

The Effect of Parental Absence on Children's Literacy Development: A Case Study of a Fourth-Grade Elementary School Student

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Abstract

The research analyzed the parental role in the literacy development of a fourth-grade Midwestern elementary school student in the United States of America. The subject selection was based on the beginning of the year assessment, which showed an early second-grade literacy level. Data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews with the homeroom teacher, reading specialist, and the subject for one semester. The observation notes, and interview transcriptions were coded. The four emerging themes were the subject's literacy level, parental background, the caregiver's literacy belief and behavior, the home literacy environment, and the subject's literacy interest. The analysis showed that parental absence affected the subject's lack of motivation in facing academic challenges and literacy difficulties. Low motivation led to low academic achievements, including literacy. The caregiver, which was the grandfather, did not display his parental role in reinforcing the subject's literacy. A home literacy-rich environment was not created. The caregiver did not expose the subject to literacy-related activities at home. Meaningful conversation on literacy activities and achievements was not made between the caregiver and the subject, which was suggested to be the factor that caused the subject's difficulties in processing and delivering information. The limited parental support by the caregiver on the subject's literacy activities and resources was analyzed to be the instrumental factor that caused the subject's difficulties in reading and writing.

Keywords: parental role in children's literacy; elementary school; home literacy environment

Introduction

Research suggests the role of parents in the academic success of children of different ages (Bahagia et al., 2022; Lara & Saracostti, 2019; Wahid et al., 2022). Parental absence, which

refers to parents and caregivers, contributes to children's low academic performance (Mao et al., 2020). Home literacy environment (HLE) is under the family literacy theory that focuses on how the home environment influences children's literacy performance, the theory that

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drives this research (Niklas & Schneider, 2013, 2017). Home is the first learning institution for children. Parents and the environment where the children live are where they learn the most in the beginning years of their lives.

Supports from parents motivate students learning. Learning responsibilities are supervised in the presence of parents. Their presence provides guidance, help, resources, advice, relief, consolation, and protection to create a safe and comfortable learning environment. Children digest the learning process with the parents' support so that making mistakes are taken positively as part of their achievements. Students who think positively about learning will be motivated to complete their learning responsibilities. There are conditions when students experience the absence of parents, like divorce. In the case of parents' absence, frustration and panicking can attack children's comfort zone in learning as they manage to deal with both demands as an achieving student in the classroom and a compassionate child at home. Learning motivation will significantly decrease as they feel a lack of support from the feeling of loneliness in facing learning difficulties.

The significant role of parents in children's literacy development determines students' success in academic life (Dong et al., 2020). Some efforts to develop literacy skills include building a home literacy-rich environment. Building a home literacy environment means parents provide books and prints and use them to do shared reading, dialog, discuss, and communicate with the children. Highly involved parents influence students' academic performance (Lara & Saracostti, 2019; Naite, 2021). As parents are aware of their active role in supporting their children in school, they will

take responsibility for being the first teacher at home and assist with school-related problems. When monitoring the children's behavior at home, parents ensure their progress and check the possible gap between the children and the teacher. Regular monitoring improves their academic performance. Parents can become great tutors when challenging assignments are faced. Tutoring provides emotional support and prevents children from encountering stress. When stress is not handled, children will fail in their education. On the other hand, encouragement throughout a difficult time will boost children's academic performance and build stronger relationships and trust between parents and children.

Good parenting encourages parental involvement in building relationships with teachers and the school to support children's academic performance (Grace et al., 2012; Lara & Saracostti, 2019; Rahman, 2001; Topor et al., 2010). Parents will help with the homework while communicating with teachers about the children's progress. Teacher-student relationship mediates parents-teacher communication. School functions and governance will be taken seriously by the parents. Parents are taking school advice to create a home environment that encourages learning. Continuous supports and resources guide the children in making good decisions regarding future careers, employability, and advancement. Children can be more successful in their future life.

Parents support children's academic achievement, especially the success of their literacy development (Kigobe & Uk, 2019; Mao et al., 2020; Xiaofeng et al., 2018). The family environment significantly supports literacy

development. Children start developing literacy skills early by communicating with their parents. Parents continue to develop children's literacy by reading books, playing, telling stories, singing, and talking. Parents promote the importance of the success of reading comprehension for their children's future life. Expectations from parents for the children to succeed in reading are important.

On the other hand, children with absent parents' experience struggle to process written or oral information. The basic and complex skills in understanding the meaning within a text are interfered with by insecure feelings in the absence of the parents. While children with parents receive appreciation for the success of dealing with problems and responsibilities in reading, children with absent parents feel lonely and isolated. Even when children are successful in their effort to deal with struggles, they tend to perceive the celebration because of isolation negatively. The situation lowers their motivation to interact with others, decreasing their speaking and listening skills. Eventually, reading and writing information is challenging for children. The efforts in class are disturbed by less healthy mentalities in generating their best performance. Students also do not accept parents' expectations and support for success in literacy.

Evidence from research shows home literacy environment predicts children's early literacy development (Hamilton et al., 2016). Children experiencing literacy-related interactions at home are the center of the home literacy environment. They participate in interactions with parents and or family members to understand oral information from the dialog, play, and other daily activities. Children also

interact to understand written information from literacy resources around the house, like magazines, newspapers, books, signs, running text and subtitles on television, recipe books, and other prints in the environment. A home literacy-rich environment promotes print knowledge and phonological awareness to bring formal reading instruction as they start schooling.

Creating a home literacy environment using shared reading routines with parents and family members supports the development of children's linguistic and socioemotional competencies (Hamilton et al., 2016; Wirth et al., 2022). In the children's early years, parents' effort in providing many books or prints is not the only determining factor in promoting a literacy environment. To support it, parents must create a literacy-orientated environment by sharing reading routines from the books or prints available at home. Parental attitudes toward reading are significant in making prints meaningful to children. Children's linguistic competencies are developed using receptive and productive language skills inspired by the literacy-rich environment. They can understand the spoken language and produce it within the appropriate context. Early language acquisition is the precursor of good communication skills. As communication skills are necessary to build a good relationship, children benefit from them to build socioemotional competencies. Children's intelligence to provide, process, and receive information is the key to socio-emotional competencies for cooperation and self-regulation to school adjustment and academic demands.

Endurance during a difficult learning process to read is created by a supporting and

encouraging environment where the children grow up (Tarelli & Stubbe, 2019). Family plays a significant role in children's motivation to learn to read. Lower support might cause lower motivation in children to deal with difficulties in reading, which lead to difficulties in finding pleasure in reading. A rich home literacy environment provides pre-literacy skills and principles of language and texts. Children who experience literacy at home from an early age are aware of pre-literacy skills such as phonological awareness. Responding to inherent repercussions by the teachers can contribute to compensating the children with disadvantaged home literacy environments.

When parents are absent, children's caregivers, like the other family members, should take responsibility for developing the children's literacy (Dowd et al., 2018; Wambiri, 2014). Caregivers who substitute the absence of parents can be kin like grandparents, uncles, or aunts. As they are responsible for providing the care, they also affect the children's emergent reading development. Caregivers' enthusiasm for schooling establishes learning and support for early reading. Before formal reading instruction, the relationship between caregivers and children determines reading achievements when they join formal education. Reading difficulties potentially occur in children with little or no simulation from caregivers to enhance early reading development. Limited interaction between caregivers and children lowers the opportunities for communication, play, dialog, and telling stories that can stimulate early reading development. The condition can lower interest and motivation to read as the children start schooling.

Children with absent parents experience a higher risk of delayed development (Jampaklay et al., 2016). Creating a parents-children bond is instrumental to healthy development in children. Parents provide support and resources to maintain children's long-term motivation in processing challenges in life and, most importantly, difficulties in learning. As more children are experiencing parental absence, schools and educators need to have information and research that provide evidence and recommendations for dealing with the condition. While research on parents supporting roles in children's learning is vastly available (Dowd et al., 2018; Hume et al., 2015; Ihekerenma & Margaret, 2020; Kigobe & Uk, 2019; Wambiri, 2014), little research is discussing the influence of when parents are absent. Especially, few explicitly provided an example of the role of a grandfather as a caregiver to reinforce children's literacy.

This research was conducted to investigate the role of a grandfather on a fourth-grade student. The research results offer an analysis of the caregiver's role in students' literacy development. Observation and interviews with the student, homeroom teacher, and literacy specialist were conducted to gather data.

Method

Participant

The subject of the research was a fourth-grade student, aged nine-year-old, who studied in an elementary school in the Midwestern area of the United States of America. The research subject was selected after an interview with the fourth-grade homeroom teacher, an interview with the fourth-grade reading specialist, and a one-week classroom observation. The

homeroom teacher had been teaching in the elementary school for fifteen years. The reading specialist had been working for seventeen years, helping students with literacy difficulties.

Initially, an interview with the fourth-grade homeroom teacher was conducted to gather information on students who can be the subject, a student with problems in literacy development. The interview with the reading specialist was conducted to gather similar information and to choose a student who potentially had problems in literacy development. The homeroom teacher and reading specialist also provided the researcher with documents on the potential subjects' literacy works and grades. The researcher used the documents to help choose the subject.

After gathering a list of potential students to become the subject, a one-week classroom observation was conducted to choose one among several students on the list, make a proper introduction to the subject, and gain the subject's trust by involving in several classroom activities, while sending an informed consent letter to the receive approval on the interview from the subject's parents or caregivers. On the last day of observation, the informed consent letter was received with the approval signature of the subject's caregiver. The subject was considered to fit for the research because of her low performance in literacy and being cared for by her grandfather. The condition raised a research question on whether the caregiver affected the subject's literacy performance and in what way.

Consent

The subject was a minor participant, a child under eighteen. Thus, oral consent should be

received in every session besides the initial approval from the subject's caregiver. When the subject refuses or is asked to stop during the interview session, the researcher should comply. Sometimes, the answer to one question was collected after several interview sessions. Sometimes, the subject took questions while completing activities like scribbling, coloring, or discussing favorite sites from the school tablet. The total number of attempted interview sessions was twenty-five.

Data Collection

The research was a case study using a qualitative research method (Ary et al., 2010; Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The qualitative research method provided opportunities to learn more about the subject's life. It offered possibilities of making a difference in improving the subject's practice from everyday concerns. The qualitative method was expected to support the subject by understanding her low reading competencies, the potential causes of the parental roles, and prospective solutions to the complication.

A series of in-depth interviews with the subject was conducted during the spring semester to gather data on the home literacy environment. Questions also gathered information on the caregiver's involvement in student literacy development and their literacy-related behaviors and beliefs. The answers to the interview questions were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded to analyze the emerging themes (Ary et al., 2010). Coding systems were used in this research to facilitate categorizing predetermined reading behaviors of the subject as they occur in the school and home environment. Analyzing the coded data from observation and interviews helped to indicate

whether certain literacy behavior occurred. The emerging themes were determined: the subject's literacy level, parental background, the caregiver's literacy belief and behavior, the home literacy environment, and the subject's literacy interest.

The interviews started in the second week of the spring semester. The interview was conducted at the elementary school. As the subject's available time varied each week, depending on the schedule of the subject's intervention sessions outside of the homeroom schedule, the interview was conducted intermittently during the spring semester. The duration of the interviews varied depending on the subject's willingness to answer the interview questions. Each interview session was allotted twenty minutes, with an additional ten minutes to pick up and return the subject from the homeroom class to the interview room and interview preparation. Preliminary observations were conducted before interview sessions with the subject. It was conducted for five days or one-week instructional day, from Monday to Friday, from 8 AM to 3 PM. Data from observation were recorded in written notes, focusing on the subject's literacy activities like writing, reading, listening, and speaking. The observation noted activities that specifically indicated phenomena that reflected low literacy performance. The observation was completed without interfering with the classroom and the subject's literacy activities by observing from the rear seat of the classroom. Whenever the subject produced literacy work during the observation, the teacher and reading specialist shared it as the observation document. The observation notes, and documents were coded and analyzed.

Data Analysis

Results of the research were concluded from the data analysis of the one-week preliminary observation of the subject, documents of literacy works and grades from the homeroom teacher and reading specialist, interview with the homeroom teacher, interview with the reading specialist, and one-semester in-depth interviews with the subject. The themes emerged from the coded interviews (Ary et al., 2010). Initially, they were divided into two themes. The first theme was parental interactions with the subject to develop literacy at home. The second theme was their literacy-related behaviors and beliefs. While processing the data, four themes were gathered from the initial two themes. The four emerging themes were the subject's literacy level, parental background, the caregiver's literacy belief and behavior, the home literacy environment, and the subject's literacy interest.

The trustworthiness in this qualitative research was the establishment of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Nowell et al., 2017; Stahl & King, 2020). The credibility of the research was established through triangulation. The researcher had a preliminary observation, an interview with the homeroom teacher, and an interview with the reading specialist to collect data on the subject's background, character, literacy achievement, and personal issues. Besides, data on the subject's literacy products and grades support the researcher in understanding the literacy achievement and personal condition of the students. The understanding through the triangulation of different data from different resources of individuals provided a more

credible view in concluding the analyzed data and providing post-research suggestions.

As variability occurs from different contexts in qualitative research, dependability means consistency in which variation can be clarified and tracked (Ary et al., 2010). The documentation of the approach and procedures is used to test reproducible conclusions. One strategy to investigate dependability is using triangulation. Dependability in this research was established by triangulation for writing the result through consulting the process and the result of the research to the teacher and reading specialist. The peer-level member check provided views on the objectivity of the data analysis before concluding the result. The influence of the researcher's values and passions was controlled by having the research checked by peers. The peers were colleagues working in the same department as the researcher.

Confirmability was established by ensuring the research's objectivity (Creswell, 2014; Nowell et al., 2017). Neutrality in the procedures and interpretation of results were achieved by collecting and concluding the data, confirmed by other researchers studying the same problem. Corroboration was used as the approach to enhance confirmability in this qualitative research using the strategy of data triangulation. The data-oriented approach was used to ensure the analysis to conclude the findings. Data were collected from a one-week preliminary observation, a recorded interview with the homeroom teacher and the reading specialist, documents of literacy works and grades from the homeroom teacher and reading specialist, and a one-semester recorded interview with the participant.

The research's transferability was concerned with applying the findings in another situation (Ary et al., 2010). Descriptive adequacy is a researcher's responsibility to provide accurate, complete, and detailed participant descriptions. A detailed description of the research will help other users compare the similarity in the same case of reading on children, making transferability. The literacy problems faced by the subject were related to parental absence in literacy development, where the home literacy environment was not utilized to support the comprehension of reading skills. The subject's low literacy level and limited home literacy environment may apply to another. This research might picture and provide suggestions on a similar matter related to parental absence influencing children's literacy development.

The reflexivity of this research was instrumental in directing the analysis of the data (Ary et al., 2010; Creswell, 2014). The research was based on a personal interest in finding the influence of parental absence on the student's literacy development. An effort was made to further understand the family literacy theory, especially in the home literacy environment. The theory of family literacy provides suggestions on the positive effects of family support on children's literacy (Niklas & Schneider, 2013, 2017). Data were collected from the student, homeroom teacher, and reading specialist's point of view. Data from the caregiver were not gathered. There were possibilities that the data were analyzed based on the family literacy theory, suggesting that parental presence is the ideal condition to support the student's literacy. The data could lead a researcher to conclude data based on the student's parental condition, including when there was parental absence.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

While the subject was a fourth grader, data analysis on the observation notes, documents, and interviews showed that the subject's literacy level was at the beginning of second grade. The analysis of the subject's literary products was in concurrence with the explanations of the homeroom teacher and the reading specialist.

"I couldn't compare her literacy level with the other fourth graders. The granddad could've involved more. I would suggest additional hours with the reading specialist to address her problems" (Homeroom Teacher, Interview).

The potential contributing cause of the subject's literacy problem was the absence of parental support to enhance her literacy development from an early age. The caregiver did not assist with the subject's needs to advance literacy. The condition is apt to the caregiver's belief and behavior in literacy. The grandfather did not create literacy activities with the granddaughter. Limited children's literacy resources at home could limitedly spark the subject's interest in reading. Children's books were not available. Newspaper or other printed resources were not provided. He never read children's books to her. He never introduced letters, sounds, or words. She rarely saw the grandfather model reading to her or having any favorite reading materials. The caregiver had low reading habits and lived in a poor home literacy environment with limited literacy resources. The condition pictured his low literacy belief and behavior. It echoed the subject's low literacy interest.

The subject showed difficulties in reading longer texts. The subject hardly decoded and pronounced only an average of three words in every long sentence consisting of five or more words. Intonation and clarity were not mastered.

"They are difficult (the multi-syllable words). I just jumped to the other one (next word in the sentence). Hm, dunno. Hate it. Never like 'em (the new vocabulary)" (Subject, Interview).

Multi-syllable words were skipped or mumbled. Word comprehension caused the inability to connect ideas in the text. It created confusion about the meaning of the sentences. The condition was worsened by her lack of concentration during reading. She tried to find distractions during reading by asking questions, explaining, discussing, or pointing out subjects unrelated to the reading activities. The subject was also not interested in reading activities, especially fiction texts. Many provided fictional texts did not spark her interest.

The subject's reading skills were reflected in her writing skills. The cueing systems were not acquired properly, so the subject was not confident when approaching and using unfamiliar words. The subject's limited vocabulary did not only affect reading comprehension but also writing skills. It caused trouble expressing her ideas, feelings, thoughts, and emotions using written and spoken words. Writing products showed short and simple sentences, consisted of an average of three words every sentence, and were built from a subject and main verb. Words contained misspellings. Sentences did not use contextual vocabulary, which the fourth-grade level should develop.

The subject refused to speak elaborately in response to questions or requests from the teacher or reading specialist. Speaking was a challenge because she struggled to comprehend the meaning of words and sentences. She was aware of the condition by frequently stating "I can't" or "I don't know" when the teacher or reading specialist asked her to speak. The difficulties caused her low confidence in speaking in front of others. She could not express independently and elaborately her thoughts and ideas. Production was merely short answers to triggered teacher or reading specialist questions. The condition caused trouble in listening and understanding oral information. Frequently, information should be repeated to the subject to deliver meaning.

The caregiver's activities and behavior did not support the subject's literacy development. The subject was under the care of a caregiver, the grandfather. The caregiver never asked the teacher about the subject's literacy development or academic performance. He passively received school reports that showed the subject's low performance. The teacher explained that the caregiver did not ask for suggestions to guide the subject better.

"She took her writing feedback home. I asked about her granddad's response. She said that he wouldn't care. It's sad, I know. She didn't even have children's books at home. I tried to discuss it with her granddad in the parent meeting" (Reading Specialist, Interview).

The caregiver lived at his apartment just with the subject. The subject did not experience a rich home literacy environment that could have enhanced her literacy. The caregiver did not create and could not model literacy habits like reading, writing, discussion, or watching

educational programs to support his granddaughter's literacy. Communication between the caregiver and the subject was short and meaningless. Regular questions were about "How's it going?" "Need help?" and alike, which was answered by the subject with short responses like "Sure," "Fine," and "It's okay." No children's books, posters, or other printed materials were available at home. The subject said she preferred staying in her room and "doing nothing."

Discussion

The literacy level of the subject was concluded to be the beginning of second grade. Problems in reading fluency were identified before entering the fourth grade. The homeroom teacher and the reading specialist provided documents of literacy works and grades when the subject was in the third grade. The documents were the subject's writing sheets and grades, spelling grades, reading comprehension evaluation sheets and grades, speaking grades, and progress reports from the third-grade homeroom teacher and the reading specialist. The subject's writing had many spelling mistakes with limited word choice. Developing vocabulary is crucial to children's reading comprehension and writing skills (Butler et al., 2010; Nash & Snowling, 2006). Questioning and language engagement by the teacher and reading specialist increase students' word knowledge. However, the subject frequently refused to participate in language classroom activities. The researcher's one-week preliminary observation notes during the literacy hours confirmed the subject's passiveness and errors in the teacher's requested involvement in the provided questions. The subject did not provide the

expected responses to the comprehension questions of the text.

Observations confirmed subject's recalling information in the text was challenging. Recall questions were not responded to as expected, even more, complex questions like probing questions. Reading was on a syllable level, so the subject could not directly comprehend the text. When vocabulary is limited and imprecise, students' interest in reading, writing, speaking, and listening classroom activities decreases (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). The findings confirmed previous research on the significance of vocabulary to language comprehension (Nash & Snowling, 2006; Sadeghi & Sharifi, 2013; R. Silverman & Hines, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

Previous research findings mentioned that reading fluency indicates reading comprehension (Başaran, 2013). When students show prosody as they read, there is a greater chance that they are linking the in-depth meaning of the information in the text. Reading speed is not a predictor of comprehension. Correct reading skills at least help students link the superficial meaning of the text. The subject seemed to have challenges in understanding both the in-depth and superficial meaning of the text because of difficulties in reading fluently. Many words were not recognized because of a lack of phonetic knowledge and memory in spelling. Strategies for comprehending the text were not mastered to help understand the information. The subject refused to share prior knowledge on the topic of the text. Mistakes were made when asked to predict and make inferences based on the information in the text. Fluent readers would recognize words quickly and be able to gain meaning from the reading so

that reading sounds natural. Reading fluency activities enhances reading comprehension (Pallathadka et al., 2022). The subject's lack of skills in comprehending the text was the predictor of the limited reading fluency activities. Unfortunately, the caregiver in this research did not expose the subject to reading materials or model the subject in reading. Exposing the subject at home with printed materials would have sparked their interest in reading. Moreover, if the caregiver had read to the subject and discussed the text, he could have modeled the subject in reading.

The caregiver's skills in reading are correlated to support the children's fluency and comprehension (Bilge & Kalenderoglu, 2022; Palmer, 2010; State Government of Victoria Australia, 2023). Modeling is the key to correlation. If the caregiver had the skills in reading and could model them, the subject could learn the skills to support her fluency and comprehension because extensive reading improves writing skills (Rizal & Zulaefa, 2023). Fluency and comprehension are dependent upon one another. Interviews in this study showed no information on the caregiver's efforts of modeling reading to the subject. The caregiver's ability to decode the text could have determined the subject's fluency. The caregiver could have taught the phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary abilities when modeling the reading—modeling and explaining how the abilities determine fluency influence children when decoding the text. The subject could have recalled the strategies when she faced difficulties decoding the text. Vocabulary comprehension supports the reader's fluency accurately and with appropriate speed (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Reading

comprehension and fluency progress as the reader decodes the text quickly and accurately. The subject of this research showed weak decoding skills and limited vocabulary. The limitations significantly resulted in the subject's low reading fluency and comprehension skills. Consequently, the subject experienced low writing comprehension and writing fluency skills.

Analysis of the subject's parental background showed the absence of parental support in early literacy development. The subject lived only with the caregiver, the grandfather from the mother's side. The parents handed the subject to the caregiver when she was a toddler. The subject continued the communication only with the mother, who lived overseas. The subject lost contact with the father. While the role of the subject's mother was unclear regarding early years literacy development, detailed information on the caregiver's role was gathered. The caregiver retired from working in the field of business. The specific job was unclear. The subject's frequent statement, "I am by myself," when asked about daily activities at home, showed feelings of loneliness. It indicated that the relationship with the caregiver was not very close.

Studies suggest that high-quality and meaningful conversation benefits children's academic development and success (Caro, 2011; Knight, 2017; Kumncho, 2018; Miao, 2021; Offordile, 2012; Zhang, 2020)—the patterns of parent-child communication influence school self-esteem. When parents or caregivers care about issues in children's education, they will have conversations with children on school-related topics, making them feel supported. The feelings boost motivation for their academic

outcomes. It means that although the quantity of communication has an influence, the quality of parent-child communication influences more in strengthening their connection. The quality of communication is associated with children's self-concept, which positively establishes motivation for children to succeed academically. During the meaningful discussion, children comprehend vocabularies and conversational skills that support reading success. They learn how to provide, respond to, and analyze the information. As students understand the skills for reading success, they will use strategies in processing the meaning of the information and finally succeed academically.

The subject admitted that problems faced at school were rarely discussed in detail with the caregiver, including literacy problems. Questions frequently asked by the caregiver were common questions on whether the subject "did good" at school. The subject's progress on each course was not in the discussion. When asked the common question, the subject's answers were short and general statements like "okay," "good," "things happen, but it's okay," or "not bad." The caregiver rarely prompted meaningful conversation on the subject's academic achievement. The caregiver rarely considered homework and assignments to discuss and support. When the subject encountered difficulties in completing literacy assignments or preparing for literacy evaluations and tests, she frequently stated about the caregiver's that "He doesn't care" or "He won't care."

Assistance from parents and caregivers motivates children to endure their academic challenges (Darko-Asumadu & Sika-Bright, 2021). The risk of failure can be prevented as children feel confident in facing difficulties with

parents' help at home and teachers' support at school. Parents could help with homework, assignments, test preparation, and self-reflection. Having family members around will create a secure feeling when making mistakes and searching for learning solutions. When children receive help with schoolwork from their parents and caregivers, they start seeing their parents and caregivers as peers (Reilly, 2021). Helping children with homework positively impacts their academic performance by promoting positive learning behavior. Confidence will develop after children master new information gathered with their parents before they meet with the teacher and peers.

Data on the caregiver's literacy belief and behavior were gathered by inquiring about the caregiver's daily reading habits and home literacy environment. The result showed low reading habits and a poor home literacy environment. The subject mentioned spending extensive screen time on television with the caregiver. The television was on in the morning when they woke up, after school, and before bed. The programs varied from movies, news, series, and reality shows. When asked to explain the television programs, the subject could not explain the content in detail. A general statement described the television programs, like "I don't know. I don't care," "I think it's about food," or "It's about old people." The subject's responses to the programs pictured her not paying attention to the content nor discussing the program with the caregiver.

Screen time can enhance students' literacy positively to initiate discussion, reading, and sharing (R. D. Silverman & Keane, 2021). Digital media can enhance instruction because it promotes engagement and motivation.

However, children will be distracted from what they need to learn without modeling and guidance from parents and caregivers. In the case of parental absence when accessing digital media, screen use is associated with lower reading activities. While co-viewing determines language development during screen time, the negative influences outweigh the positive (Karani et al., 2022). It means that guidelines on screen use are necessary for families to supervise children when accessing digital media (McArthur et al., 2021). Solo media use should be avoided, especially for children at an early age. Parents should guide the screen time to children of all ages. High-quality content should be assured to control children's information intake.

Television programs can teach children complex reading skills supporting their schooling (Kennedy et al., 2022; Schwartz, 2022; R. D. Silverman & Keane, 2021). Informational text in nonfiction books, reference books, lectures, articles, or recipes can be effectively taught while children watch educational television programs. Watching the shows and relating the shows with other activities, like completing related digital games, can help children work on their mastering and applying the comprehension of the reading skills. Children can connect to their background knowledge, analyze information, and build arguments while developing an understanding of certain topics of their interests. Encouraging teachers and parents to utilize educational television programs maximally can help children connect themselves to what they learn from the screen and its application to the real world.

The last theme in the subject's interview was related to the subject's interest in literacy. The

findings showed the subject's low literacy interest. During the sessions with the reading specialist, students showed low interest in literacy. When answering questions during the interview, the subject refused to answer questions on reading self-concept as she requested to stop the interview sessions, do different activities, or talk about different things besides literacy. The school provided reading specialist sessions for the subject to help with the low literacy level. The sessions were created to help the subject to comprehend on-grade reading skills. However, there were no enthusiastic answers, conversations, questions, or reading activities during the sessions with the reading specialist.

Interestingly, the subject was willing to have a deep conversation during the interview as the conversation was about her interest, like her favorite animal and her plans with her mother. The topics of her interest made her willing to discuss the reason for her curiosity on the topics, draw while having the conversation, listen to the readings on the topics, read along some words on the readings, have a conversation on the readings, have question and answer sessions related to the readings, and scribble along information on her comprehension to the readings. Unfortunately, as the researcher tried to provide topics other than her interests, she showed low attentiveness. She indicated a refusal to complete the literacy activities.

The findings of this research contributed to providing evidence for the theory of family literacy. It was evident that parental absence in modeling literacy and providing a home literacy environment disrupted the children's literacy development. Children's literacy interests are related to the parental role in promoting literacy

(Hume et al., 2015). Parents and caregivers should support the school's efforts in strengthening literacy interest in children. Literacy interest grows among children throughout their academic years. Thus, exposing literacy is important in both school and home. As their initial interest appears, the parental role is significant to support it and ensure the continuing progress of literacy development. Children's interest yields power to motivation when experiencing texts (Paige, 2020)(Paige, 2020). There are cases when students read on topics they never know or experience, read on themes that interest them, and receive instructional materials that are not on their grade level. These conditions risk lowering students' interest in literacy. The recommendation for future research was to collect family literacy data from the caregivers of children with problems in their literacy. The caregivers provide different points of view that corroborate with the data from the teacher, reading specialist, and student.

Conclusion

Parents and caregivers have a significant role in children's literacy development, which leads them to academic success. This research concluded that parental absence became the suspected factor in children's literacy development. Based on the family literacy theory, the caregiver should have provided a home literacy environment to support children's literacy development. In this case study, the grandfather as the caregiver indicated parental absence in supporting the subject's literacy. He did not model literacy activities or provide a home literacy environment to promote reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Reading

motivation and achievement are supported by a home literacy-rich environment where parents or caregivers provide support to children by involving them in activities that enhance their literacy (Dong et al., 2020; Hamilton et al., 2016; Kennedy & Trong, n.d.; Wirth et al., 2022). Suggestions for the role include having meaningful communication with the children (Knight, 2017; Kumncho, 2018; Miao, 2021; Offordile, 2012; Zhang, 2020). Quality conversation provides an in-depth discussion of the children's achievements and challenges at school.

The school should be aware of the importance of parental roles by creating policies and activities to support literacy instruction that involve parents or caregivers (Clark, 2007; Williams, 2022). Engaging parents or caregivers with reading activities at home influences children's success. Reading for pleasure with the family triggers children's positive attitudes toward reading, leading to school enjoyment. Parents or caregivers can help children process and progress through academic challenges, including literacy. The parents or caregivers guide children's behavior and social-emotional state. Literacy instruction can be supported at home by encouraging children to learn new letters, words, or sounds. Parents and caregivers can start with the children's favorite topic, object, or animal. Engaging and routine home literacy activities with parents or caregivers using books, games, technologies, or other literacy resources can help children to love reading while developing literacy skills. Parents or caregivers' best efforts in children's reading will enhance their literacy interest and academic performance for their future success in life (Dowd et al., 2018; Hume et al., 2015; Kigobe &

Uk, 2019; Mao et al., 2020; McArthur et al., 2021; Wambiri, 2014; Xiaofeng et al., 2018).

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