patterns, the specific words, and how to combine words to form sentences (Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2006).

The scholarship of language development has seen an emergence of several theoretical perspectives. Amongst these are three broad theoretical perspectives that will be briefly discussed: the nativists, the connectionists, and the interactionists. Each of these theories tends to have a differing focal point when it comes to language development.

As observed by Siegler, Deloache, and Eisenberg (2006) the nativists like Chomsky and Pinker believe that language is not learned like other types of behavior. Humans are biologically wired to learn language at a particular time and in a certain manner. This view maintains that children are born with the apparatus for language development and because of this innate knowledge, children simply learn language through hearing other people speak.

On the other hand, the connectionists propose that language learning is a result of general purpose learning mechanisms. The other perspective is advanced by the interactionists who argue that language development occurs due to the interplay of biological, cognitive and environmental influences (Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg 2006). This view is heavily aligned to Vygotsky’s model of collaborative learning.
According to this perspective, children learn the patterns involved in language use by holding conversations with older people. For instance, as children play with parents and siblings they hear different words being used and recognize the use of words as well as the social context in which language is used. This view is expounded by Dodici, Draper and Peterson (2003) who asserted that children’s learning occurs as they interact and play with the people in their environment. The interactionist theory is widely used by language theorists. This study will be shaped by the perspectives of the interactionist theory as it combines both the biological and environmental components.

Having discussed the theories of language development, it is imperative to explore the importance of early literacy development which encompasses the development of both language and writing skills.

**Importance of Early Literacy Development**

In recent years, researchers have underscored the importance of early literacy development (Roberts, Jurgens, Burchinal, 2005; Senachal & Lefevre, 2002). Past research studies have identified the period between birth and five years as an opportunity that should be seized to ensure a successful future in children’s reading and writing (Morrison, 2008; Siegler, Deloache & Eisengberg, 2006). The authors also stated that language acquisition becomes more difficult and eventually less successful beyond the age of five years.

There has been a general consensus among researchers that the development of early literacy skills among children sets the stage for future learning (Bennet, Weigel, & Martin, 2002; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Thus, researchers have identified the
development of early literacy skills as one of the strongest predictors of children’s academic success (Werner & Smith, 1992). For instance, Walker, Greenwood, Hart, and Carta (1994) found that preschoolers’ language abilities predicted their reading achievements in grades one through three.

Interestingly, the development of literacy skills in the early years are not only important for language and writing skills but are also critical to other areas of children’s development: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development (Brock & Rankin, 2008). With this information, it makes sense then, that acquisition of literacy skills does not only predict future academic success, but also signifies whether the child will function competently and contribute actively in the society (Newman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000).

While the initial attempts that explored early literacy in the home focused largely on parent-child book reading (Bennett, Weigel & Martin, 2002), more recent researchers have extended their focus to examining the home literacy concept in a more encompassing manner. For this reason, an understanding of the current home literacy practices is essential for this study.

**Home and Literacy Development**

Given that early language and literacy development begins in the early years of life, the home environment has attracted a lot of interest from researchers (Dodici, Draper & Peterson, 2003; Rodriguez, 2006). The existing presumption is that the home context
impacts on young children’s literacy interactions, explorations, expressions, and behaviors, contributing to literacy development (Saracho, 2002). Therefore, it is without doubt that a significant number of homes provide literacy rich environments for their children. This setting allows children to interact with literacy materials like books, paper, and crayons, (Rodriguez, 2004) and with the adults in their lives.

In particular, parents who are directly involved with their children and also encourage literacy related activities (Farver, Xu, Eppe & Lonigan, 2006) groom school readiness skills. Thus, the language, reading and writing skills of children in such homes are enhanced. This understanding is echoed by the research findings which allude to the fact that children’s exposure to books is related to development of vocabulary and listening comprehension skills (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002).

However, families differ in terms of culture and socio-economic status and this creates variability in the type and amount of resources each individual family has. This disparity has been revealed in several studies. For example, the findings of the study conducted by Rodriguez (2004) showed that the literacy resources that were available in the Dominican families included paper, notebooks, pencils and crayons. Another dimension to this disparity has been highlighted in the study by Molosiwa (2007) which revealed the bible and children’s school books as the only available resources in Botswana homes.

With regard to socio-economic status, Weigel, Martin and Bennet (2005) discovered that children whose parents had higher levels of education, incomes, literacy skills and positive school experiences had higher verbal expression abilities, and their comprehension of verbal language was also relatively higher. Although some studies
(Steensen, 2006) have uncovered that poor families can also have regular school-related literacy activities with their children, the quality of activities done and the type of resources used is bound to vary drastically with those of families who have a good socio-economic standing. With this information in mind, it is not surprising that various families have distinct home literacy practices.

**Literacy Practices**

Home literacy practices refer to the everyday activities that occur in the home, that promote language and writing skills. A considerable number of researchers have gained particular interest in exploring home literacy practices (Roberts, Jurgens & Burchinal; Senechal & LeFvre 2002; Hughes, Schumm & Vaughn, 1999).

Literacy practices are embedded into the framework of everyday life. According to Aram, Most and Mayafit (2006) literacy related activities include family interactions and conversations, reading environmental print, storybook reading, joint writing, playing with letters and watching educational television programs. Other researchers (Rodriguez, 2006) have expounded the list of literacy activities to include listening to music and singing, library use and computers. Further, studies (Geiner & Alant, 2005) have revealed that children learn literacy skills by watching the actions of the people in their homes. In particular, “young children pay close attention to what they see the powerful and significant people in their world doing and they imitate behaviors that seem to be important to these people” (McLance & McNamee, 1990, p. 90)
Culture also seems to define the literacy activities that occur in the family setting. As argued by Barratt-Pugh and Rohl (2000) “literacy activities are mediated through the values, beliefs and behaviors of the child’s culture” (p.7). In other words, the development of literacy skills occurs as children participate in various daily activities and cultural events.

The interplay of culture and literacy development is reflected in the study on language and literacy practices in Dominican families in New York City which illustrated that the families communicated in both Spanish and English, but Spanish was emphasized for family communication (Rodriguez, 2006). The emphasis of Spanish in family communication clearly highlights the value of culture for the Dominican families studied. Similarly, the findings of the study by Geiner and Alant (2005) revealed that literacy skills in Botswana were learned in the context of play with siblings and not the parents. The authors further reported that:

Multi-level play was observed where children of various ages (ranging from infants able to sit but not yet walking at 7-8 months, to school-going age) would play together. Playing school, an older child would be the teacher and ask other older children a question such as “what is two plus two?” Once the older child had given an answer the teacher would turn even to the youngest and command, “Say four!” (Geiner & Alant, 2005, p. 187)

The quote in the preceding paragraph symbolizes that literacy practices differ from one culture to the other. While parents take a prime role in activities such as book reading, storytelling, game playing and probably coloring with their children to facilitate
the development of literacy skills, mothers in Botswana rely on older siblings to pass the literacy skills from one generation to the other (Geiner & Alant, 2005). This reaffirms the argument that was raised in chapter one, which highlighted the influence of culture in family practices.

The communal activity illustrated allows the children to learn from one another (Rodriguez, 2006) presumably, the babies who grow within such a setting would have acquired a variety of skills through playing with more competent siblings. In this type of play there is some form of scaffolding instruction which is described by Vygotsky as an act where a more knowledgeable person provides information or support to facilitate the learner’s development (Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2006).

Consistent with the findings by Geiner and Alant (2005); Rodriguez (2006) it is reiterated that younger children were introduced to printed literacy materials by their older siblings who attended school (Molosiwa, 2007). This is mainly because family and community literacy in Botswana is predominantly oral (Molosiwa, 2007), which implies that there may be few or no printed materials like reading and coloring books in the majority homesteads rendering many children to grow up in settings which have no printed literacy resources.

However, research has argued that parents who place greater importance on their children’s literacy and language development, and who value parental role in their children’s development, engage their children in literacy and language enhancing activities on a regular basis (Weigel et al., 2006). Hence, some of the common examples of activities that are perceived to enhance literacy development include reading books;
scribbling, drawing, coloring or writing notes to friends; visiting the library regularly, talking or communicating, and pointing out letters, sounds, signs and labels. One of the interesting dimensions of early literacy research is the accessibility of literacy resources to children. The ownership of basic literacy materials like paper, pencils, and crayons is restricted to school going children in some cultures (Rodriguez, 2006).

**Books and reading.** Although several studies have indicated that children are capable of learning reading and writing skills at home, this only seems to occur in a literate environment in which books are valued and family members model reading and writing to the children (Oglan & Elcombe, 2000). For instance, the findings of the studies undertaken by Perry et al., (2008); Rodriguez (2006) showed that reading and writing were ingrained in the daily lives of the families that participated in the two studies. Besides, previous studies (Weigel, et al., 2006) also showed that children’s interest was aroused when they participated in literacy and language activities with parents. It also appears that the presence of books in the home and the presence of a family member who is keen to read and write with the child aides in developing the child’s interest in reading and writing.

Reading stories to and with children is a worthwhile activity that promotes literacy development (Aram, Most & Mayafit, 2006). In essence, stories help children learn about life, emotion, culture and morals (Brock & Rankin, 2008) and this enables the children to develop understanding of the world around them. Stories also offer pleasure and enjoyment and enable children to develop a sense of creativity and imagination.
Further, stories are crucial to children’s understanding of language structure and vocabulary (Brock & Rankin, 2008). Reading stories to children help them recognize the structural organization of stories which include the beginning, middle and end. This knowledge becomes handy when children start telling stories or writing stories as they would know how to order the events for their tale. Also, storytelling introduces children to literacy skills, equipping them to be confident in the use of words and communication. Therefore, storytelling is perceived as a powerful medium for the development of spoken word (Brock & Rankin, 2008).

It should be noted however that even with such strong support for story telling or reading, some studies have unveiled that a disparity exists in the amount of time families invest in reading stories to children and the approaches they use. One such study was conducted by Stavans, Olshtain, and Goldzweig (2009) who found that Ethiopian parents in Israel read to their young children every day, and read once a week for older children. Another qualitative study conducted by Molosiwa (2007) discovered that reading to young children was not common in Botswana, instead story telling was commonly used and it was predominantly oral; parents did not read from any story books. This form of storytelling is applauded by Cutspec (2006) who maintain that oral storytelling is an artistic alternative to print-based literacy that can be shared by parents and young children.

Even though many parents can read to or tell children stories, keeping the children’s interest throughout the process can be challenging. To avert boredom mothers in the study that was conducted by Bingham (2007) enhanced children’s participation in the book-reading activity by asking questions, directing children’s attention to pictures
and pausing during reading to allow the children time to participate. Other than storytelling, it has been argued that literacy skills can also be acquired through play.

**Play.** Play gives the children an opportunity to create events which allow them to experience the use of literacy skills in the literal sense (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000). As mentioned by Makin and Whitehead (2004), playing with other children or with parents is a huge boost to language development as it demands the use of excellent communication, language and diplomacy skills. Thus, through play, the children actively practice and refine their language skills. However, it is important that adults are involved in children’s play activities (Brock & Rankin, 2008) to make them more meaningful.

**Talk and communication.** Talking to or with children appears to play a pivotal role in the development of literacy skills in several ways. According to Makin and Whitehead (2004), talk in any language enables children to:

- Communicate with other people and express their own needs and feelings;
- Sort out their own ideas;
- Share their ideas, feelings and interests;
- Reflect on past experiences and make sense of them;
- Sort out new experiences and link them to things they really know;
- Enjoy the sounds of languages and play with rhymes and rhythms;
- Realize gradually that what people say is often written down as signs, messages and notices (p.51).
While holding conversations with children was deemed essential by the Dominican families in New York (Rodriguez, 2006) some studies have discovered that children in some communities are discouraged to reciprocate when elderly people talk to them. A study by Geiner and Alant (2005) revealed that children in Botswana were expected to listen quietly and not answer back or ask questions when adults talked to them. The authors further explained that children were either ignored or strongly reprimanded if they attempted to interrupt adults or asked questions. But acquisition of early literacy skills is highly depended on the people around the child, through watching, listening and participating in conversations, young children begin to learn the conventions of turn-taking in communication (Brock & Rankin, 2008).

**Literacy resources/materials.** Several materials and resources are essential to a literacy rich environment. One such resource is a collection of quality books. It is important that children have easy access to books (Makin & Whitehead, 2004) to enable them to interact with words and print. Also, several audio tapes including those that have stories similar to those in children’s popular books provide another dimension of storytelling. The advantage of this resource is that it grants children an opportunity to listen to a story while at the same time matching the sounds they hear with the words they see on the book (Makin & Whitehead, 2004).

Another resourceful tool for literacy development found in many contemporary homes is the computer. Accordingly, the computer enables children to convert their thoughts into print, which they can read, rethink and revise (Casey, 2000). In addition, computer programs have transformed children’s learning to make it more interactive and
enjoyable. This important gadget however, is sparsely available in many family homes. For instance, in a study that was conducted by Rodriguez (2004) only one out of the seven families that participated in the study owned a computer while the rest could not afford it.

The use of computers in early literacy development is still a grey area that is still being investigated. Few studies that have been carried out on the use of computers by preschoolers do not give a clear direction of which pathway should be followed. The studies contended that home computer use enhances children's ability to read and visualize images (Subrahmanyam, Kraut, Greenfield, & Gross, 2000) while simultaneously warning that the use of this gadget may prevent the child from differentiating real life from imitation.

The library serves as another important resource for developing children’s literacy skills. With the understanding that families vary in terms of socio-economic status, the community libraries provide free and easy access to books and other materials that can be used to enhance children’s literacy development. The benefits of introducing children to the use of the library in the early years develops children’s confidence in book handling, story reading and finding information from reference books to support later learning (Brock & Rankin, 2008). Access to the libraries has also improved in developing countries like Botswana. Nowadays, parents in Botswana can visit public libraries and access books and other literacy materials free of charge. Similarly, computers are no longer perceived as luxury but are seen as a necessity in every household. However, it is not clear whether these important resources are effectively utilized in enhancing children’s literacy skills.
**Participation in household chores.** Children’s participation in household chores provides opportune time for observation, participation, questioning and explanations. Apart from creating moments for family bonding, children’s involvement in family tasks has been recognized as a powerful tool for promoting children’s language development (Akhtar & Jipson, 2001). Actually, children in diverse communities develop clear understanding of language use and speaking through observing and imitating language others use (Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez & Angelillo, 2003). For instance, In Botswana young children spend their entire time accompanying their mothers as they performed household chores or work in the farms (Geiner and Alant 2005). It can be assumed that these activities give young children a chance to observe firsthand the processes involved in carrying out the tasks. In addition, it can be speculated that they acquired a great deal of language by being in constant company of family members who spoke fluently.

**Summary**

The review highlighted the importance of early literacy development and the findings of studies that have been done on the field. The availability of resources in the home is one of the key elements in literacy development, even though it is apparent that some families still thrive in literacy development without resources. Further, the review illustrated cultural differences that exist among families regarding literacy practices. While printed material and child-adult communication are valued in many households of developed countries, they seem to be of less value in Botswana homes. With this interesting finding, it is clear that early literacy research needs to be extended to other
parts of the world to enrich the current knowledge with new and different evidence. In light of the literature, this study therefore aims at examining the early literacy practices used by parents of preschool children in Botswana so as to contribute new evidence to the current knowledge.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study used a phenomenological qualitative approach to examine the early literacy practices used by parents of preschool children in Botswana. However, quantitative responses collected using the questionnaires were used to validate the interview responses. Thus, the responses from the two instruments were compared to ensure that the data gathered through interviews was accurate. The quantitative questions focused on gathering information on demographic data, literacy activities that parents use, and materials and resources used to promote literacy development.

Qualitative research is an approach that is used to investigate and understand the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Cresswell, 2009). More precisely, qualitative researchers who utilize the phenomenological technique “attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of their subjects in order to understand how and what meaning they construct” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p.23). The approach was deemed appropriate for this study because first it allowed the researcher to study a small sample of subjects (Creswell, 2009), and secondly, gave the researcher an opportunity to understand the phenomenon from the participants’ perspectives (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998) and provided relevant answers for the study. In general, qualitative research permits the researcher to collect in-depth understanding of human behavior and
the reasons surrounding such behavior. Further, qualitative research makes use of smaller but focused samples rather than large random samples.

This chapter therefore, serves to describe the methods that were used for conducting this study. These include sample selection, sampling procedures, sample size, instrumentation, data analysis procedures and IRB approval.

**Sample Selection**

The target population for this study was parents of preschoolers enrolled at the University of Botswana child development laboratory. Only one parent from each family was used for the study. The targeted population consisted of families of students, faculty members and support staff. Given the heterogeneity of the population, the education level of participants varied expansively.

**Sampling Procedures**

It was essential for the researcher to ensure that the research participants used for research met the criteria required to fulfill the intent of the study. To satisfy this, the researcher used purposive sampling to obtain the sample for the study. This method allowed the researcher to choose the participants that possessed characteristics that make them good informants for the research problem (Orcher, 2005). The subjects were selected on the basis of being parents of the preschoolers enrolled at the University of Botswana Child Development laboratory. Further the site was chosen because the researcher is an employee of the department and therefore, it was much easier to gain access to the parents within the University of Botswana child development laboratory.
than it was with other sites. Besides, the ultimate intention of the researcher is to design parenting programs for the selected site and therefore it was mandatory to conduct the study in the selected site.

**Sample Size**

As observed by Orcher (2005) samples used in qualitative research tend to be smaller, and often much smaller, than samples used in quantitative research. This is because qualitative researchers unlike the quantitative researchers emphasize depth of the selected group rather than the appropriateness of the sample to form generalizations to the larger population (Orcher, 2005). Furthermore, Marshall (1996) noted that “an appropriate sample size for qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question (p. 523)” of the study. The study therefore recruited all 18 families represented in the Child Development laboratory of the University of Botswana to participate in the study. However, only 14 parents participated in the study. Thus, a sample size of 14 parents was used as a reasonable number of subjects to complete a questionnaire and interview in depth over a period of two weeks.

**Instrumentation**

Two instruments were used to gather data for this study: a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A) and a closed-ended questionnaire (Appendix B). The questionnaire contained a total of 16 closed-ended questions. The questionnaire items included multiple choice questions, as well as categorical and numerical questions. The information covered demographic, literacy activities, literacy materials/resources, and
parent/child interaction. One of the guidelines for constructing questionnaires provided by Gay, Mills and Airisian (2009) is to “use structured items with a variety of possible responses” (p.373). This format helps to reduce the time required to complete the questionnaire.

In addition, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants. A semi-structured interview protocol containing ten guiding questions was used to obtain qualitative data from the research participants. The interview protocol contained a core set of questions that were asked the participants, while allowing the researcher to add additional questions as needed to explore unexpected findings. The interview protocol illustrated the order in which the interview was carried out (Orcher, 2005). The major advantage of the interview was that it provided important data that could not be obtained through observation (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). In other words, the interview yielded rich material as well as put flesh on the bones of observation or questionnaire responses.

**Validity and Reliability**

Issues of validity and reliability are considered important in both qualitative and quantitative research. However, they are viewed differently. It is therefore important that data collecting techniques such as questionnaires and interviews always meet the standards of validity for the data to achieve credibility and dependability. While quantitative researchers talk about reliability or consistency and reusability of research findings, qualitative researchers emphasize trustworthiness, rigor and quality of research findings. Thus, “qualitative researchers establish the trustworthiness of their research by addressing the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of their
studies and findings” (Gay Mills & Airasian, 2009, p.375). In essence, qualitative validity refers to establishing the truthfulness of the findings following specific procedures (Cresswell, 2009).

Several procedures were used to establish the validity and reliability of the study. The researcher checked the transcripts for obvious mistakes made during transcribing. A detailed description was used to convey the findings of the study. In addition, triangulation of the questionnaire and in-depth interviews was used to determine if the information given on the questionnaire was consistent with data gathered through interview.

Further, peer debriefing and submission of the report to the thesis committee were used to enhance the accuracy of the description. Peer debriefing is “having a qualified researcher who is not directly involved in the data collection or the analysis of the results consult with the researcher” (Orcher, 2005, p.73). The role of the peer debriefer is to facilitate the researcher's consideration of methodological activities and provide feedback concerning the accuracy and completeness of the researcher's data collection and data analysis procedures. According to Orcher (2005) a member of the thesis or dissertation committee may perform this activity to enhance the validity of a qualitative study (Cresswell, 2009).

**Data Collection Procedures**

Prior to conducting the study, permission for conducting research was obtained from the Ministry of Education in Botswana (Appendix C) and subsequently from the department of Home Economics Education of the University of Botswana (Appendix D).
Since this research study involves human subjects, the researcher obtained IRB approval (Appendix E) prior to conducting the study.

Consequently, data collection for this study was done through the use of a questionnaire containing closed ended questions. Parents who volunteered to participate in the study completed a consent form (Appendix F) before being interviewed. Each participant then received a questionnaire to complete at home and return to the University of Botswana Child Development laboratory.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted by the researcher at the Child Development Laboratory premises. The researcher introduced herself and presented the purpose of the interview to the participant. This was followed by the discussion of the interview procedure, participant introduction, rapport building, the interview discussion, conclusion and thanking the participant.

A tape recorder was used to record the interview responses. In addition, a brief summary of the important aspects of the interview and notes on participant’s body language and emotional mood were recorded soon after the interview. According to Orcher (2005) recording interviews using a tape recorder has an advantage of generating a comprehensive record of participant’s reaction. On the other hand, it has been noted that a small number of participants may shy away from being tape recorded (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). In this study, the latter was minimized by assuring the participants that the information gathered shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. Both data on paper and data on audio tapes were stored in locked cabinets at the researcher’s place of residence.
Pilot Study

“A pilot test of an instrument in qualitative research is less crucial than in quantitative research because it is acceptable for qualitative researchers to modify their instruments (e.g., interview schedules) as they collect data.” (Orcher, 2005, p.132). Therefore, there was no pilot study conducted for this research. Instead, the researcher used the interviewing skills experience derived from conducting interviews in the studies she has performed previously.

Data Analysis

Data collected through closed-ended questions of the questionnaire were coded and analyzed through the use of computer-aided software known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 18). For this data frequency tables were used to reflect the responses in percentages.

On the other hand, qualitative data collected through interviews mainly consisted of quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge. Therefore, analysis of this data followed a pattern proposed by Bogdan and Biklen (2006) who asserted that analysis of qualitative data “involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them searching for emerging patterns, deciding what important and is what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others” (p.157).

Consistent with the phenomenological method, data analysis followed several processes. First the researcher organized (Kahn and Best, 2006) and prepared the collected data for analysis by transcribing interviews. Since a standard interview format
was used with all the fourteen participants, answers were grouped across respondents (Kahn and Best, 2006). The researcher then read through all the prepared data to gain a general sense of the ideas (Creswell, 2009), the tone and the overall depth of the collected data. This process included demarcating the information into different segments.

Secondly, the coding process began. Coding is “the process of categorically marking or referencing units of text with codes and labels as a way to indicate patterns and meanings (Gay, et al., 2009).” Each segment was highlighted with a different color and coded or labeled with either a term or phrase. The labels used were based on the actual language of the participants (Creswell, 2009). The segments were categorized by examining the participants’ transcripts and identifying significant statements/meanings. Provisional themes that emerged from the statements were then identified and compared. Initially, each interview question generated many provisional themes.

After careful comparison of the themes, some of the identified themes were merged (Creswell, 2009) until the researcher remained with the main themes that are relevant to the study questions. This process was achieved after the researcher accurately read and comprehended similarities and differences across various text passages. Thus, the text passages that contained identical themes were coded the same way, and passages containing different themes received different codes. Finally, the researcher gathered data that belonged to each category in one place, interpreted it and presented the findings in narrative passages.

If the study had a larger sample (25 to 30 participants), a test of significance would be done at $p > .05$. The test was not conducted on this study because the sample size was small; 14 participants. Instead, methodological triangulation was used for the
study. The findings of the questionnaire and interviews revealed some inconsistencies which impacted on the validity of the findings, therefore, the findings were interpreted cautiously.

**Summary**

This chapter illustrated the use of the phenomenological qualitative approach to investigate the research questions for the study. It further outlined the different strategies that were used for sample selection, instrumentation, and data analysis procedures.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the family literacy practices embraced by parents of the University of Botswana child development laboratory. This chapter presents the results according to the research questions of the study. The sections included are description of participants, findings of research sub-questions one to seven and summary.

Description of Participants

The population of the study included parents of children enrolled at the University of Botswana Child Development laboratory. The targeted population consisted of families of students, faculty members and support staff. Fourteen out of eighteen parents who were recruited participated in the study. Thus, a response rate of 78% was achieved. The rest of the participants did not take part because they were either out of the city or had time constraints.

Demographic data were obtained from items 1 to 5 on the questionnaire. The demographic data are presented in Table 1. Of the fourteen participants, 35.7% were males while 64.3% were females. It should be noted that all mothers that participated in this study were either employed on a full-time basis or University students. The majority
of participants 71.4% (n=10) fell between the ages of 36 and 45 years, and both age
categories of 25 years or below and 26 to 35 years had 14.3% (n=2) each. Participants’
educational levels varied; 14.3% (n=2) had certificate, 21.4% (n=3) diploma, 28.6%
(n=4) undergraduate degree, 21.4 (n=3) Masters Degree and 14.3% (n=2) had PhD.

The positions held by participants were also different. The majority of participants
57.1% (n=8) held support staff positions, while academic staff members made a total of
28.6% (n=4) and only 14.3% (n=3) were students. All the participants had only one child
enrolled in the University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory. The majority of
participants 64.3% (n=9) had children between three and four years of age and the
remaining 35.7% (n=5) of the participants had children between two and half and three
years of age.
Table 1

Participants Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 years or below</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Qualification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support staff</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of the Child</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5-3 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previously stated in the methodology section, qualitative data for the study was analyzed following the phenomenological qualitative approach. The findings obtained are therefore presented in narrative form under the research questions of the study.
Research Sub-Question One: What Literacy Activities do Parents and Children do in the Home?

Data for the research sub-question that aimed at identifying activities parents do with their children at home were derived from the interview questions 4, 5, 8 and 9. The themes derived from the interview questions are presented below.

Activities done at Home to Promote Children’s Early Literacy Skills

The interview question that looked into the literacy activities that are carried out at home to promote children’s early literacy development yielded eight themes. All the participants mentioned several literacy enhancing activities that occur within the home setting and those are captured as the themes that emerged: reading and writing, singing, drawing and coloring, storytelling and reciting rhymes, play, household chores, vacation and outdoor activities, and television and educational toys. These themes are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

Reading and writing. More than half of the participants 64.3% (n=9) disclosed that they read and wrote with their preschool children. Participants indicated that they read story books, picture books and the bible to their preschool children. In addition, two of the nine participants (14.3%) mentioned that they also used posters and flash cards for reading. Even though participants revealed that they did not have any schedule for reading, the information they shared indicated that reading often took place in the
evenings. It also transpired that the older siblings equally played a role in reading to their younger brothers and sisters.

One common challenge that participants raised concerning reading to their children was the fact that their children had very short attention spans which made it difficult for them to stay put during the story reading process. With regard to writing, participants stated that even though they tried to provide the opportunities for writing their children were very small and the best they could do was scribble.

**Singing.** Six out of fourteen participants (42.9%) revealed that they sing to/with their children. One participant pointed out that “you sing with them while you are home, they can learn from that. Just sing with them when you are listening to music, sing that song with them …. gospel music. Eventually they know the meaning of the song.” As illustrated by the participant quote above, singing gospel music appeared to be most popular amongst the participants. Participants also indicated that they sometimes sing popular children’s songs. They further mentioned that their children often led the songs and they joined in to assist with proper pronunciation of the song words. It appeared that siblings also assisted with singing to/with the younger children and that sometimes the younger children learned songs from their older siblings.

**Drawing and coloring.** The findings revealed that drawing and coloring were not popularly used by the participants as only 14.3% (n=2) indicated that they provided drawing and coloring opportunities for their preschool children. These participants also mentioned that they also do cutting and pasting activities with their children. The findings
obtained through the interview question was inconsistent with data obtained using the questionnaire (items 12, 13 and 14). While the interview questions indicated that only 14.3% (n=2) of participants drew and colored with their preschool children, questionnaire item 12 of the indicated that 100% (n=14) of participants had crayons, 78.6% (n=11) had coloring books and 92.9% (n=13) had pencils. The variance between the two results may be qualified by presuming that most participants had the resources but only a few participants used them with their preschoolers.

On the other hand, the results for questionnaire item 13 reflected that 78.6% (n=11) used crayons, 92.9% (n=13) used coloring books and 100% (n=14) used pencils. The findings indicate that more participants used pencils and coloring books and yet a smaller percentage of participants indicated that they have these resources. The discrepancy between the findings of questionnaire item 12 and 13 clearly shows that the information provided by the participants may not be a true reflection of their practice. Thus, rendering the information provided by the participants questionable because there is no corroboration between the findings of the two items. Therefore, the findings of the interview question 1 were solely used as a true indication of the writing and drawing activities.

**Storytelling and recitation rhymes.** Very few participants 21.4% (n=3) stated that they do story or tale telling and recitation of poems. However, participants highlighted that telling tales was not frequently done. When quizzed about the poems they recite with the children, the participants disclosed that they recited popular children’s rhymes like “baa baa black sheep.” These findings were also divergent from
the information gathered through the questionnaire which showed a higher 35.7% \( (n=7) \) percentage.

**Play.** Over half 57.1% \( (n=8) \) of the participants declared that they have play moments with their preschool children. Participants revealed that play could involve the entire family, the siblings only or the preschooler alone. It also became apparent that participants engaged in both traditional and conventional games when playing with their children. One of the traditional games mentioned was “*ha go jela mang?*” (“Who eats here?” -pointing to different parts of the arm, and the child has to say the names of different people and then they get tickled).

Other games disclosed by participants included playing with water, skipping with a rope, climbing up and down a hill, running around the yard, or playing with trash as one of the participant commented:

“I think kids like to play outdoors. My kids love to play outdoors, playing with … sometimes with trash, sometimes with soil, sometimes they like making fire. It’s not a game but to them it’s fun. Sometimes they try to fix things when I’m working around the yard.”

From the participant’s comments it was clear that play at their homes was not structured and it also followed several forms.

**Household chores.** A small percentage of participants 14.3% \( (n=2) \) disclosed that they engaged their preschool children in household chores. Participants specified that they involved their preschool children in cooking and gardening activities, one participant
remarked: “Also we cook together, I show him this is an apple, this is how we chop it, you know we have to wash it first, and do this… and that… to come up with this. So we are constantly talking during such activities.” As illustrated by the comment above, household activities involved some scaffolding as the activities provided opportunities for children to see the processes involved being performed by competent family members, learn new things, ask questions, and also get explanations for what they see.

It is generally known that children learn through observation and participation therefore, engaging them in household chores gives them an opportunity to acquire language skills and knowledge of the processes involved in various activities they observed. It is nevertheless, not surprising that only a few participants felt that engaging children in household chores helped develop the children’s literacy skills because it is often taken for granted or overlooked (Rogoff, et al., 2003).

**Vacation and outdoor activities.** Out of the fourteen participants, only two (14.3%) revealed that they take occasional family vacations and also go on outdoor activities with their preschool children. For outdoor activities, one of the participants reiterated that:

“I think kids like to play outdoors. My kids love to play outdoors, playing with … sometimes with trash, sometimes with soil, sometimes they like making fire. It’s not a game but to them it’s fun. Sometimes they try to fix the things when I’m working around the yard. They say ‘papa can I help you?’ Some of them are not structured, to me sometimes its work, to them its games.
The other outdoor activities mentioned by the participants included; taking walks with the children around their neighborhoods, going for picnics in the park, and taking their children to visit friends and relatives. One of the participant further mentioned taking the preschool child with the family whenever they visit the family farm. Participants felt that taking family vacations and engaging in outdoor activities helped children to acquire new knowledge.

**Television and educational toys.** Only 35.7% (n=5) of the participants indicated that watching television and playing with educational toys were part of the activities they had in their homes. Nevertheless, the participants were quick to qualify that not all television programs were good for the children and that they only allow their children to watch educational programs on the television. Some of the examples of the television programs that the participants felt were good for their preschoolers included “Sesame Street and Barney.” Participants highlighted that they usually prompt their preschoolers’ learning by asking them questions to see if they understand what the television program shows.

With regard to educational toys, participants did not give any specific examples of the type of toys they have for their children but they made it clear that they were against their children playing with “violent” toys like guns. This reaction is illustrated in the comment made by one of the participants, who said: “With us I think it’s just having critical things which the child could use in the form of toys, which are influential in learning. Not toys like guns for instance; to me they are just useless. Toys which can help
the child in the future to read and learn things and also maybe cartoon CD’s, something which impacts positively on the child.”

Participants also appreciated the use of puzzles. They felt that puzzles enhance the children’s thinking capability. Overall, participants had the opinion that “appropriate” toys were good as they allowed the children to explore on their own.

**Things That Parents do when Reading with Their Child which help the Child Become Literate**

Four themes emerged from the interview question aimed at identifying what parents do when reading to their children to help them become literate. The generated themes include; discuss pictures, point and repeat words, mimic characters and never read. The themes are discussed below.

**Discuss pictures.** Of the nine participants who read to their children, 64.3% indicated that they discussed the pictures in the story book while reading to their preschool children. Some of the participants revealed that they did not usually do it but either the mother or children’s older siblings discussed the pictures with the preschoolers during storytelling, this is reflected in what was mentioned by one participant who said “…well, the siblings do it, but I often hear them talking about the pictures in the book and sometimes asking her to say the words after them.” Participants stated that pointing to pictures is one way of getting the children’s attention. Further, they mentioned that it
helps to involve the children during story reading. The observations made by participants are consistent with what has been discussed in research.

Participants also highlighted the challenges that they meet while reading the stories to their children. One participant had this to say: “It’s very difficult to get his concentration. Most of the time when you start reading, he starts saying the story like “once upon a time,” then he will add “there was a princess, what, what, what…. So I realized that he doesn’t have much interest, although I show him pictures and the like, he doesn’t concentrate that much when I read.”

It appeared that most of the participants read story books to their children. However, one participant indicated that they sometimes used magazines like “baby and you” for their preschool child. Nevertheless, the participant clarified that they did not read the articles in the magazine with the child but rather used it for discussing pictures.

**Point and repeat words.** Eight out of the fourteen (57.1%) participants said that they pointed to the words and asked children to repeat the words they said during story telling. One participant made the following comment, “When I read I make sure that I point to each word and I pronounce it and make her repeat it so that she can know how to pronounce some words and that helps also in language.” As mentioned by the participants, involvement of actions helped the children learn new words and proper pronunciation of the words. Further, participants hinted that they sometimes asked children to retell the story they listened to just to see if they could follow the events narrated in the story. They also added that they did that with the understanding that the children were small and may not remember everything that was said during story telling.
Participants also disclosed that sometimes the children were the ones who initiated retelling the stories.

**Mimic characters.** At least 7.1% (n=1) of the participants mentioned that story time at their home is lively and fun. In particular the participant illustrated this by stating that “I love reading stories to my son, and what I love about the bedtime stories, they have different characters and those characters have their own… you know…um… temperaments and characteristics. So I try by all means to mimic those characters… you know, do the action, do the funny sounds yeah! Laughing with him, tickling him, and all that brings live and fun to storytelling time.” Accordingly, adding life to the story motivates the child (Bingham 2007) to gain interest in storytelling.

**Never read.** Surprisingly, 21.4% (n=3) of the participants openly revealed that they never read to their preschool children. Participants sounded shocked when asked what they do when reading to their preschool children to help them become literate. One of the participants could not conceal their reaction by uttering: “Reading to who? The little one? No…, no I never read to him.” The three participants were candid about the reasons why they never read to their preschool children. Some of the reasons given were that the children were too young to be read to, and that they are too tired to read to the children after work.

The other participant however, went further to explain, “I think maybe I am undermining her. I think so. But I know reading is important. I don’t know why, but she will be turning four years and I never ever even get a story book to read with her at
home.” Participants also gave insights into the fact that their children usually showed the desire to be read to. They cited incidents where children have scribbled on their reading books or held their books upside down, attempting to read by themselves.

When probed about their reaction to the children when they scribbled or held the book upside down, one of the participants declared that “I just say, Nolly don’t color in that book it’s for reading. Put it like this and you read. And she will just be murmuring. Yesterday she was reading something here, I didn’t even… oh no… I’m often so tired. Isn’t it I have to build from there…, but instead I will be ignoring her attempts.” From the data gathered from participants it was clear that they understood the essence of reading to their children but lacked the initiative to do it.

**How often do you have a Back and Forth Conversation with Your Preschooler?**

All the participants 100% (n=14) disclosed that they had a back and forth conversation with their preschoolers on a daily basis, as one participant said “No, that one is almost every day. But the discussion is general; it’s not usually based on any specific topic. It’s just talking.” Participants also highlighted that they usually had more than a single back and forth conversations with their children in a day, “um… we do have often. Um… on a daily basis more than three times in a day, and because he is very talkative too.” According to the participants the back and forth conversations took place anywhere, be it at home or any other place that the parent would have visited with the child. Typically, conversing with children help them practice language, listening skills as well as increase their vocabulary.
What do you Normally Talk About to Promote Your Child’s Literacy Skills?

All the participants 100% (n=14) informed the researcher that they talked about general topics with their preschool children. Participants insisted that the conversations were unstructured and covered a wide range of topics; “well, probably for them to reflect on their coming from school, the school, the night sleep or anything, it’s open. I must be honest, normally I don’t structure the conversation. It’s just anything that they pick up. They can pick up a tree as we pass by.” The themes that emerged are discussed in detail in the following pages.

**Child’s feelings.** Participants indicated that the back and forth conversation sometimes is centered on the child’s feelings. It became apparent that the conversation may be started by either the parent or the child. Participants further mentioned that they usually asked the children how they were feeling in the morning and when they collected the children from the preschool. They also hinted that the children sometimes initiated the conversations by informing the parents about their feelings.

**Events of the day.** According to participants, back and forth conversations between them and the preschoolers also focused on the child’s experience of each day. Participants shared that the children were usually eager to tell their parents the activities they did at school and their experiences with other children or the teacher. Furthermore, participants disclosed that sometimes they asked questions to prompt the discussion about the child’s experience at school as illustrated by the statement made by the participant.
“Ok, sometimes we just talk about his experience at school. I ask him “How was school? Can you tell me about school?” Then sometimes he doesn’t like to tell me the exact words, “the school was like” instead he will be demonstrating, and I will interpret his actions and understand what they were doing.” Overall, participants felt that back and forth conversations were learning moments for their children. They believed that children expanded their vocabulary through conversations.

**Questions.** Participants felt that the preschool children were inquisitive as they confronted them with endless questions. A comment made by one of the participants was “every time he comes, he wants to talk and every time he will be asking “why?” Accordingly, the participants said that the questions asked by the children helped to create back and forth conversations between themselves and their preschool children. In addition, participants stated that the questions for discussion often stemmed from anything; the trees, cars or houses they passed. Some questions regarded the different things in the home or the activities they saw taking place in the home setting.

**Research Sub-Question Two: Which Literacy Materials/Resources do Families Have?**

The questionnaire item 12 was used to gather information for the research question that sought to identify the material/resources that families used. The findings are illustrated on Table 2. The majority of participants 92.9% (n=13) indicated that they had children’s reading books, and pencils. In addition, an overwhelming 100% (n=14) of participants revealed that they had crayons and 78.6% (n=11) had coloring books. Over
three quarters of the participants 92.9% (n=13) showed that they had children’s’ puzzles and over half of the participants 57.1% (n=8), disclosed that they had a computer, educational DVD’s/CD’s, and alphabet posters. However, very few participants highlighted that they had alphabet audio tapes 7.1% (n=1), rhymes audio tapes 21.4% (n=3), and computer games with stories and letters 28.6% (n=4). None of the participants related that they had any materials other than the ones reflected in the questionnaire.
Table 2

*Materials and Resources that Families Have*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which of the following materials do you have?</th>
<th>Answer to question &quot;Which of the following materials do you have?&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's reading books</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's puzzles</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloring books</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencils</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crayons</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabets audio tapes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhymes audio tapes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer games with stories and letters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational DVD's/CD's</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet posters</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other materials</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Sub-Question Three: Which literacy Materials/Resources Do Families Use?

For the research question that aimed at identifying the material/resources that families used, data was collected using item 13 and 14 of the questionnaire and the results are shown in Tables 3 and 4. As reflected in Table 3, all participants 100% (n=14) use pencils in their homes. The findings also show that the majority of participants used coloring books 92.9% (n=13), children’s puzzles 85.7% (n=12), and crayons 78.6% (n=11). At least more than half of the participants indicated that they used children’s reading books 64.3% (n=9) while half 50% (n=7) used educational DVD’s/CD’s. The results also illustrate that very few participants used a computer 42.9% (n=6), alphabet poster 35.7% (n=5), rhyme audio tapes 21.4% (n=3) and computer games with stories and letters 21.4% (n=3). Only one participant 7.1% (n=1) indicated that they used other material at home, the Bible.
Table 3

Materials and Resources that Families Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which of the following materials do you use?</th>
<th>Answer to question &quot;Which of the following materials do you have?&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's reading books</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's puzzles</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloring books</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>92.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencils</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crayons</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabets audio tapes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhymes audio tapes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer games with stories and letters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational DVD's/CD's</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet posters</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other materials</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The information on Table 4 illustrate that the majority of respondents 92.9% (n=13) go on outings with their preschool children. Participants who revealed that they go on outings with their children specified that they utilized different community places like game parks, museums, shopping complexes, restaurants and attended friends and family functions.

Table 4

*Public Places Visited with the Child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Places Visited with the Child</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the data collected through the questionnaire, interview question six also yielded information for research sub-question three. The information is narrated below:

**Other Community Places That Parents Use to Promote Their Children’s Literacy Skills**

The findings of the interview question that sought to find out other community places that the participants used to enhance their children’s literacy skills generated the
following themes; parks and game reserve, places of worship, shopping malls, museum, restaurants, and public library. The themes are discussed below:

**Park and game reserve.** A total of eight participants 57.1% (n=8) declared that they often took their preschool children to the park and the game reserve. Participants informed the researcher that they visited the park during weekends or public holidays for family picnics or just for fun. Further, participants revealed that they took their children to the game reserve to show them the animals and the nature reserve.

**Places of worship.** A total of nine participants 64.3% (n=9) affirmed that they took their preschoolers to places of worship. Eight of the nine participants revealed that they took their children to the church while one indicated that they go to a place of worship which is not a church. Participants who attended church with their children revealed that their churches had a Sunday school that catered for the preschool age.

**Shopping malls.** More than half of the participants 71.4% (n=10) indicated that they take their preschool children with them when they visit shopping malls. Apparently some of the malls provide free child care services while the parents are doing shopping this was reflected in the statement made by one of the participants; “there is a shop, a new shop that has got free child care services, “Square Mart.” “When I’m doing shopping, I leave my child there. And then they will be studying, coloring, playing games, singing with the care taker.” Another participant shared “we go to “Game City” mall and my
daughter will be asking, “Can you buy this toy? I want this Hannah Montana, I want this, and I want that.”

As illustrated by the statements of the participants taking children to shopping areas appear to have a positive bearing on literacy development. Besides, it helps children to explore new environments and exercise the use of language as depicted in the statement shared by the latter participant. Against this background, it seems right to ascertain that taking children out to the shops is one way of enriching children’s literacy abilities.

**Restaurants and offices.** Less than half of the participants 28.5% (n=4) stated that they take their preschool children to the restaurants for social activities often. One of the activities mentioned was the birthday parties for school mates or for relatives. Furthermore, participants stated that they also take their preschool children to restaurants for family functions. One of the participants added that they also take their preschool child to their offices.

**Public library.** Surprisingly, all the fourteen participants (100%) revealed that they never used the public library and were not even thinking about utilizing it for their preschool children. In fact, all participants seemed surprised when asked if they ever took their preschoolers to the public library. Participants cited several reasons why they did not consider the public library for their preschoolers. One of the reasons advanced by the participants was that the library was too dull for the children’s age. One of the participants commented: “Mmm… no not yet. Ah…I…just find the library very dull for
his age. So I don’t think it’s a good idea to take him there.” They also mentioned that even the arrangement of the library did not match the preschool age children.

Another reason advanced by the participants regarded the suitability of the public library for the preschoolers. This sentiment is reflected in what was said by this particular participant; “not at all, it is not suitable for that age. It is too quiet and the expectations are just too high.” Participants argued that the preschoolers were at the stage of exploration and would want to look around the library if taken there, something which they said was unacceptable at the public library. Furthermore, participants were not even sure if the public library carried the books suitable for preschool age.

Some participants simply said that they never thought the public library was an ideal place for the children. When quizzed why they felt that way, the answer was that the children were still too young to use the public library. However participants considered the school and church libraries as suitable for preschool children’s use:

“We don’t take our preschooler to the public libraries or whatsoever. I mean for this small one…, we don’t go to the library. But at our church they set up library environments for children, toddlers, small little ones… they have their own environment where they can go and to me that contributes to their literacy development.”

The statement above was made by the participant justifying their church library use over the public libraries. From the findings, it appears participants were not necessarily against the use of library per se, but they doubted its relevance and appropriateness for their preschool children.
Research Sub-Question Four: How Much Time do Parents Spend Interacting With Their Preschool Children?

Questionnaire items 7-11 were used to gather data for research sub-question four. Item 11 was however, omitted from the results because it was a replication of item 8. The responses gathered for questionnaire item 7 indicated that participants read to their children as follows; 14.3% (n=2) all the time, 14.3% (n=2) often, 42.9% (n=6) sometimes and 28.6% (n=4) rarely. With regard to writing, the majority of participants 57.1% (n=8) revealed that they wrote sometimes with their children. Fewer participants 14.3% (n=2) indicated that they read all the time, and often, while only 7.1% (n=1) participants showed that they rarely read to their child and another 7.1% (n=1) disclosed that they never read to their child. From participants’ responses writing with children was an occasional event in the participants’ homesteads.

For singing, at least half 50% (n=7) of the participants indicated that they sang to their children all the time, 28.6% (n=4) often, and 21.4% (n=3) sang sometimes to their children.

The responses for the questionnaire item that sought to find out how often the participants drew pictures showed that most of the participants 35.7% (n=5) drew pictures together with their child sometimes, 28.6% (n=4) was recorded for both often and rarely, and 7.1% (n=1) indicated that they never drew pictures with their child.

The findings for the four questionnaire items outlined above generally show that participants spent minimal time per week with their children. This information is deduced from the fact that on average participants revealed that they completed the various literacy activities with their children at least 1-3 times a week. However, the information
gathered can be used in general terms as it does not give specific details of how many minutes or hours participants spent with the children during each encounter. The findings are illustrated in Table 5 below.
Table 5

*Time Spent Interacting with their Preschoolers*

**Answers to Questions 7 to 10**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Read with the child</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Writing with the child at home</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Sing with the child at home</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the time</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Draw pictures together with the child</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For questionnaire item 11, the participants responded as follows: the majority of participants 35.7% (n=5) rarely told their children tales, 28.6% (n=4) never told their children tales, 21.4% (n=3) told their children tales, sometimes and 14.3% (n=2) told their children tales often. In general, telling children tales seemed to be a rare practice amongst participants. The findings are illustrated in table 6 below.

Table 6

*Telling Preschool children Tales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers to Questions 11</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>V Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Sub-Question Five: What are Parents’ Beliefs about who should Promote Preschool Children Early Literacy Development?

How children gain literacy skills.

For the interview question that sought to determine the views of the parents on how children gain literacy skills, the following themes emerged from the responses: learn from people around them, learn from talking and singing, learn through observation, learn through play and technological devices. These themes are discussed below.

Learn from the people around them. Out of the fourteen participants, 64.3% (n=9) of them felt that children gain literacy skills from the people around them. In particular, five of the nine participants 55.6% (n=5) believed that children gain literacy skills from siblings, as one participant revealed “they learn mostly from siblings. Like my child learn from older siblings as they play and she sees them doing things.” Also, three out of nine participants 33.3% felt that children gained literacy skills from parents and 11.1% (n=1) felt that children gained literacy skills from the school.

According to the information gathered, children learn from older siblings during their interaction. Participants stated that as children play, younger children gain interest in the activities that older siblings engage in and try to emulate their seniors and in the process they acquire literacy skills. Through the participants’ comments it became clear that older siblings also help their younger brothers and sisters to acquire literacy skills by
teaching them what they have learned at school, this was elucidated in the comment made by one participant commented:

“I observed that it’s advantageous if there are other siblings because you find that they teach the younger one so many things. It could be colors or they come discussing any work from school, he will be interested in the activity. Let’s say its just coloring, when my daughter who is in standard one brings home some school work like coloring or drawing, my little boy will be interested in the activity. And my daughter will always try to help him.”

Some participants 33.3% (n=3) were of the opinion that children gain literacy skills from their parents: “When they watch us-parents doing whatever we do. That’s the first and foremost of how they learn.” Participants also mentioned that parents impart literacy skills to their children as they play with them. In addition, participants commented that children gained literacy skills from what they saw parents doing. Apparently, parents also taught children literacy skills through their daily interactions with them.

A comment by one of the participants was: “Yes, you find that we tend to send our children to go get some things around the house. When they come with it, that’s when we teach them what that object you sent them to get is.” Participants also shared that sometimes the children themselves created opportunities to be taught by parents. This according to participants occurred when children asked questions out of curiosity, prompting parents to give explanations which helped the children acquire literacy skills.

Out of the fourteen participants only one felt that children gain literacy skills from school. The argument advanced by this participant was that the teachers at school know
what age they can introduce the literacy skills. Some of the comments this particular participant made was that:

“For me the problem is if they are not at school, I have a feeling that this child is too small. I have all those books but I don’t know when or how to use them for his age. I feel at school they know what age they can introduce it. Although I don’t say I don’t do it, I do it. But every day I feel it’s too early for him! It’s too early for him!”

**Talking and singing to the child.** Four out of fourteen participants (28.6%) were of the opinion that children gained literacy skills when they were talked to or sung to. Participants communicated that they talked and sang to the children from the time they were born, and that it is through such processes that children learned language skills. A further explanation given by the participants was that talking and singing to children helps them to learn words, the proper pronunciation of words, and even sentence construction.

**Learn through observation and copying.** Some of the participants 35.7% (n=5) felt that parents are children’s role models and therefore, children often copy what parents do at home. As stated by participants, children watch how parents communicate with other family members and talk in the same manner. It also became clear from participants’ comments that children’s participation in household chores helps them to learn many skills that enhance their literacy ability. A statement made by one participant was that: “While you are cooking you involve the children, impart your cooking skills, in
that way the children learn. They can pick some things like the names of the items you are using and even the procedure you follow. Participants also mentioned that children learned literacy skills by seeing different things in the household. They gave examples that children learned to name different things like dogs, windows, and doors by seeing them and hearing what they are named.

**Learn through play and technological devices.** Less than half of the participants 28.6% (n=4) believed that play provided an opportunity for children to learn literacy skills from others. Apparently children who engaged in play activities with others learned language skills quickly. Participants commented that younger children got highly motivated to learn when playing with others. Furthermore, participants had the opinion that play allowed children to see the actual actions, hear the words, and provided a platform for practice of those actions and words with assistance from the individuals they are playing with.

Few participants 14.3% (n=2) felt that television and computer programs helped the children to acquire literacy skills. Participants however made it clear that not all television programs were good for the children. They emphasized that educational television and computer programs enhance children’s literacy skills.
At What Age Should Early Literacy Skills be Developed?

Four themes emerged for the interview question that sought to establish the age at which parents thought early literacy skills should be developed. The themes included: from birth, 18 months, between 24 and 36 months, and between 36 and 48 months.

**From birth.** About 28.6% (n=4) of the participants felt that early literacy skills should be developed as soon as children are born. One of these participants highlighted that children learn more between birth and five years. Participants further elaborated that talking to the child from birth helps the child to get acquainted to the sound and flow of words. One of the participants had this to say: “All I can say is that literacy skills can be developed as early as the child is born through singing and talking to the child.”

**18 months.** More than a quarter of the participants 28.6% (n=4) were of the opinion that early literacy skills should be developed at the age of 18 months. Participants emphasized that this is an ideal age because children are expected to be uttering their first words during this time. They further explained that other literacy activities like drawing, coloring and writing can be introduced as the children mature. Even though all these participants indicated that 18 months was the most ideal age to introduce early literacy skills, half (n=2) answered with hesitation, and their responses could be interpreted as lack of certainty for their answers.
24-36 months. A total of 35.7% (n=5) participants indicated that children should be introduced to early literacy skills between the ages of 24 and 36 months. Even though the participants felt that this was a reasonable age to introduce literacy skills, they hinted that children are different and therefore the age at which they are introduced to literacy skills may vary. One of these participants commented that it is difficult to attach the age to the introduction of early literacy skills because it depends on how one perceives it.

36-48 months. Only 7.1% (n=1) of the participants thought that children could be introduced to early literacy skills. The participant however revealed their uncertainty about the answer before guessing that 36 to 48 months seemed appropriate for introduction of early literacy skills.

Is the Development of Early Literacy Skills Important?

For interview question three 100% (n=14) of participants acknowledged that development of early literacy skills is important when answering the interview question that sought to find out if the development of early literacy skills was important. When participants were probed why they thought early literacy development is important, a common theme emerged: prepare children for future learning and fair competition.

Prepares children for future learning and fair competition. All the participants 100% (n=14) indicated that the development of early literacy skills is important because it sets the stage for the children’s learning in the future. Participants remarked that
developing early literacy skills among children does not only equip children with the essential skills for learning, but also help children to fare comparatively with their age mates once they start formal schooling. This sentiment was summed up in the comment made by one participant who uttered that:

“Yeah, it’s critical because it’s laying a very important foundation for the future of the child. I can say that also looking at our first daughter; we learnt that reading is very important because if we were to wait until late she wouldn’t be able to cope with the activities introduced at school. Another thing is that the child would lag behind when compared with the rest who were exposed to early literacy. And in this era the child may even opt out of school, not because they don’t like school but because of intimidation, finding that there is a big gap between them and other kids.”

Another participant said this about development of early literacy skills: “Definitely, development of those skills is very important! Especially now because most children are exposed to literacy skills at a very young age, and this makes the competition in schools stiffer. If you do not develop your child’s literacy skills, you are almost killing their potential to learn and they will be lagging behind their age mates once they start school.”

Participants shared the view that the competition among the children in schools has become stiffer because more parents are cognizant of the importance of early literacy development, citing that parents who are unable to do it at home pay schools to do it for them.
Participants also believed that children have the capability to grasp a great deal of information while they are still young and that it is important for parents to take advantage of this opportunity to prepare their children for the future. Further comments centered on making the job of the teachers easier. The participants pointed out that developing the children’s literacy skills before they entered school relieved the teachers of the strain of starting learning late, and from scratch. The comment made was: “I mean, the child has the skills already. The teachers will not start from the scratch teaching the child that this is your head, these are the fingers… what, what, what. Already he or she would have learned the skills from home.”

Furthermore, participants mentioned that early learning enhanced brain development which is critical to children’s learning. Another point raised by the participants was that developing children’s literacy skills in the early stages actually help parents to make early identification of whether the child can hear and talk. Apparently, the parent-child interaction in the home provided a good modem for identifying irregularities in the child’s development. Overall, the findings gathered through this interview question indicated the importance participants ascribed to the development of early literacy skills and provided answers to the study research sub-question five.
Research Sub-Question Six: What Challenges do Parents Face in Promoting Children’s Literacy Skills?

The findings for the research sub-question that aimed at identifying the challenges parents faced in promoting their children’s literacy skills were generated from interview question seven.

Participants highlighted several challenges when responding to the interview question that aimed at identifying the challenges that parents faced in promoting their children’s early literacy skills. Participants’ responses generated the following themes; time constraint, gaining children’s interest, resources, no challenges. These themes are discussed below:

**Time constraints.** Time constraint seemed to be a major challenge facing participants as 57.1% (n=8) revealed that it was an obstacle they faced in developing children’s early literacy skills. Participants felt that they did not have much time to spend with their children because they all had full-time jobs. According to their responses they have limited time in the evenings and a bit more time during weekends. However, parents said they are usually too tired to do anything productive with their children.

Participants also added that even during weekends they still did not have much time because of other family and social commitments. One of the participants summed up the challenges the participants faced by stating that” Um… it’s a lot of energy, em… they need a lot of attention. It takes a lot of energy to promote early literacy skills. Sometimes it takes a lot of resources, a lot of creativity, and most of the time we as parents don’t have time…we could create it but it’s not our priority hahaha…, you know what mean?”
Apart from having limited time, the participants complained that their children had an enormous amount of energy of which they could not cope with.

**Gaining children’s interest.** Four out of fourteen participants (28.5%) stated that they had difficulty keeping their children interested in the activities they plan for their kids. Participants lamented that the preschoolers were unpredictable as some of the time they listen well and participate in the activities planned by parents while other times they refuse to partake any activity initiated by their parents or siblings. They also raised a concern that their children could not concentrate on the activities they do with them. One of the participants however speculated that the parents’ frustration derived from the fact that they often undermined children’s capability.

**Resources.** Less than half of the participants 35.7% (n=5) felt that they struggle with getting the right resources for their preschool children. Participants believed that the toys, books and other resources essential for the preschool age group were a bit pricey. They also protested that their kids get easily bored by playing with the same thing several times and yet there was limited variety in the shops. Two of the five participants shared that they often grapple with getting the right kind of materials for their child and therefore perceive that as a challenge. Another participant revealed that they were not sure if the books they got for their preschooler were suitable because apparently their preschoolers tore them easily.
Research Sub-Question Seven: What Kind of Assistance do Parents Need?

Overall, all participants 100% (n=14) indicated that they needed assistance with one or more of the four areas highlighted in item 15 of the questionnaire. The majority of the respondents 71.4% (n=10) indicated that they needed assistance with promoting early literacy development. Also, 64.3% (n=9) of the participants showed that they required assistance with parental involvement in early literacy while half of the participants 50% felt that they were in need of information related to literacy resources and their use.

Approximately one-third of the participants 5.7% (n=5) needed to know more about the importance of early literacy. Only one participant (7.1%) selected the option “other” and highlighted that they needed information on children’s exposure to television. In particular, this participant felt that he needed to know if exposing children to television was beneficial or harmful and also the amount of time the children can be allowed to watch television. These findings are illustrated in Table 6 below.
Table 7

*Type of Assistance Needed by Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Early Literacy</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Resources and Use</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Involvement In Early Literacy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Early Literacy Development</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Exposure To TV</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

Both descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables and the themes generated through qualitative data were presented in this chapter. The results derived from the questionnaire and the interviews were used to answer the research questions of the study. The findings revealed that parents of the University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory promote their children’ literacy skills using various resources and materials. The results of both qualitative and quantitative instruments were compared
in certain sections and some inconsistencies were identified. The findings are discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the family literacy practices embraced by parents of the University of Botswana child development laboratory. The study was a qualitative research design in the form of interviews with some quantitative method in data collection phase. Phenomenological qualitative analysis and descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables were used for data analysis. This chapter therefore presents the discussion of the findings under the study research questions.

Research Sub-Question one: What Activities do Parents and Children do in the Home?

The findings presented in the preceding chapter provide evidence that the University of Botswana parents actively engaged in various literacy enhancing activities in their family settings. It is clear from the findings that the majority 64.3% (n=9) of parents of the University of Botswana child development laboratory read, wrote and discussed pictures, played 57.1% (n=8), held back and forth conversations with their children 100% (n=14) to enhance their children’s literacy skills. In addition, it is apparent that a small number of parents used other activities such as singing 42.9% (n=6), story telling 21.4% (n=3), drawing and coloring 14.3% (n=2), vacation and outdoor activities (14.3%) as well as television and educational toys to promote children’s literacy
development. The strength of these findings is however weakened by the inconsistencies identified in the information supplied by the participants for both qualitative and quantitative instruments.

**Reading and writing.** The evidence derived from the study however, suggested that the majority of parents 64.3% (n=9) promoted their children’s literacy skills through reading and writing and only a small percentage 21.4% (n=3) did not read to their children. It is also evident that parents of the University of Botswana use reading to children as an interactive activity as the results show that most of them 64.3% (n=9) discussed pictures and over half of them 57.1% (n=8) also pointed and repeated words while reading. Also, it is prevalent that a few parents 7.1% (n=1) to arouse the children’s interest while reading stories.

This is contrary to earlier research submissions (Molosiwa, 2007) which highlighted that reading and writing was a rare practice in Botswana families, and that printed material was scarce. If this variance of findings is something to go by, then one can comfortably speculate that there has been a promising improvement with regard to literacy development of children within homes in Botswana. The findings however, resonate well with earlier studies (Perry et al., 2008; & Rodriguez, 2006) which also found that reading and writing activities were part of the daily routine in family settings and emphasized that parents should involve different attention arousing actions during reading to avoid boredom (Bingham, 2007).

From the results therefore, it can be deduced that most of the parents of the University of Botswana child development laboratory understand the importance of
reading and writing which has been elucidated by research (Aram, Most & Mayafit, 2006). As illustrated previously, reading and writing serves several purposes in children’s development. Other than bringing sheer excitement of spending time with a parent, story reading provides an opportunity to learn new words and follow the order of events (Brock & Rankin, 2008).

**Play.** It is not surprising that the majority of the participants identified play as one of the mediums they use to impart literacy skills to their children because previous studies have revealed similar findings. In fact, studies conducted by Geiner and Alant (2005), Molosiwa (2007) revealed that young children in Botswana generally gained literacy skills through play. The results of the current study however, added a new twist to the existing knowledge brought in by previous studies (Geiner and Alant, 2005; Molosiwa 2007) by revealing that play could involve even parents. Previous studies emphasized that children learned literacy skills through playing with siblings or other children, and it is interesting to know that even parents get involved in play activities because research (Brock & Rankin, 2008) has underscored the importance of parental involvement in play activities.

**Back and forth conversations.** As shown by the results of this study all participants 100% (n=14) revealed that they have back and forth conversations with their preschool children. The evidence gathered show that participants have daily unstructured conversations with their children. It is also clear that these conversations may stem out of the discussion of the child’s feelings, the child’s day experiences or can be provoked by
the questions asked by the children. These findings contradict what was discovered earlier by Geiner and Alant (2005). Instead of discouraging children from expressing their opinions and asking questions, the findings revealed that parents of the University of Botswana child development laboratory welcomed children’s questions and felt that questions provided opportunities for learning and expanding children’s vocabulary. Basically, children who are talked to tend to acquire language skills more quickly than their peers who are not talked to. Therefore, having back and forth communication with children is often seen as a catalyst of literacy development.

Among the activities that were revealed by this study, it surfaced that few parents promoted children’s literacy skills through singing 42.9% (n=2), storytelling 21.4% (n=3), household chores 14.3% (n=2), vacation and outdoor activities 14.3% (n=2), and television and educational toys 35.7% (n=5). The limited usage of the activities listed above may be partly because parents were not aware of their essence in the development of children’s literacy skills. However, engaging children in such activities can aide their literacy skill development. For example, through singing children can acquire knew words and expand their vocabulary as well as learn ordering of words. Similarly, storytelling is perceived as an excellent way of developing children’s literacy skills (Brock & Rankin, 2008).

Although very little research has been done on the use of household chores as a learning opportunity for children, some studies (Akhtar & Jipson, 2001; Rogoff et al., 2003) have revealed that children acquire language skills by observing and imitating others. Also, these findings are consistent with what previous studies (Geiner & Alant 2005) have discovered. Family vacations also expose children to new environments and
arouse their desire for exploration and enquiry, and this helps them to refine their language skills. Likewise, proper use of television and educational toys can help promote children’s listening and language skills.

**Research Sub-Question Two: Which Materials/Resources do Families Have?**

It is clear from the findings that parents of the University of Botswana child development laboratory have literacy rich home environments. Overall, the majority of respondents indicated that they had children’s books, children’s puzzles, coloring books, pencils, and crayons. At least over half of the participants also indicated that they had a computer, educational DVD’s/CD’s, and alphabet posters and few had computer games, rhyme audio tapes and alphabet audio tapes. The findings of the current study are a direct deviation from earlier submissions which revealed that ownership of basic literacy materials like paper, pencils, and crayons were restricted to school going children (Molosiwa, 2007; Rodriguez, 2006). Also, the current evidence showed an extended list of literacy materials in the homes.

Literacy rich environments allow children to interact and explore with a variety of materials. According to Makin & Whitehead (2004) providing accessibility of literacy resources like books to children enable them to interact with words and print and ultimately enhanced literacy skills. Nevertheless, the availability of literacy materials in the home is not sufficient for children’s literacy development. Rather, literacy materials should be available and accessible to children for them to be beneficial. For example, it has been argued that development of children’s literacy skills only take place in settings where books are valued and reading and writing are modeled (Oglan & Elcombe, 2000).
The latter is presumed to apply to the current study given that participants were not only members of a high institute of learning but some of the participants were academic staff members and students.

**Research Sub-Question Three: Which Materials/Resources do Families Use?**

It is evident from the findings that parents of the University of Botswana child development laboratory used a variety of materials and resources to develop children’s literacy skills. As shown by the results most parents used children’s reading books, children’s puzzles, coloring pencils, crayons and educational DVD’s/CD’s. Also, a small number of parents utilized rhymes audio tapes, computers, and computer games with stories and letters and alphabet posters.

However, previous studies found that the only literacy materials that were available for literacy development in Botswana were textbooks for school going children (Molosiwa, 2007). The implication advanced by the study was that the household did not have any literacy materials for younger children. The findings are not surprising though because Weigel, Martin and Bennet (2005) linked children of parents with higher levels of education, incomes, literacy skills and positive school experiences to good literacy skills. Based on the demographic information supplied by the participants, it can be speculated that the socio-economic status of the participants allowed them to acquire and use various literacy materials for their preschool children.

The use of various literacy resources has been linked with children’s literacy development. Senechal & LeFevre (2002) tied children’s exposure to books to
development of vocabulary and listening comprehension skills. Likewise, Makin & Whitehead (2004) argued that accessibility of books enabled children to interact with words and print. Furthermore, studies have also emphasized that home computer use enhances children's ability to read and visualize images (Subrahmanyam, Kraut, Greenfield, and Gross, 2000).

Other than having a variety of literacy materials, the findings revealed that participants used outings to enhance their children’s early literacy skills. It is evident from the findings that participants took their children to parks and game reserves, places of worship, and shopping malls. Besides helping children to become familiar with the environments around them, outings provide children with an excellent opportunity to interact with their parents and other people. In addition, they give children a chance to expand their language skills through asking questions. Evidence from this study further diverges from initial findings of studies conducted in Botswana (Geiner and Alant, 2005; Molosiwa, 2007) which implied that there was limited interaction between children and their parents. Again, the variability between the current and the former studies may be attributed to the demographic variance of the populations used.

The study also revealed shocking results; none of the participants used the public library for their preschoolers. Participants revealed that the public libraries were not appropriate for young children. However, research has shown that exposing young children to library use help promote their confidence in the skills that support future learning (Brock & Rankin, 2008). These findings therefore, prompt further investigations of the services offered by the public libraries and whether the libraries carry resources and materials relevant to the preschool age-group. Further, it will be worthwhile to carry
out a general national survey of public library use by parents and preschool children in order to understand the extend and depth of the phenomenon.

**Research Sub-Question Four: How much time do parents spend with their preschool children?**

From the evidence supplied by the study most of the participants indicated that they read 42.9% (n=6), wrote 57.1% (n=8), and drew 35.7 (n=5) with their children 1-3 times per week. A few participants indicated that they read 14.3% (n=2), wrote 14.3% (n=2) and drew 28.6% (n=2) with their children 7 or more times per week. The findings therefore, indicate that parents do spend some time with their children but is not specific about amount of time spent.

**Research Sub-Question Five: What are parents’ beliefs about who should promote preschool children early literacy development?**

To answer this research question information from several sections of the questionnaire and interview items were used. It is clear from the findings that the majority of participants believe that young children gain literacy skills from the people around them and parents. In addition, the responses for the first interview question show that the majority of participants felt that children’s literacy skills should be developed between birth and three years. Also, participants unanimously felt that the development of early literacy skills were important. Based on these findings it can be concluded that participants were of the opinion that parents are responsible for developing preschool children’s literacy skills.
Research Sub-Question Six: What challenges do parents face in promoting children’s literacy skills?

The results of the study show that the majority of participants’ main challenge was time. It is clear that participants were grappling with balancing their time among family and employment demands. As one participant noted “time is a major challenge. It is difficult to balance the time for working, being a mother and other social commitments. From the information gathered through the interviews, it also became apparent that parents seemed not to have adequate time to spend with the children mainly because spending time with their children is not in their list of priorities. As one participant stated “for me the little time I have is trying to… I know money is not very important but it but it’s very important we use every time. The little time we have, we say how do I make more money?”

Less than half of the participants also mentioned resources (35.7%) and gaining children’s interest (28.6%) as the challenges they faced. Acquisition of resources did not seem to be much of the problem for the participants as reflected in the amount of resources they had, however, choosing the right kind of resources seemed to be a challenge for some of the participants. This makes sense given the fact that for literacy development to take place the resource used should be ideal.

Research Sub-Question Seven: What kind of assistance do parents need?

Responses made to item 15 of the questionnaire illustrated that the most participants needed assistance with promoting early literacy development. In addition,
more than half of the participants felt that they needed assistance with parental involvement and literacy resources and their use. Few participants reflected that they were in need of information about the importance of early literacy and only one parent wanted to be educated about the use of television for young children. In light of the findings, it is clear that there is need initiate and implement parenting education programs so as to address the deficiencies identified by this study.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the family literacy practices embraced by parents of the University of Botswana child development laboratory. The study was a qualitative research design in the form of interviews with some quantitative method in data collection phase. Phenomenological approach and descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables were used for data analysis. The conclusions and recommendations of the study are presented in this chapter.

Conclusions

Based upon the findings and within the limitations of the study, several conclusions are drawn. First, the present study demonstrated both similarities and differences identified in the existing literature. Similar to earlier research by Perry et al. (2008); Rodriguezgar (2006) this study found that reading and writing were embedded in family daily activities. On the other hand, the current study has revealed that parents of the University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory used various literacy resources to enhance their children’s literacy skills development. These findings differ with previous studies (Molosiwa, 2007) which indicated that literacy development in Botswana is predominantly oral with scarce literacy materials and resources. Further, it is apparent that parents of the University of Botswana engaged various unstructured
activities to enhance children’s literacy development in their homes. The findings revealed that the majority of parents used reading, writing, play, and back and forth conversations for development of children’s early literacy skills. In addition a small but significant number of parents used singing, storytelling, vacation and outdoor activities as well as educational toys for children’s early literacy development.

Also, the findings indicated that families of the University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory have and used a variety of literacy materials and resources to develop their children’s literacy skills. In particular, the majority of participants used children’s books, children’s puzzles, coloring books, pencils and crayons. In addition, more than half of the participants also revealed that they had a computer, educational DVD’s/CD’s, and alphabet posters. This is a good sign for children’s early literacy development. As already mentioned, it is important that children have easy access to books (Makin & Whitehead, 2004) to enable them to interact with words and print. Apparently, availability of a variety of literacy resources and materials signifies a literacy rich environment, and children who are raised in such settings thrive.

Parents of the University of Botswana believed that they are responsible for developing their children’s literacy skills. This stems from the findings which showed that the majority of participants believed that children’s literacy skills should be developed between birth and three years. Past research studies have also identified the period between birth and five years as ideal for early literacy development and a way to ensure a successful future in children’s reading and writing (Siegler, Deloache & Eisengberg, 2006; Morrison 2008).
Time constraint is a major challenge facing parents of the University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory. As shown by the findings of this study, the majority of participants indicated that they had problems balancing time among work demands, parental roles, and social commitments. While this constraint affected the time participants spent with their children, parental involvement is deemed highly essential for the development of children’s early literacy skills.

Based on the findings of this study, there is a need to educate parents of the University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory on promoting early literacy development, parental involvement, early literacy resources, and their use, the importance of early literacy, public library use, and the use of television for young children. Although the current study has shown that parents provided a variety of materials and resources for their children, it is clear that parents were uncertain about their attempts to develop their children’s literacy skills, highlighting the need for assistance in various areas.

Essentially, parents need to be educated about the importance of their involvement in children’s early literacy development, what to guard against, as well as when and how to promote children’s early literacy skills. Different programs can be put in place to address this identified need. For instance, newsletters and PTA meetings can be used to disseminate the information pertaining to early literacy development. In addition, web-resources for parents can be incorporated into the current University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory website. This way, parents can have free and easy access to the information each time they need it.
Therefore, addressing parents’ deficiencies is vital given that direct participation of parents in children’s literacy related activities helps children to develop school readiness skills (Farver, Xu, Eppe & Lonigan, 2006). Also, it is clear from research (Bennet, Weigel, & Martin, 2002; Senechal &LeFevre, 2002) that the development of early literacy skills among children sets the stage for future learning. Besides, Oglan & Elcombe (2000) children are capable of developing literacy skills in environments where family members model these skills. The implication therefore is that availing literacy materials alone is inadequate in developing children’s early literacy skills, but should be coupled with parent participation. In this regard, developing and implementing parent education programs might help parents to improve their participation and current early literacy development practices for improved development of literacy skills among children.

**Limitations**

The findings of the present study should be interpreted cautiously in light of some limitations. As a qualitative study, the research is limited in its ability to be generalized. This research was based on the qualitative investigation of fourteen participants in a particular context. The findings are enriching to family literacy research. However, broader application would require observations and replication of the research in various contexts. The findings and conclusions generated are of potential value to parents and all stakeholders. This research has provided current and new information about the practices, the material resources, parents beliefs about who should develop children’s literacy skills as well as the amount of time parents spend with their preschool children.
Further, the use of self-report questionnaires to assess the home literacy practices is always subject to bias. Parents might have had trouble estimating the frequencies of their own behavior and that of their children. Moreover, because most parents know that they are “supposed” to stimulate the development of literacy skills for their children, they may have over-reported the frequencies of their literacy behaviors. Certainly, it would have been more optimal to cross-validate parents’ reports with home observations. Given the fact that many households for working parents in Botswana utilize the services of house maids, this study may have missed essential information as it did not explore the role that house maids played the development of children’s early literacy. Nevertheless, there is a possibility that the maids for the families that participated in this study may be having an influence in early literacy development of children.

Despite these limitations, there are many strengths of this study that make it a very important contribution to the literature. First, the study provides important information about the family literacy practices in Botswana which is a direct deviation from the understanding provided by previous research. Thus, providing evidence to further challenge the notion that family literacy development in Botswana is predominantly oral with less written material in the homes, and that parents are not actively involved in children’s literacy-related activities. Secondly, the study engaged multiple instruments to assess literacy practices in the homes, including questionnaires and interviews. This helped in cross-validating the results for validity and reliability. Overall, these results have important implications for future research studies examining the family literacy practices and children’s development of literacy skills in Botswana.
Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a result of the foregoing study:

A similar qualitative study which includes interviews and observations should be conducted with the same population in order to address the inconsistencies that emerged during data collection of this study. This will help to generate findings that are more reliable and valid. Furthermore, a follow up study with the same sample should be undertaken to find out if the families used for the current study have maids and whether the maids do literacy related activities with the children. It is recommended that further research on family literacy practices in a different context be conducted, building on this study. For example, it would be desirable to further explore the trends and themes found in the family literacy practices, across other geographic, ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic groups. This will help to identify if the findings of the current study apply to the families of Botswana in general. Another logical step in further research would be to conduct a longitudinal study involving children from the families that participated in this study in order to understand the impact of family literacy practices on children’s performance as they progress through the levels of education.

A parenting program should be developed and implemented to address the needs identified by the current study. Families are children's first educators and play a critical role in young children's literacy development. Studies have shown that young children's future success is related to their early literacy experiences (Saracho, 2002) in the home. In essence, family practices determine young children's literacy skills prior to formal instruction. However, as evidenced by the findings of the current study families may not...
be aware of the best practices in developing children’s literacy development. Therefore, relevant parent education programs can help families of young children improve their awareness and knowledge of optimal literacy development. By providing families with specific strategies to support their children’s literacy skills, families may increase their understanding of early literacy development.

It will also be interesting to investigate the services offered by the public libraries in order to understand the services and materials they have available for preschoolers. The recommended study is important given that the findings derived from the current study indicated 0% use of public libraries by participants and their preschool children. Therefore, examining what public libraries have to offer to preschool children and their families will provide important information for the parents as well as help the public libraries to improve the services they may currently have for the preschoolers.

In addition, the information derived from such a study may be used to educate parents about the services available for families and preschool children. This may help create a stronger interest in library use, help teach young children to understand, appreciate and use public libraries and consequently have a good impact on children’s early literacy development. Besides, as already indicated by Brock & Rankin (2008) library use develop children’s confidence in book handling, story reading and finding information from reference books to support later learning.
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Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.


APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. In your own view, how do children gain literacy skills?

2. At what age should early literacy skills be developed?

3. Is the development of early literacy skills important?

4. What do you do at home to promote your child’s early literacy skills?

5. When you read with your child, do you do anything in particular to help your child become literate?

6. Which other places in the community do you use to promote your child’s early literacy skills?

7. What challenges do you face as a parent in promoting your child’s early literacy skills?

8. How often do you have a back and forth conversation with your preschooler?

9. What do you normally talk about?

10. Is there any other information that you think would be useful for me to know?

Thank you very much for coming this afternoon. Your time is very much appreciated and your comments have been very helpful.
APPENDIX B

Parent Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic Information

For each of the questions in this section indicate your answers by checking the appropriate box.

Gender:  Male  □  Female  □

1. Age:
□ 25 years or below
□ 26 – 35 years
□ 36 – 45 years
□ 46 years and above

2. What is your highest level of education?
□ Certificate
□ Diploma
□ Undergraduate
□ Masters
□ PhD
□ Other (please specify)
3. What is your current position?

☐ Academic Staff

☐ Support Staff

☐ Student

☐ Other (please specify)

4. How old is your preschool child/ren who is/are enrolled in the UB Child Development Laboratory?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>☐ 3-4 years</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

specify_________
SECTION B: Literacy Activities that Parents do with Children

For question 6, check all the activities that apply (you can check as many as possible). For question 6 to 11 choose only one answer.

6. Which of the following do you do with your preschool child at home? (Tick all that apply).

☐ Read the books together
☐ Teach alphabets
☐ Play games together
☐ Sing rhymes together
☐ Draw pictures together
☐ Write with your child
☐ Tell my child tales

7. How often do you read to your child at home?

☐ All the time (7 or more times a week)
☐ Sometimes (4 – 6 times a week)
☐ Rarely (1 to 3 times per week)
☐ Never
☐ Other (please specify)………………………………..
8. How often do you write with your child at home?

☐ All the time (7 or more times a week)

☐ Sometimes (4 to 6 times a week)

☐ Rarely (1 to 3 times a week)

☐ Never

☐ Other (please specify)………………………………

9. How often do you sing with your child at home?

☐ All the time (7 or more times a week)

☐ Sometimes (4 to 6 times a week)

☐ Rarely (1 to 3 times a week)

☐ Never

☐ Other (please specify)………………………………

10. How often do you draw with your child at home?

☐ All the time (7 or more times a week)

☐ Sometimes (4 to 6 times a week)

☐ Rarely (1 to 3 times a week)

☐ Never

☐ Other (please specify)………………………………
11. How often do you write with your child at home?

☐ All the time (7 or more times a week)

☐ Sometimes (4 to 6 times a week)

☐ Rarely (1 to 3 times a week)

☐ Never

☐ Other (please specify)........................................................................................................

.....................................................................................................................
SECTION C: Materials and Resources

For this section check all items that are applicable to you.

12. Which of the following materials do you have?

- ☐ Children’s reading books
  - Number of books ____________
- ☐ Children’s puzzles
  - Number of Puzzles__________
- ☐ Coloring books
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Alphabet audio tapes
- ☐ Rhymes audio tapes
- ☐ Computer
- ☐ Computer games with stories and letters
- ☐ Educational DVD’s/CD’S
- ☐ Alphabet posters
- ☐ Other (please specify)…………………………………………………………………
13. Which of the following materials does your child use?

☐ Children’s reading books

☐ Children’s puzzles

☐ Coloring books

☐ Crayons

☐ Pencils

☐ Alphabet audio tapes

☐ Rhymes audio tapes

☐ Computer

☐ Computer games with stories and letters

☐ Educational DVD’s/CD’S

☐ Alphabet posters

☐ Other (please specify)

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

14. What other places do you visit with your child?

☐ Library

☐ Go on outings with the child

☐ Other (specify)

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………
15. What type of assistance do you need regarding the issue of early literacy development?

☐ Importance of early literacy

☐ Information about literacy resources and use

☐ Parent involvement in early literacy

☐ Promoting early literacy development

☐ Other (specify) …………………………………………………………………………………………..
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………

*Thank you for your responses!*
APPENDIX C
Permit: Ministry of Education and Skills Development

To: Mrs. Maria M. Tsabane
Boks 70459
Gaborone

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY ON: "THE ROLE OF FAMILY LITERACY PRACTICES IN CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY SKILLS IN BOTSWANA"

We acknowledge receipt of your application to conduct a research on the topic mentioned above.

This serves to grant you a permit to conduct your study amongst parents of children enrolled at the University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory to address the following research question and sub-questions:

1. How do parents promote early literacy development of children?
   a) What activities do parents and children do in the home?
   b) What materials do you use to foster literacy?
   c) What interactions between the parents and children?
   d) What are your beliefs about the importance of literacy development?

2. What challenges do parents face in promoting children's literacy skills?

3. What level of engagement do parents have?

It is of paramount importance to seek consent from the University of Botswana, the Child Development Laboratory and the parents that you are going to use as your respondents. We hope and trust that you will conduct the study as stated in your Proposal and to strictly adhere to Research Ethics so that the research permit serves its purpose.

Please note that this permit is valid for a period of one year effective from 12th January 2010 to 12th January 2011.
You are furthermore requested to submit a copy of your final report of the study to the Division of Planning, Statistics and Research, Ministry of Education and skills Development, Botswana.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

[Name]
For / Permanent Secretary
APPENDIX D

Permit: Department of Home Economics Education, University of Botswana

19 January 2010

M. Samane (Mrs)
3776 North Nelson Ave
 Apt 149
Montana, MT 59604

Dear Mrs. Samane,

Re: Permission to Conduct Research Study

This is to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct a research study at the Child Development Laboratory in Home Economics.

Thank you,

Dr. M.S. Sneyd
HDG, Department of Home Economics
APPENDIX E

IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board

DATE: January 7, 2010
TO: Marea Tsamaase, Ms
FROM: Ball State University IRB
RE: IRB protocol # 147232-2
TITLE: The Role of Family Literacy Practices in Children’s Development of Literacy Skills in Botswana
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision
ACTION: APPROVED
DECISION DATE: January 7, 2010
EXPIRATION DATE: January 6, 2011
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

The Institutional Review Board has approved your Revision for the above protocol, effective January 7, 2010 through January 6, 2011. All research under this protocol must be conducted in accordance with the approved submission.

Editorial Notes:

1. Prior to any subject recruitment and data collection, please be sure to secure permission from the Ministry of Education as you have proposed to do in your protocol.

As a reminder, it is the responsibility of the P.I. and/or faculty sponsor to inform the IRB in a timely manner:

- when the project is completed,
- if the project is to be continued beyond the approved end date,
- if the project is to be modified,
- if the project encounters problems, or
- if the project is discontinued.

Any of the above notifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (http://www.bsu.edu/irb). Please reference the IRB protocol number given above in any communication to the IRB regarding this project. Be sure to allow sufficient time for review and approval of requests for modification or continuation. If you have questions, please contact Amy Boos at (765) 285-5034 or akboos@bsu.edu.
APPENDIX F

Participant Consent Form

Study Title
The Role of Family Literacy Practices in Children’s Development of Literacy Skills in Botswana.

Study Purpose and Rationale
The purpose of this research project is to examine the family literacy practices embraced by parents of children at the University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory. Findings from this research may be used to inform the development and implementation of parent education programs for the University of Botswana Child Development Laboratory. It is also hoped that the results of the study will sensitize the parents and all stakeholders about the importance of developing children’s early literacy skills. Further, the study will provide a unique contribution to the literature by adding new information to the existing knowledge of family literacy practices and early literacy in developing countries.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria
To be eligible for this study, the participants must be parents (either biological or adoptive parents) and have one or more of their children enrolled in the UB Child Development Laboratory. In the case where there are two parents in the family (mom and dad), only one parent will be expected to participate in the study. Only parents who are 18 years and above (legal adults) will be eligible to participate in the study. In case there may be parents who are under the age of 18 years, they will be excluded from the study because they will be under age. The subject population will be restricted to the UB Child Development laboratory because the findings of the proposed study will be used to inform the design of parenting education programs offered by UB.

Participation Procedures and Duration
For this project, you will be interviewed and asked to complete a questionnaire about the literacy practices. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes, and the questionnaire will take 7 to 10 minutes to complete.

Audio or Video Tapes

For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio taped. Any names used on the audiotape will be changed to pseudonyms when the tapes are transcribed. The tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher’s home for three years and will then be erased.

Disclosure of Alternative Procedures

Not applicable

Data Confidentiality or Anonymity

All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

Storage of Data

Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s home for three years and will then be shredded. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer for three years and then deleted. Only the researcher and the thesis advisor will have access to the data.

Risks or Discomforts

The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that you may not feel comfortable answering some of the questions. You may choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable and you may quit the study at any time.
**Who to Contact Should You Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study**

Not applicable

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**Benefits**

The personal benefits for participation include receiving a copy of the results of the study upon request.

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**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

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**RB Contact Information**

For one’s rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Research Compliance, Sponsored Programs Office, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.
**Study Title**  The Role of Family Literacy Practices in Children’s Development of Literacy Skills in Botswana.

**Consent**

I, __________________, agree to participate in this research project entitled, “The Role of Family Literacy Practices in Children’s Development of Literacy Skills in Botswana.” I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

______________________________  ____________________

Participant’s Signature  Date

**Researcher Contact Information**

Principal Investigator:  Faculty Supervisor:

Marea M. Tsamaase, Graduate Student  Dr. Scott Hall

Family and Consumer Sciences  Family and Consumer Sciences

Ball State University  Ball State University

Muncie, IN  47306  Muncie, IN  47306

Telephone: (765) 214-0086  Telephone: (765) 285-5943

Email: mmtsamaase@bsu.edu  Email: sshall@bsu.edu