

The Impact of Parents' Reading Beliefs on Children's Reading Interests: Possible Influential Factors and Suggestions for Promoting Early Reading Development

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Abstract. The development of children's early reading is one of the key topics of research today. The cultivation of young children's reading interests is of great significance in the development of early reading. Parents' reading beliefs play an irreplaceable role in the development of young children's reading interests. Scholars have examined the links between parents' reading beliefs and young children's interest in reading, but fewer studies have further examined and analyzed the links in a systematic way. Therefore, based on the results of various studies conducted by many scholars, this study analyzes the different effects of parents' reading beliefs on young children's interests by examining different families' socioeconomic status (SES), home literacy environment (HLE), and the parents' education level. In response to the results of the study, educational institutions and social organizations can guide parents to establish good reading beliefs in a variety of ways. These organizations can strengthen their assistance to families with low SES and stimulate young children's interest in reading through a variety of ways, thus promoting early reading development.

1 Introduction

Reading plays an important role in the process of human growth and development. The cultivation of young children's reading interest has been an important concern of children's language development for a long time. The development of young children's interest in reading is the key to helping them promote their own abilities and qualities through reading, and its development determines the cultivation and promotion of young children's early reading skills [1, 2]. After children develop an interest in reading, they are able to participate more actively in reading activities, thus accumulating knowledge, gaining experience and applying it to their lives [1, 2]. Early reading is the reading of children under the age of three, which is closely related to the continuous development of social and cultural practices and plays a central role in the international literacy education process [3]. *Guideline and Kindergarten Education Program Guidelines (For Trial Implementation)* also clearly states in the content and requirements of the language field that children's reading interests should be fostered through a variety of means in order to improve their reading and pre-writing skills [4]. The description of this document highlights the importance of early reading.

Many studies have shown that young children's interest in reading can be influenced by a variety of factors. Researchers in different countries have proposed a variety of strategies aimed at increasing young

children's interest in reading in response to different factors. In Germany, in the process of promoting early reading education activities, rich and interesting group reading activities are created by creating pleasurable sensory enjoyment to stimulate young children's interest in reading, thus promoting the occurrence of reading behavior [5]. Some Chinese scholars focus on establishing a good reading environment, stimulating children's interest in Chinese characters and other external influences, utilizing a variety of ways such as pictures and actions, and increasing the interaction between parents and children [2]. Parental beliefs about reading are parents' basic understanding of why young children read, whether reading is important and whether they are willing to read with their children. Parents' reading beliefs play an irreplaceable role in the development of young children's interest in reading. Some studies have explored whether there is a correlation between the two, but there are still some problems. Most of these studies consider parents' beliefs about reading as part of developing children's interest in reading, along with other external factors such as creating an appropriate reading environment in the classroom and stimulating children's interest in reading through a variety of means [2]. Some studies have also analyzed children's writing ability and parents' early reading beliefs [6]. However, few studies have systematically examined the relationship between parents' reading beliefs and children's interest in reading. It is meaningful to study the correlation between these

two factors to understand the underlying reasons and to better help parents promote their children's reading interest by changing their own reading beliefs. The study begins with parents' reading beliefs and early reading at home, describes the influence of parents' reading beliefs on young children's interest in reading, analyzes the reasons for these beliefs, and makes appropriate suggestions and conclusions.

2 The impact of parents' reading beliefs on children's reading interests

2.1. Parents' reading beliefs

Beliefs in psychology usually refer to people's tendency to trust their thoughts and conscious behaviors unswervingly [7]. The home environment, which includes the interactions of young children with their parents, siblings, and other adults, and the childcare environment are two environments that directly influence young children's development [8]. The home reading environment is part of a young child's home environment, and parents' beliefs about reading play an important role in creating a home reading environment.

Weigel, Martin and Bennett in their 2005 study defined parents' reading beliefs as the perceptions and attitudes that parents hold about their young children's reading and writing skills and language development [8]. Parental beliefs about reading include parents' self-efficacy in teaching young children to engage in reading behaviors, parents' attitudes toward reading, and whether parents provide appropriate reading instruction to young children [9].

Parents' beliefs about reading have been studied in a variety of ways. *The Parent Reading Belief Inventory* (PRBI), developed by DeBaryshe and Binder in 1994, has been widely used in quantitative research. While the scale was originally designed to measure parents' beliefs about the goals and processes of reading aloud to young children, today scholars are more likely to use the scale as a preliminary measure to assess the beliefs parents hold about the behaviors associated with reading to young children [10, 11]. The scale consists of 42 items divided into seven dimensions and is scored on a 4-point Likert scale that summarizes the seven dimensions and collectively assesses the positive and negative tendencies of parents' beliefs about reading [10]. The scale was initially measured and researched in the United States, translated into various languages and investigated in many countries around the world. Chinese scholars have already tested the reliability and validity of the scale localized in China [11]. These Chinese scholars explored the appropriateness of the scale's design for use in families with Chinese preschoolers, and the results of the study showed that the scale was equivalent in the measurement of a sample of fathers and mothers of Chinese preschoolers [11].

2.2 Family early reading status

In various studies, scholars have categorized the current situation of preschool children's early reading at home into four dimensions to be explored, namely, young children's reading interest, young children's reading habits, reading ability, and family reading atmosphere, which are studied through interviews and questionnaires [12]. In this paper, the above four dimensions are divided into the reading performance of young children and the family reading atmosphere to summarize the discussion.

In terms of children's reading performance, some scholars have suggested that children's interest in reading can be reflected in children's impressions of bookstores, their attitudes toward storybooks, and their performance in group reading activities and reading areas in kindergartens [1]. According to the research results of Jie Zhang and other scholars, kindergartens have carried out various reading activities such as "book drift bag" and regularly arranged language public classes [1]. As a result, children can leave a deeper impression on bookstores and show higher interest in group reading activities [1]. In addition, children's attitudes toward storybooks and the frequency of children's activities in the reading area are closely related to children's reading of picture books. According to Shuqin Zhang, the current picture book reading by young children has the phenomena of overstepping adult guidance, lack of picture book illustrations, and misplaced reading purpose, which results in the false, superficial, and utilitarian problems of picture book reading [13]. The problems of picture book reading will be reflected in young children's reading performance, causing young children to reduce their desire to go to the picture book itself, making the frequency of reading behavior decrease. Overall, young children's interest in reading is strong, but self-control is lacking, and there is a dependence on the sense of sight, young children can develop certain habits when reading, but the generalization and continuity of reading are insufficient [12].

In terms of family reading climate, recently Fan Yang used PRBI to analyze family reading beliefs in the process of studying the relationship between family reading beliefs and young children's literacy development [6]. He found that there was an imbalance among parents in different dimensions of early reading, but the average scores were generally high, indicating that the overall level of parents' early reading beliefs was high [6]. However, some scholars have also shown in their studies that certain parents have insufficient knowledge about early reading, irregular arrangements of reading time and place as well as being too casual in the selection of reading materials [12].

2.3 Implications

Parents' reading beliefs remain closely related to parent-child reading habits, parent-child exposure to joint reading activities, and young children's attitudes toward books when parents' income and education are controlled for [10]. Parents' reading beliefs predict the quality of

parent-child interactions and the quality of parent-child joint reading [10]. The effects are reflected in parents' beliefs about reading and behaviors that teach young children to read. Parents with positive reading beliefs view reading as a fun and enjoyable activity rather than focusing on skill-based books, such as basic alphabet knowledge, which significantly contributes to young children's interest in reading [10, 14]. Parents with more positive beliefs about reading had high-quality interactions with their children, frequently asked questions and communicated with their children, and had a high frequency of reading and a high number of books in the home [10]. Such families allow young children to establish reading habits at an early age and stimulate their language skills, and the data reflect that young children in such families have a higher interest in reading [10].

3 Factors influencing parents' reading beliefs and children's reading interests

3.1. Family socioeconomic status

Family socio-economic status (SES) is closely related to the development of children's language, which can measure the individual's social status [15, 16]. With the development of an individual's life, SES will have an impact on the individual's language, experience and cognition [15, 16]. Parents with different SES have different reading beliefs, and different reading beliefs lead to different behaviors of parents in treating children's reading, which has an impact on children's reading interests. According to Debaryshe's research, parents' reading beliefs have a direct impact on children's reading interest, and the impact is largely determined by SES, rather than a large number of reading exercises [9]. The data show that SES is positively correlated with parents' reading beliefs, that is, parents with high SES have more positive reading beliefs [9].

In recent years, some Chinese scholars have used *The Parent Reading Belief Inventory* (PRBI) to investigate, analyze and compare the differences between parents' reading beliefs in different SES families [6]. The results show that there is no significant difference in the total score of parents' reading beliefs in different SES families, but there are significant differences in the three dimensions of PRBI: verbal participation, environmental investment and knowledge building. Parents with high SES score higher in the above three dimensions than those with low SES [6].

In families with high SES, parents' income is generally high and stable, children's language input quality is higher, and parents have a certain ability to provide children with hardware equipment (such as purchasing reading materials) and software facilities (such as living in a good environment, and there are libraries, museums and other facilities nearby) [6, 16]. In addition, parents in high SES families can ask a variety of questions in the reading process, closely connect the story content with children's lives, and help children

understand the story content and use it in life through story description [6, 16].

Parents in families with low SES have relatively low economic income, cannot live near facilities conducive to children's language development, and parents have no energy to provide help for children's reading [6, 16]. At the same time, parents with low SES have misunderstandings about children's language cognition and development, ignoring the important role of parents' reading beliefs and literacy in children's early reading development [6, 16].

However, the effect of SES on parents' reading beliefs and children's reading interests is not absolute. Despite this trend, there are still parents with low reading skills in families with low SES who hold positive beliefs about children's reading and play an important role in promoting children's reading, and vice versa [9].

3.2. Home literacy environment

Home literacy environment (HLE) is a complex and multi-faceted concept, including resources and activities related to children's language development, such as family demographics, parents' leisure reading habits, family storybook reading habits, etc. [14, 17]. It summarizes a variety of children's behaviors and parents' activities, which play an important role in promoting the development of preschool children's reading and are closely related to children's reading interests [14, 17]. Its different components are related to different aspects of children's reading and writing ability and language abilities [14, 17]. Parents' active participation in children's reading activities is the manifestation of parents' active reading beliefs, and it is also an important part of HLE [14]. Parents' key participation in language activities such as reading can well predict children's reading interest.

In addition, different HLEs in different regions have different effects on children's reading development. In Asian countries, there is a multilingual reading environment, some families use Chinese as their mother tongue and English as their second language [14]. Their parents make rational use of existing resources and use a variety of ways to interact in person, they create rich HLE, which can promote the development of children's language and reading ability. It helps children to integrate in a variety of languages and has a positive impact on children [14].

3.3. Education level of parents

The education level of parents is one of the dimensions to measure HLE [17]. It plays an irreplaceable role in the development of children's reading, so it is analyzed and summarized separately as a part.

At present, Chinese scholars have conducted systematic research on the impact of family cultural background on children's reading development and quantified it for statistical analysis [18]. Among them, the education level of parents is one aspect of family cultural background. The results show that the education

level of parents plays an important role in the development of children's reading, especially in young children. Parents' education level indirectly affects the development of children's early reading, which has a strong correlation with family cultural resources. Parents with higher education level may put more sufficient and abundant cultural resources at home, thus promoting more abundant parent-child cultural interaction. The dual cooperation of cultural interaction and family cultural resources promotes the development of children's reading [18]. Parents with a higher level of education have a higher level of knowledge, which is more conducive and convenient to understand the level of children's development, critical period and other parenting knowledge and practice, and produce a variety of interactive ways and behaviors [16]. The effective interaction between parents and children can improve children's willingness to read, so as to improve children's interest in reading.

Although the education level of parents plays an irreplaceable role for children in the early reading process, it is not the only factor affecting the development of children, that is, it does not play a decisive role [18]. Its importance gradually weakens with the growth of children's age and gradually tends to be based on the development of children themselves. When it develops to the upper grade of primary school, it is mainly the role of children's independent cultural activities [18].

4 Suggestions

4.1. Guiding parents to establish good reading beliefs

Good parents' reading beliefs can promote the development of children's reading interests. The community, preschool education institutions and other relevant departments can analyze the current development level of children with parents and understand the importance of early reading through setting up parent schools, parent meetings and other ways. These relevant departments need to give full play to the role of parents in cultivating children's reading interests on the basis of children's development level and their own interests. Previous studies have shown that there is an imbalance between different dimensions of parents' reading beliefs [6]. Therefore, parents can be consciously guided to strengthen the connection between their reading beliefs and children's reading development and improve the level of parents' investment in family cultural resources and environment, so as to establish good reading beliefs [6].

4.2. Strengthening the help for families with low family socioeconomic status

Parents in low SES families do not have enough ability to provide children with good reading resources and conditions such as diversified books, which makes children unable to get reasonable development in

language due to the family environment [15]. Families with low SES mostly live in areas with relatively general environments, and their parents suffer from various pressures from work and life [16]. With the help of public social resources such as the construction of public books, newspapers and periodicals, book borrowing activities, and various forms of language activities organized by neighborhood committees, parents can be guided to actively participate, which can improve the language environment of children living in low SES families and promote their development [16]. At the same time, the government can provide suitable work opportunities and other benefits to low-income family members in low SES families, reduce their work pressure and economic burden, and then have more time to pay attention to the development of children [16].

4.3. Stimulating children's interest in reading in multiple ways

Children are born with strong curiosity and are interested in new things and bright colors [12]. The combination of words and pictures can not only deepen children's understanding of the story content, but also make children feel an interest in words, so as to improve their interest in reading and then actively read [2]. On this basis, teachers and parents can reasonably carry out home-school cooperation, enrich the forms of children's reading, and use a variety of ways to interact and read with children through multiple senses such as vision and hearing. Therefore, children's interest in reading can be cultivated.

5 Conclusion

Early reading plays an important role in the development of young children, in which parents' reading beliefs and young children's interest in reading are significantly correlated. Moreover, positive parental beliefs about reading promote young children's interest in reading. Research has shown that due to the various influences of family socioeconomic status, home literacy environment, and parents' education level, parents' views on reading and their educational behaviors toward their young children's reading have differences in many ways. Parents with positive reading beliefs view reading as a pleasurable activity and engage in positive parent-child interactions. Therefore, this has a positive impact on children's interest in reading, which is reflected in children's own reading behaviors and promotes children's development in the language domain.

According to this study, parents can promote children's interest in reading by changing their own reading concepts. For educational institutions, it is possible to understand the influence of parents' reading beliefs on reading. This will facilitate home-school cooperation through parent-teacher conferences and parent schools. They start from the parents' side to improve the parents' reading beliefs, which will increase the reading interest of young children and thus promote the development of early reading.

This study analyzed and summarized the impact of parents' reading beliefs on young children's interest in reading, and its use of references spanned a wide range of dates. In recent years, with the development of quality education, parents' beliefs about young children's reading are likely to be different from those in the past. Moreover, the study covers a wide range of geographical areas, both in China and around the globe, and is not targeted enough. In the future, based on the findings of recent years, a more in-depth and systematic study can be conducted for a certain region.

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