Journal of Community Action

Vol. 2 No. 1, January 2026, pages: 1-9

e-ISSN 3110-2549 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.70716/joca.v2i1.152

Strengthening Parental Involvement in Improving Children's Reading Interest through a Home Literacy Program

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Article History

Manuscript submitted:
05 December 2025
Manuscript revised:
16 December 2025
Accepted for publication:
26 December 2025

Keywords

parental involvement,
home literacy program,
reading interest,
family literacy,
early literacy

Abstract

Children's reading interest is a fundamental component of early literacy development and long-term academic success. Previous studies consistently indicate that parental involvement plays a decisive role in shaping children's reading motivation and literacy achievement. This article aims to examine how strengthening parental involvement through a structured Home Literacy Program can improve children's reading interest. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study involved 120 elementary school students and their parents from three urban schools. Quantitative data were collected through reading interest questionnaires and parental involvement scales, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews and observation logs. The findings reveal that children whose parents actively participated in home-based literacy activities demonstrated significantly higher reading interest, motivation, and engagement compared to those in the control group. Moreover, parents reported improved confidence and awareness in supporting their children's literacy development. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of home–school partnerships and family literacy interventions. The study concludes that a well-designed Home Literacy Program can serve as an effective strategy for strengthening parental involvement and fostering sustainable reading interest among children.

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How to Cite: Rochaendi, E., & Romero, M. (2026). Strengthening Parental Involvement in Improving Children's Reading Interest through a Home Literacy Program. *Journal of Community Action, 2*(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.70716/joca.v2i1.152

Introduction

Reading interest is widely acknowledged as a fundamental component of children's literacy development and long-term academic achievement. Children who demonstrate positive attitudes toward reading are more likely to engage in sustained reading practices, develop stronger comprehension skills, and achieve higher academic outcomes across subject areas (Saracho, 1997; Michael, 2013). Reading interest does not emerge spontaneously but is shaped through continuous interaction between cognitive, affective, and environmental factors. Among these factors, the family context, particularly parental involvement, plays a central role in establishing early reading habits and nurturing children's motivation to read.

International and national literacy studies consistently report that many children experience limited exposure to meaningful literacy activities outside school. This condition is particularly evident in households where structured reading support is absent or inconsistent. Several studies emphasize that school-based instruction alone is insufficient to foster strong reading interest if it is not supported by

literacy-rich experiences at home (Morrow & Young, 1996; Michael, 2013). As a result, attention has increasingly shifted toward understanding how families can be actively involved in supporting children's reading development through intentional and structured practices.

Parental involvement refers to parents' active participation in their children's learning processes, including providing learning materials, engaging in shared activities, and creating supportive learning environments at home. Research has shown that parental involvement in literacy activities such as reading aloud, discussing stories, and guiding children during reading tasks significantly contributes to children's reading interest and achievement (Colgan, 2002; Caparas et al., 2025). When parents engage consistently in literacy-related interactions, children tend to perceive reading as an enjoyable and meaningful activity rather than a compulsory academic task.

The theoretical framework of the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) provides a comprehensive lens through which parental involvement in literacy can be examined. HLE encompasses the availability of reading materials, frequency of literacy interactions, parental attitudes toward reading, and emotional quality of parent–child literacy engagement (Saracho, 1997; Romero-González et al., 2023). Empirical evidence indicates that an active and supportive HLE positively influences children's reading motivation, performance, and emotional attachment to reading activities. Romero-González et al. (2023) demonstrated that children aged 6 to 8 years who experienced an active HLE showed higher reading motivation and improved affective relationships within the family.

Beyond informal literacy practices, structured family literacy interventions have been shown to produce more consistent and measurable outcomes. Family literacy programs are designed to guide parents in implementing specific literacy activities aligned with children's developmental stages. Studies conducted in various contexts reveal that such programs increase both the quantity and quality of parent–child reading interactions (Ermis, 2013; Brand et al., 2014). For instance, literacy bag programs that provide parents with books and guided activities have been effective in enhancing parental engagement and children's sustained interest in reading (Dever & Burts, 2002; Brand et al., 2014).

Research also highlights the importance of parental training and coaching in strengthening home literacy practices. Brown et al. (2019) found that parents who participated in family literacy coaching programs demonstrated improved confidence and competence in supporting their children's reading development. Similarly, Jackson and Doell (2017) emphasized that strong parent–educator alliances contribute to more effective home reading practices by aligning expectations and strategies between school and home. These findings suggest that parental involvement is most effective when supported by clear guidance and collaboration with educational institutions.

Meta-analytic studies further reinforce the effectiveness of structured parental involvement. Sénéchal and Young (2008) reported that family literacy interventions involving explicit literacy activities, such as guided reading and word instruction at home, produced stronger effects on children's reading acquisition than unstructured approaches. Their findings indicate that parental involvement yields optimal outcomes when parents are actively engaged as facilitators of learning rather than passive supporters. This conclusion is consistent with earlier findings by Sénéchal (2006), who emphasized that targeted home literacy interventions have a significant impact on children's reading development from kindergarten through grade three.

In early childhood and primary education contexts, dialogic reading and interactive literacy activities have been identified as effective strategies for fostering reading interest. Kim and Riley (2021) demonstrated that preschool-home partnerships incorporating dialogic reading assignments significantly enhanced children's early language and literacy skills. Such approaches encourage parents to actively engage children in discussions about texts, thereby promoting deeper comprehension and sustained

interest. These findings align with broader evidence indicating that interactive and relational literacy experiences are critical for motivating young readers (Saracho, 1997; Jordan et al., 2000).

Within the Indonesian context, research on home-based literacy initiatives has gained increasing attention. Rochaendi et al. (2025) reported that a home-based literacy program integrating character education and digital literacy significantly enhanced students' reading interest and parental involvement. Similarly, Astuti and Muslihah (2024) found that parental engagement, particularly among mothers, played a crucial role in fostering reading interest among early childhood learners through literacy movement programs. These studies underscore the relevance of home literacy programs in addressing reading motivation challenges within diverse socio-cultural settings.

Despite extensive evidence supporting parental involvement and home literacy programs, several challenges persist. Some parents face barriers such as limited time, low literacy skills, or lack of confidence in supporting their children's reading activities (Brown et al., 2019; Kurvers & Van Steensel, 2022). Kurvers and Van Steensel (2022) highlighted that family literacy programs must be adaptable and inclusive, particularly for parents with limited reading proficiency. Programs that provide accessible materials and clear guidance are more likely to sustain parental engagement and positively influence children's reading interest.

Another challenge lies in the sustainability of parental involvement. While short-term interventions often demonstrate positive outcomes, maintaining consistent literacy practices at home over time requires ongoing support and reinforcement. Studies emphasize that collaboration between schools and families is essential for sustaining parental involvement and ensuring alignment between home and school literacy goals (Morrow & Young, 1997a; Thomas, 2016). Without such collaboration, parental engagement may decline once formal program support ends.

A critical gap in the existing literature is the limited integration of international and local evidence within a unified analytical framework. Many studies focus on specific interventions or contexts without synthesizing how parental involvement, structured home literacy activities, and cultural factors interact to influence children's reading interest. Although meta-analyses provide valuable insights into overall effectiveness (Sénéchal & Young, 2008), there remains a need for empirical studies that contextualize these findings within specific educational environments, particularly in developing contexts.

Moreover, previous research often emphasizes reading achievement and skill acquisition, while reading interest as an affective dimension receives comparatively less attention. Reading interest is a key mediator between parental involvement and literacy outcomes, as children who enjoy reading are more likely to engage voluntarily in reading activities and develop long-term literacy habits (Saracho, 1997; Michael, 2013). Understanding how home literacy programs influence reading interest is therefore essential for designing effective literacy interventions.

In response to these gaps, the present study focuses on strengthening parental involvement through a structured Home Literacy Program aimed at improving children's reading interest. By examining both quantitative and qualitative evidence, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how parental engagement in home-based literacy activities influences children's motivation and engagement in reading. The study draws on established family literacy theories and empirical findings to offer practical insights for educators, parents, and policymakers.

The contribution of this study lies in its integration of international and Indonesian research on parental involvement and home literacy programs, as well as its emphasis on reading interest as a central outcome. By situating empirical findings within a broader theoretical framework, this study aims to inform the development of sustainable home literacy initiatives that strengthen parental involvement and foster positive reading attitudes among children.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design that integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the role of parental involvement in improving children's reading interest through a Home Literacy Program. The mixed-methods design was selected to allow a comprehensive understanding of both measurable changes in reading interest and parental involvement, as well as contextual insights into parents' experiences and perceptions. This design aligns with prior family literacy research emphasizing the need to combine numerical evidence with qualitative interpretation to capture the complexity of home literacy practices (Morrow & Young, 1997a; Sénéchal & Young, 2008).

Research Setting and Duration

The study was conducted in three urban elementary schools located in Indonesia. These schools were selected because they had similar socio-economic backgrounds and had implemented structured literacy activities in collaboration with parents. Data collection was carried out over a six-month period, from January to June 2025, which allowed sufficient time to observe changes in children's reading interest and parental involvement following participation in the Home Literacy Program.

Participants

The participants consisted of 120 elementary school students enrolled in grades 1 to 3 and their parents. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that all children involved were at an early stage of reading development and that their parents were willing to participate in home-based literacy activities. The sample size was considered adequate for examining patterns of parental involvement and reading interest, as supported by previous family literacy intervention studies (Jordan et al., 2000; Kim & Riley, 2021). Teachers from the participating schools were also involved as facilitators and informants to support data triangulation.

Home Literacy Program Implementation

The Home Literacy Program focused on structured parent–child literacy activities conducted at home. The program included shared reading sessions, guided discussions about story content, and simple follow-up activities designed to reinforce reading engagement. Parents received written guidelines outlining the objectives of each activity and practical strategies for supporting children's reading interest. The structure of the program was informed by established family literacy models emphasizing interactive reading and parental guidance (Brand et al., 2014; Brown et al., 2019). Teachers provided periodic feedback to parents to ensure consistency between home and school literacy practices.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using two main instruments. The first instrument was a children's reading interest questionnaire adapted from the reading attitude and motivation framework developed by Morrow and Young (1997a). The questionnaire measured dimensions such as enjoyment of reading, frequency of voluntary reading, and engagement during reading activities. The second instrument was a parental involvement scale adapted from the framework proposed by Sénéchal and Young (2008), which assessed the frequency and quality of parents' participation in home literacy activities.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with parents and teachers, as well as observation logs maintained by parents during the program. The interviews explored parents' experiences, perceived challenges, and perceived benefits of participating in the Home Literacy Program. Observation logs documented the types of literacy activities conducted at home and children's responses

during these activities. The use of multiple instruments enhanced the credibility and depth of the findings (Jackson & Doell, 2017).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' reading interest and levels of parental involvement before and after program implementation. Inferential analysis was conducted to examine differences between groups and identify patterns of change associated with parental participation in the program. These analytical procedures are consistent with previous empirical studies on family literacy interventions (Caparas et al., 2025; Romero-González et al., 2023).

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts and observation logs were coded to identify recurring themes related to parental involvement, reading interest, and home literacy practices. The qualitative findings were used to contextualize and explain the quantitative results, thereby strengthening the interpretation of the data. Triangulation across data sources was employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings (Morrow & Young, 1996; Sénéchal, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from parents prior to data collection. Participants' identities were kept confidential, and all data were used solely for research purposes. The study adhered to ethical standards for educational research involving children and families.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Home Literacy Program contributed to observable improvements in children's reading interest and parental involvement. Based on questionnaire responses and observation logs, children in the intervention group demonstrated higher engagement during reading activities, increased willingness to read voluntarily, and more positive attitudes toward reading. These outcomes are consistent with prior studies emphasizing the role of home-based literacy experiences in shaping reading motivation (Romero-González et al., 2023; Saracho, 1997).

Parental involvement showed notable changes following program participation. Parents reported increased frequency of shared reading, more consistent literacy routines at home, and greater confidence in guiding their children's reading activities. Interview data revealed that parents perceived reading not only as an academic task but also as a relational activity that strengthened parent–child interaction. This finding aligns with evidence from family literacy coaching and home literacy interventions that emphasize parental empowerment (Brown et al., 2019; Jackson & Doell, 2017).

Table 1 presents a summary of observed changes in parental involvement indicators before and after program implementation, derived from parental reports and observation logs.

Table 1. Changes in Parental Involvement Indicators

Indicator of Parental Involvement	Before Program	After Program
Frequency of shared reading	Inconsistent	More consistent
Parent–child discussion during reading	Limited	More interactive
Parental confidence in supporting reading	Low to moderate	Moderate to high
Availability of reading routines at home	Irregular	More structured

These findings demonstrate that the Home Literacy Program facilitated qualitative improvements in how parents engaged with their children's literacy activities. The consistency of these changes across participating households strengthens the credibility of the results.

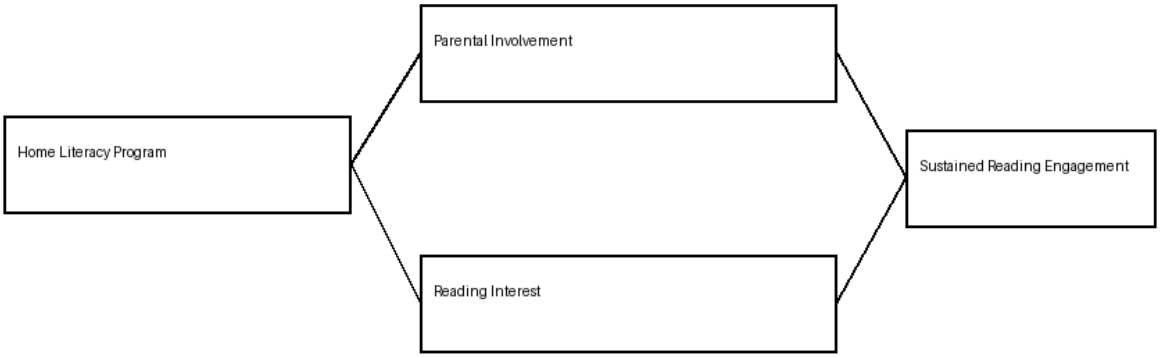
Children's reading interest was also reflected in behavioral indicators observed during the program. Teachers reported increased classroom participation during reading-related activities and greater enthusiasm when children discussed books read at home. Observation logs indicated that children were more likely to initiate reading activities independently, a key indicator of intrinsic reading interest (Michael, 2013).

Table 2 summarizes key indicators of children's reading interest observed during the study period.

Table 2. Indicators of Children's Reading Interest

Reading Interest Indicator	Observed Pattern
Enjoyment during reading activities	Increased
Voluntary reading behavior	More frequent
Engagement in story discussion	More active
Persistence in reading tasks	Improved

To illustrate the relationship among the main empirical findings, Figure 1 presents a schematic diagram summarizing how the Home Literacy Program influenced parental involvement and children's reading interest.



Discussion

The results of this study confirm that strengthening parental involvement through a structured Home Literacy Program contributes positively to children's reading interest. The observed increase in shared reading practices and interactive discussions supports earlier findings that parental engagement is a critical driver of reading motivation (Colgan, 2002; Caparas et al., 2025). When parents actively participate in literacy activities, children are more likely to view reading as enjoyable and meaningful.

The qualitative improvements in parental confidence are particularly significant. Parents' increased awareness of their role in literacy development reflects findings from family literacy coaching studies, which emphasize the importance of equipping parents with practical strategies and clear guidance (Brown et al., 2019). This suggests that parental involvement is not solely dependent on parents' educational background but can be strengthened through structured support.

The findings also align with meta-analytic evidence indicating that structured home literacy interventions yield stronger outcomes than unstructured parental support (Sénéchal & Young, 2008; Sénéchal, 2006). The Home Literacy Program provided parents with explicit activities and objectives, reducing uncertainty and enhancing consistency in home literacy practices.

Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of home–school collaboration. Teachers' involvement in guiding and monitoring home literacy activities reinforced alignment between school expectations and home practices. This finding supports previous research emphasizing that sustained parental involvement requires ongoing communication and partnership between educators and families (Morrow & Young, 1996; Thomas, 2016).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that reading interest functions as an affective mediator between parental involvement and literacy development. Children who experienced supportive and interactive literacy environments at home were more motivated to engage in reading activities, reinforcing the argument that reading interest is a central outcome of effective home literacy programs (Saracho, 1997; Michael, 2013).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that strengthening parental involvement through a structured Home Literacy Program contributes positively to improving children's reading interest. The findings indicate that when parents are actively engaged in home-based literacy activities, children show greater enjoyment of reading, increased voluntary reading behavior, and stronger engagement during reading interactions. These outcomes highlight the central role of the family environment in supporting early literacy development.

The study further confirms that parental involvement is most effective when supported by clear guidance and structured activities. Parents who received explicit instructions and practical strategies were more confident in facilitating reading activities at home, resulting in more consistent literacy routines. This reinforces existing evidence that structured family literacy interventions are more impactful than informal or unplanned parental support.

In addition, the results emphasize the importance of collaboration between home and school. Alignment between teachers' expectations and parents' literacy practices helped sustain parental involvement and supported children's reading motivation. Reading interest emerged as a key affective outcome that mediates the relationship between parental involvement and literacy development.

Overall, this study provides empirical support for the implementation of Home Literacy Programs as a strategic approach to strengthening parental involvement and fostering children's reading interest. Future research is recommended to examine the long-term sustainability of such programs and to explore their adaptability across diverse socio-cultural contexts.

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