

Exploring Family and Preschool Early Interactive Literacy Practices in Jordan

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Abstract : Background: Child's earliest experiences with books and stories during the first years of his life are strongly linked with the development of his early language and literacy skills. Interacting in routine learning activities, such as shared book reading, storytelling, and teaching about the letters of the alphabet make a critical foundation for early learning, language growth and emergent literacy. Aim: The current study explores family and preschool early interactive literacy practices in families and preschools (nursery and kindergarten) in Jordan. It highlights the importance of early interactive literacy activities on child language and literacy growth and development. Methods: This is a cross sectional study that surveyed 243 Jordanian families. The survey investigated literacy routine practices, largely shared books reading, at home and at preschool; child speech and language development; and family demographics. Results: Around 92.5% of the families read books and stories to their children, as frequently as 1-2 times weekly or monthly (75%). Only 19.6% read books on daily basis. Many families reported preferring story-telling (97%). Despite that families acknowledged the importance of early literacy activities, on language, reading and writing, cognitive, and academic development, 45% asked for education and training pertaining to specific ways and ideas to help their young children develop language and literacy skills. About 69% of the families reported reading books and stories to their children for 15 minutes a day, while 71.2% indicated having their children watch television for 3 to > 6 hours a day. At preschool, only 52.8% of the teachers were reported to read books and stories. Factors like parent education, monthly income, living inside (33.6%) or outside (66.4%) the capital city of Amman significantly ($p < 0.05$) affected child early literacy interactive activities whether at home or at preschool. Conclusion: Early language and literacy skills depend largely on the opportunities and experiences provided to children in the home and in preschool environment. Family literacy programs can play an important role in bridging the gap in early literacy experiences for families that need help. Also, speech therapists can work in collaboration with families and educators to ensure that young children have high quality and sufficient opportunities to participate in early literacy activities both at home and in preschool environments.

Keywords : literacy, interactive activities, language, practices, family, preschool, Jordan

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