

# Influence of Home Literacy Environment on Children Reading Attitude

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## Abstract

The home environment is a primary context for children and it appears to be most vital in the early years of a child and also important for the subsequent years in elementary school learning. Home is a major source of reading attitudes, it may be a very important contributor toward the formation of a positive or negative attitude toward reading (Kubis, 1994). In the present study, the researcher examined the children's reading attitude and identifies the relationship between the children's attitude towards reading and home literacy environment. 182 children and their parents from five Malay-medium National Schools in Malaysia participated in this study. Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 Learning to Read Survey were adapted. There were high level of children's reading attitude, number of books at home, and parents' attitudes toward reading. Generally, there was significant relationship between children's reading attitude and home literacy environment (early literacy activities, number of books at home and parents' attitudes toward reading). Parents' education levels also indicated significant correlation with children's reading attitude. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that HLE factors and parents' education levels explained statistically significant increases in the variance of children reading attitude. In conclusion, a rich-literacy home environment was essential to cultivate children's reading attitude.

**Keywords:** Literacy; Early literacy activities; Home literacy environment; Reading attitude

## 1. Introduction

Reading is considered as a foundation for functioning in school. Due to the critical importance of reading in today's society, it is important that children develop a positive attitude towards reading at a young age. Wang (2000) explains that children's future success in reading was determined by their literacy development, and children's reading habit is determined by their attitudes toward reading. According to McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995), reading attitudes have been found to have an effect on both engagement and achievement. Reading attitude also fulfils a pivotal role in the development and use of lifelong reading skills (Lazarus and Callahan, 2000).

Environment is one of the factors which influence children to develop a positive reading attitude and thus crucial to be understood. Children develop in a varied milieu of natural environments ranging from the immediate family to the broader aspects of a particular culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The environments in which children live are related to various developmental aspects. Early stimulating environments are the possible causes of later performance such as reading.

The home environment is a primary context for children's early learning and socio emotional development (Morrison and Cooney, 2001), and it appear to be most vital in the early years of a child and also important for the subsequent years in elementary school learning. Home is a major source of reading attitudes, it may be a very important contributor toward the formation of a positive or negative attitude toward reading (Kubis, 1994). The earlier in a child's educational process parent involvement begins, the more powerful the effects in children's reading. The context of the family can influence children's attitudes towards reading (McCarthy and Moje, 2002).

As parents are children's first educators, therefore they influence how much experience children have with books and other reading materials. Parents' attitudes and thoughts about literacy are of great importance in children's literary development and children are influenced by the way in which literacy is used within the family.

### 1.1 Background of Study

The Malay Mail on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2006 carried out by the National Statistics Department looked into local reading habits and what found that more than half of the 60,441 odd Malaysians surveyed read less than seven pages a

day. Those at the age of 10 years and above read about two books a year (the figure excludes text books for students and books that are work-related for working adults). The figure is minimal for a nation that has a population of 28 million. Since 1961, the Community Development Division (KEMAS) of the Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) was entrusted to eradicate illiteracy among adults in Peninsular Malaysia through a holistic education in preschools. The National Library of Malaysia acts as the Secretariat for the National Reading Promotion Committee since 1991. The *NILAM (Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca)* program was launched by Education Technology Department, Ministry of Education in all Malaysia Primary and Secondary schools in 1999. The programme is aimed at instilling the reading habit among school children. It gives recognition to school children who read the most number of books in a year.

Many reading researches focused on identifying the social and cognitive factors related to children's reading abilities, such as phonological awareness (MacDonald and Cornwall, 1995) and child's socioeconomic background (Noble, Farah, and McCandliss, 2006). In time of this, the contribution of affective factors to reading then also received emphasis (McKenna *et al.*, 1995). According to Kush, Watkins and Bookhart (2005), affective factors are commonly identified as reading attitudes. Attitudes are regarded as the continuum of positive to negative feelings toward reading (McKenna *et al.*, 1995). Reading attitude is generally known as an important component in reading curriculum, and the development of attitudes toward reading in children concerns the engagement in sustained reading throughout their life (Cullinan, 1987).

Many researches study about the parents' influences and their children's reading attitudes. Baker and Scher (2002) revealed that the beginning readers in general had positive views about reading, and parental positive reading attitude predicted children's engagement in reading. Parents are related with children's reading attitudes (Baker and Scher, 2002). Among the family background factors, the parents' education level is a significant factor to children's reading. Baker, L., Serpell, R., and Sonnenschein, S. (1995) found that parents with higher education level placed greater value on education and thus provided more literacy materials and activities for their children.

Parents play a vital role in creating a literacy-rich environment in the home for cultivating children's good reading attitudes. Home environment impacts children's reading and in turn their attitude towards and engagement in reading activities (McCarthy and Moje, 2002). Parents' attitudes influence children's home experiences. Daily routines in the home impact upon children are reading development, and their attitudes to engage in reading activities (Morrow and Young, 1997). Parents are powerful role models as their daily routines provide children with an understanding of the reason their family engages in certain reading practices (Arzubiaga, Rueda and Monzo, 2002). Many parents often do not realize their significant role in shaping their child's reading attitudes and engagement, as they often believe that reading attitude development only occurs at school and not in the home (Myoungsoon and Heekyoung, 2002).

In view of the discussion above and taken into consideration of the reading habits among the younger generation in Malaysia, it might be essential or vital to find out the reading habit and its factors among primary school children in Malaysia. This research might lead educators and parents to understand how critical these home environments are to the development of children. This study is carried out to examine the role of parents as well as the home literacy environment play in the experiences and influence for children. This study focused only on home literacy environment factors. The researcher intended to understand the parents' attitudes toward reading, to have a glance on whether they are interested in reading, how they prepare the home environment for their children's development, how their children's reading attitudes and whether there's relationship between home literacy environment and reading attitude.

### 1.2 Children Reading Attitude

Promoting a lifetime love of reading should be one of the most important goals at home. Unfortunately, it seems that our social is moving away from doing this. One problem is the drive back to standards based instruction, which is being pushed by parents, school boards, and the media (Krashen, 2002).

Reading attitudes has been defined as a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) generally defined attitudes as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object." A "reading specific" definition of attitude provides a more in depth understanding: Alexander and Fuller (1976) stated that reading attitude is "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation." Attitude toward reading is a critical component in the reading process (Edmunds and Bauserman, 2006).

Reading attitudes are as significant as a child's ability to read (Tunnell, 1991). Children's reading attitude

determines their future success in reading and writing. The attitude fulfils a fundamental role in the development and use of a child's lifelong reading skills (Krashen, 2002). The child's attitude toward reading is a central factor affecting their performance as a reader (Lipson and Wixson, 1997). Some homes provide many opportunities for a positive attitude toward reading; others provide very few. Attitudes are generally influenced by people around (Harris and Sipay, 1990). Children are likely to have a positive attitude toward subjects they find interesting and a negative one to those that are not interesting.

Howard (1988) found that the way that a child feels about reading is closely related to their level of success as a reader. Other researchers have also studied that the extent to which students are successful with reading is directly related to how they feel about reading (Garrett, 2002). Researchers have also attempted to build a model of what affects children's reading attitude (McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth, 1995). McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth's model has integrated many of the ideas of all of these models into one. This model suggests that reading attitudes are a product of three main factors: firstly, the general beliefs a reader has about the outcomes of reading; a reader judges the desirability of the outcome of his/her reading. Secondly, the readers motivation to meet others expectations and conform to them. Lastly, specific past reading experiences.

Some children love and enjoy the task of reading and are proficient and skilled in this area. However, many children view reading in a negative way, and are failing as a result (Garrett, 2002). As children grow older and as more and more leisure options compete with reading, positive attitudes toward reading will on average worsen. This trend may well apply to many skillful readers because their beliefs that reading can be pleasurable are likely to compete with other beliefs that other activities are pleasurable (McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth, 1995). In addition, a number of studies documented that there is a negative trend in student attitudes toward reading as they go through the elementary grades (Garrett, 2002). It has been stated that even accomplished readers with average to poor attitudes toward reading may not read when other more enticing options such as television viewing or video games are available (McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth, 1995).

Parents who enjoy reading tend to pass these attitudes on to children. According to Harris and Sipay (1990), "attitudes toward reading are influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of their parents, peers, and teachers, as well as by the children's self-concepts, levels of reading ability, and interests" (p. 668). Since a child with a positive attitude toward reading will most probably read more often and thus better than a child with a negative attitude toward reading. Studies generally show that good readers have a more positive attitude than poor readers toward reading (Wigfield and Asher, 1984).

To help children become genuine readers, parents must provide opportunities for children to experience both the informational and recreational aspects of reading. Children should have emotional response, more than classroom reading incentive charts and rewards that will ultimately let children come to view reading as a valued means of recreation, relaxation, and learning.

It is important to first take a look at what affects children's reading attitudes in order to better understand where the influences affecting attitude arrive. Evidence suggests that there are personal attributes (or psychological factors) and environmental factors that influence the attitudes of children toward reading. These factors include ability, achievement, self-concept, home environment, instructional practices and special programs, gender, interest, and testing intelligence (Garrett, 2000). Home literacy environment is the area in which this research will focus.

### *1.3 Home Literacy Environment*

Home literacy environment (HLE) is important in molding children's reading attitude. Early literacy activities, number of books at home and parents' attitude towards reading are the variables in this study and are described in the following section.

#### *1.3.1 Early Literacy Activities*

In two decades of studies on the development of natural literacy, researchers have constructed a set of beliefs about how children read and write before receiving formal instruction, a phenomenon now referred to as emergent literacy or early literacy. The term emergent literacy was derived from Clay's (1993) observational study of children's emerging reading behavior. Rather than seeing schools as the first or sole setting for children's literacy development, Clay and others recognized emergent literacy skills as developed during the preschool years and as influenced by both home literacy environment and parent-child interactions.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) noticed the importance of supportive environments such as shared book reading in the emergent literacy skills development. Early language and literacy (reading and writing) development

begins in the first three years of life and is closely linked to a child's earliest experiences with books and stories. The interactions that young children have with such literacy materials as books, paper, crayons and with the adults in their lives are the building blocks for language, reading and writing development. This relatively new understanding of early literacy development compliments the current research supporting the critical role of early experiences in shaping brain development.

Early literacy theory emphasizes the more natural unfolding of skills through the enjoyment of books, the critical role of literacy-rich experiences, and the importance of positive interactions between young children and adults. To provide children with a critical foundation for language growth and emergent literacy, early and consistent participation in routine literacy activities, such as shared book reading, storytelling, and learning about letters and numbers are needed. Everyday activities that might expand their receptive and expressive vocabularies and promote phonemic awareness are those activities offers social exchanges and provide children with lexical information (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998). Additionally, children's participation in daily routines serves as a building block to conceptual knowledge and language. Exposure to repeated and familiar events provides infants and toddlers with the structure for interpreting others' speech acts and drawing inferences from new experiences.

The prototypical aspect of home literacy such as shared book reading provides a developmentally sensitive context for children be exposed to print and other literacy concepts and to learn language (Senechal and LeFevre, 2001). A meta-analysis by Bus, van Ijzendoorn, and Pelligrini (1995) showed that the time parents spent reading to their preschoolers was related to children's language growth, emergent literacy, and reading skills.

The association between the frequency of shared book reading and positive child outcomes may reflect a strong orientation to literacy practices in the home more broadly, rather than the specific influence of book reading alone (Share, Jorm, Maclean, Matthews, and Waterman, 1983). Beyond book reading, parents engage their children in other activities that foster the development of language and literacy skills (Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, and Daley, 1998), such as reciting nursery rhymes and playing rhyming games (Baker, Serpell, and Sonnensehein, 1995), telling or discussing stories (Saracho, 2002; Watson, 2002), and participating in activities such as learning the alphabet, numbers, and letters (Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple, and Peay, 1999). Similarly, learning activities outside the home, such as outings to the library or museum, promote the development of children's receptive and expressive language skills (Senechal et al., 1996).

### 1.3.2 Number of Books at Home

It is also important to have a large quantity of reading materials available to children. The years between eight and 13 are considered to be "quantity" years, in which children gain reading power through in-depth experiences with a profusion of reading materials, including biographies, science books, and novels. Often children of this age will enjoy reading several books by a favorite author, or a series of books with a familiar set of characters (Bus and van IJzendoorn, 1988). However, a reader's taste may shift frequently. Moreover, a vast supply of books is necessary to satisfy the range of reading levels. In addition to providing books for new learners, children who have become independent readers need to be challenged with materials that present problems and situations of greater complexity, contain subtle characterizations, and provide contexts that challenge their concepts and ideas.

Saracho (1997) proposed that parents' literacy level and the availability of reading materials are the primary characteristics of the home environment related to a child's literacy development. Kubis (1994) found that home environment (such as large personal and parental book collection) did influence ninth grade students' attitude towards reading. Considering the number of books at home as a reflection of parents' scholarly culture, recently Evans et al. (2005) examined how the number of books at home during the childhood was associated with the respondent's occupational attainment in 31 countries. They found that there were significant relationships in a wide range societies and the effect of the number of books on occupational attainment occurred through its effect on the respondent's educational attainment.

Yet as reported by McGill-Franzen and Allington (1992), many low income communities have few resources available in their homes or child care sites. McCormick and Mason (1986), for instance, reported large differences in availability of printed materials for children in the homes of low- and middle-income children. Lacking access to book materials, many young children, therefore, may not be exposed to the cognitive and linguistic richness of talk that experiences with books provide. Thus, differences in access to books may influence the amount of exposure, and the opportunities for young children to engage with literary materials, laying the groundwork for future disparities among middle- and low-income children.

The main inquiry in this chapter focuses on the role of environment in home literacy practices, and in particular, how its features help parents prepare children for the schooling and society that they will inevitably encounter.

### 1.3.3 Parents' Attitudes toward Reading

Harris and Sipay (1990) stated that attitudes are generally influenced by people around, thus, children's reading attitudes are influenced by children's self-concepts, levels of reading ability, and interests, as well as by the attitudes and behaviours of their parents, peers, and teachers" (p. 668). Parents' educational attainments, parents and children's interest in reading, materials which children and parents read and those that their parents read and prefer their children to read are factors which collectively suggest the attitudes of the parents.

Parents are the first teachers their children have, and they are the teachers that children have for the longest time (Morrow, 1995). Therefore, parents or are potentially the most important people in the education of their children. Parents who enjoy reading tend to pass these attitudes on to children.

The most crucial influences in moulding a child to become an enthusiastic reader are the child's parents. Many parents underestimate or do not aware of the important role they play in the shaping of a child's reading attitude. As children are in social learning stage, they learn via imitate their role model such as parents who are closest to them. Children view their parents as role models and experts on most everything. By observing the attitudes that parents exhibit toward reading, children will tend to develop similar attitudes. Children, particularly preschoolers have a desire to gain approval from their parents. Consequently, ildren will be more likely to seek out reading as way to gain praise and approval (Laurice, 2004).

In Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) and Teale (1986)'s reports, early research in this area produced mixed results. Some parents hardly ever converse with their children at length while some do not read and do not provide print materials for their children. Some parents are very good readers, engage actively and frequently read with their children and participate in their children's leisure activities. Snow *et al's* (1991) research showed that some parents are confident about their own literacy and encourage their children to read, although they are not always avid readers themselves and do not necessarily engage actively in talking about what they read or read aloud with their children.

Parents today face significant challenges to create a home environment that supports and instills a love for reading, as there are many activities of modern society that compete for reading time, for instance, video games, television, sports and computers. However, parents' efforts will bring children the gift of a life-long habit of reading.

### 1.4 Purpose of Study

Parallel to the explanation above, understanding home experiences and parents' perspectives on literacy are important considerations in cultivating children's reading attitudes positively. Although there are factors known to positively affect attitude toward reading, the relationship between children's reading attitudes and HLE should be more fully explored. In view of this, this study is carried out to examine the role of parents as well as the HLE play in the experiences and influence for children. This study focused only on HLE factors. The purpose of this study is to examine the children's reading attitude, following by understanding the parents' attitudes toward reading, to have a glance on whether they are interested in reading, how they prepare the home environment for their children's development, how their children's reading attitudes, what are the factors significantly influencing children reading attitude and HLE and whether there's relationship between HLE and reading attitude.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

The survey design was employed to fulfil the purpose of this study. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data from the sample in this survey. The survey method—questionnaire was used in this research for the reasons that the researcher interested in the opinion of a large group of people about a particular topic or issue by asking a number of questions, all related to the issue, to find answers. Data from a large number of respondents could be obtained quickly and economically (Gall and Borg, 2003). In this study, cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect information from a sample that had been drawn from determined population. In addition, the study used a correlation approach.

### 2.2 Participants

The participants of the current study were 182 primary school children and their parents respectively from five

urban Malay-medium national schools. The children were all in Year Five, and were made up of slightly more females (n=97, 53.3%) compared to males (n=85, 46.7%). Most of the children were Malays (n=153, 84.1%), followed by Indian (n=14, 7.7%), Others (n= 11, 6.0 %) and there were only four Chinese (2.2 %). Most of the parents participants were mothers (n=114, 62.6%), followed by fathers with 36.3% (n=66) and two guardians (1.1%). The age range that is most common is 36 to 40 years old, with 51.1% of the participants (n=93). All 182 respondents (100.0%) were married. Most of the participants were having three children with age from birth to 12 years old (n=58, 31.9%) in their family. Stratified random sampling method was used to select the children and parents as participants.

### 2.3 Instrument

Two instruments were used in this study. One of the instruments was “Elementary Reading Attitude Survey” which was constructed by McKenna and Kear (1990), to investigate the reading attitude of children. Meanwhile another instrument was “Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 Learning to Read Survey” and three items from “PIRLS 2006 Student Questionnaire” for parents in order to collect the data of HLE including early literacy activities, number of books at home and parents’ attitudes toward reading. The two instruments are used in this study were modified by the researcher based on the Malaysian context. The instrument was prepared in English and translated to Malay as it is understandable, natural and familiar language for the participants to fill out the questionnaire.

#### 2.3.1 Children’s Reading Attitude (Elementary Reading Attitude Survey)

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, constructed by McKenna and Kear (1990), also referred as the ERAS, was used in this study. Children involved in this study answered the items in this questionnaire. This survey was selected in this study, as the survey suitable to be used based upon prior theory and research. ERAS has a large scale normative frame of reference and comprises a set of items selected on the basis of desirable psychometric properties (the validity and reliability are sound). Besides, ERAS has empirically documented reliability and validity and is applicable to all elementary level children, included Year Five children. The survey is a public instrument that measures elementary children’s attitudes toward both academic, or school-based, and recreational, or leisure reading. ERAS has the elements required in this study.

Minor language and visual adjustments were made to the instrument to suit a Malaysian context. The American reference to “workbook pages” was replaced with the term *worksheets*, “reading class” was replaced with *reading lessons*, and “summer vacation” was replaced with *school holidays*. McKenna and Kear’s (1990) survey instrument was constructed using a pictorial rating scale equating to four levels of response, strongly agree; agree; somewhat disagree and disagree using the Garfield character depicting different facial expressions ranging from very happy to very sad. Within this study the Garfield character was replaced with ‘smiley faces’ (Anne-Marie L.B., 2006). There were two ten-question-sub-scales in the questionnaire, one set for recreational reading (Questions 1-10) and one for academic reading (Questions 11-20) were included on the survey. Another two questions about children’s reading text type preferences and about how much time do they spend doing the outside of school on a normal school day, were added into the questionnaire.

McKenna et al. (1995) established the reliability of this instrument by using Cronbach’s Alpha, and the coefficients of .74 to .87 for the recreational subscale, and .81 to .83 for the academic subscale were reported by McKenna et al. (1995). In this study, the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was .91, meanwhile the coefficient for recreational subscale (Item 1 – 10) was .78 and for the academic subscale (Item 11 – 20) was .83. Reliability of the instrument used in this study aligned with the original McKenna et al. (1995)’s study.

#### 2.3.2 Home Literacy Environment (Learning to Read Survey, PIRLS 2006)

HLE factors data were collected by adapted Parent Questionnaire of Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 Learning to Read Survey. The Learning to Read Survey investigated early literacy activities, number of books at home and parents’ reading attitudes. In order to have a clearer definition of variables, some questions in the original survey were eliminated. The researcher extracted 20 items about the HLE factors from the Learning to Read Survey 2006. PIRLS also provides extensive information about the home and school contexts for learning to read. Parents’ data were collected via a questionnaire in which PIRLS asked the parents or primary caregivers of each child participating in the PIRLS assessment to provide information about their child’s reading experiences. Because the sampling for the parents’ questionnaires was based on participating children, the parents were representative of parents of Year Five children.

The reliability is varied respectively for 45 countries in PIRLS. The Cronbach’s Alpha in this study was .86, indicating that the questionnaire had good reliability. The Alpha reliability coefficients for the sub-scales of

Learning to Read Survey were .81, .83 and .80 for early literacy activities, number of books at home and parents' reading attitude, respectively.

#### *2.4 Procedure of Data Collection and Data Analysis*

A total of five schools involved. Following receipt of parental/guardian permission, the adapted version of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna and Kear, 1990) for children was administered under class test conditions. The class teacher read each question (1-20) aloud or the children filled out the questionnaire independently. The parents questionnaire (PIRLS 2006 Learning to Read Survey) were given to the children from the selected schools for the children's parents. The children were briefed on the purpose of the research by their class teacher, and the students were requested to inform their parents about this study in order to have the responds from the parents. The parents questionnaire were collected after one week. The data collected from questionnaire were analyzed by using "Statistics Package For Social Sciences" (SPSS) and were summarized using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics based on the objectives of this study.

### **3. RESULTS**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are analyzed, organized and presented in three sections: (1) description of respondents' demography, (2) descriptive analysis, and (3) inferential analysis. The analysis of data is explained through descriptive and inferential statistics using the SPSS. The analysis techniques employed were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson 'r' correlation and multiple regression.

#### *3.1 Description of Participants' Demography*

The first section, which is a description of the participants' demography, is based on descriptive statistics. Item "school" in the demography section of the questionnaire was an open-ended question in children and parents' questionnaire, asking for the children participants' school's name. It was found that most of the participants (23.6%,  $n=43$ ) were from SK TD. Meanwhile participants from SK TJJ1 and SK DC show 19.8% ( $n=36$ ) and 19.2% ( $n=35$ ) respectively. Participants from SK TMA and SK TD2 show the lowest frequency with 18.7% ( $n=34$ ) each. Table 1 and 2 shows the frequency distributions of the children participants' and parents participants' demographic characteristics.

##### *3.1.1 Children Questionnaire*

The 182 participants were made up of slightly more females ( $n=97$ , 53.3%) compared to males ( $n=85$ , 46.7%). Most of the participants were Malays ( $n=153$ , 84.1%), followed by Indian ( $n=14$ , 7.7%), Others ( $n=11$ , 6.0%) and there were only four Chinese (2.2 %). All of the children participants are in Year Five with aged ten plus to 11 years old.

##### *3.1.2 Parent's Questionnaire*

250 parent's questionnaires were distributed to the 250 children participants for their parents. While only 182 parent's questionnaires were collected, 68 parent's questionnaires were not being returned. The numbers of children and parents participants were then adjusted to 182 from 250. Most of the participants were mothers ( $n=114$ , 62.6%) and followed by fathers with 36.3% of the participants ( $n=66$ ). There were 2 guardians (1.1%) only of the participants. The participants' ages were gathered in age range. The youngest participants were aged between 31 and 35 years old, while the oldest are aged 46 years old or older. The age range that is most common is 36 to 40 years old, with 51.1% of the respondents ( $n=93$ ). For marital status, all 182 respondents (100%) were married. None of the participants was found in else marital status other than married. Most of the participants were having three children with age from birth to 12 years old ( $n=58$ , 31.9%) in their family. As shown in Table 2, the parental education varied greatly, from low level to high level. Most of the parents finished SPM (37.1%), 19.8% parents were in the group of high education level (bachelor degree or higher).

#### *3.2 Descriptive Analysis*

This section on descriptive analysis presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables: children reading attitude and HLE (early literacy activities, number of books at home and parents reading attitude). The number of responses for children reading attitude variables and HLE variables was 182 respectively. There was no missing value in all the questionnaire responses.

**Table 1.** Frequency and Percentage Distribution on Children and Parents Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Variable		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
School	SK TD	43	23.6
	SK JJ1	36	19.8
	SK DC	35	19.2
	SK TMA	34	18.7
	SK TD2	34	18.7
<i>Children Questionnaire</i>			
Gender	Male	85	46.7
	Female	97	53.3
Race	Malay	153	84.1
	Chinese	4	2.2
	Indian	14	7.7
	Others	11	6.0
<i>Parent's Questionnaire</i>			
Relationship	Mother	114	62.6
	Father	66	36.3
	Guardian	2	1.1
Age	31 to 35	46	25.3
	36 to 40	93	51.1
	41 to 45	41	22.5
	46 or older	2	1.1
Marital Status	Married	182	100.0
No. of Children	1	56	30.8
	2	39	21.4
	3	58	31.9
	4	15	8.2
	More than 4	14	7.7

Note. n=182 (no missing value)

**Table 2.** Frequency and Percentage Distribution on Parents' Education Level

Variable	Father		Mother	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Did not go to school	7	3.8	0	0
Primary School	3	1.6	16	8.8
PMR/SRP	16	8.8	30	16.5
SPM	70	38.5	65	35.7
STPM/Certificate	28	15.4	18	9.9
Diploma	20	11.0	19	10.4
Bachelor Degree/Higher	38	20.9	34	18.7

Note. n=182



### 3.2.1 Level of Reading Attitudes among the Year Five Children

A four-point scale ranging from 1 to 4 was used to determine the attitude level. The overall mean of children reading attitude is 3.03 ( $SD=0.706$ ). Table 3 shows that the level of reading attitude experienced by the children participants is therefore “high” and the descriptive data of every questionnaire item measuring children reading attitudes. It can be seen that there were 11 items with high level reading attitudes, which were slightly more than nine items with moderate level of reading attitudes. There was no low level of reading attitudes.

The reading attitude statement with the highest level is “How do you feel about starting a new book?” ( $M=3.53$ ). The variability of responses is low ( $SD=0.511$ ). The mean shows that this is at high level of reading attitude. 54.4% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 44.8% just agreed, 0.8% somewhat disagreed and none disagreed. The items which presented high level of reading attitudes are Item 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17 and 19 with mean score 3.19, 3.33, 3.43, 3.04, 3.44, 3.46, 3.36, 3.16, 3.10 and 3.07 respectively. On the contrary, the statement with the lowest score is “How do you feel about reading instead of playing?”. It has only a mean of 2.19 ( $SD=0.848$ ). Apparently, it was a moderate level of reading attitude statement. Other than Item 8 and 11, Item 1, 7, 12, 13, 14, 18 and 20 were presented a mean that indicated they were in moderate level of reading attitudes.

#### 3.2.1.1 Text Type Preferences

Question 21 was added to Elementary Reading Attitude Survey to gather children’s text type reading preferences and was analyzed to ascertain the frequency for each text type. Children participants were allowed to choose more than one favorite types of reading material. Referring to Table 4, interest in reading different books varies across Year Five children. Interest in reading comics is most evident with children, with a highest score of 86.8%. Comics are a most preferred reading type for children respondents than other reading types. The second most preferred reading type is chapter books (novels) with a score of 62.4%. Meanwhile, children participants have a less positive interest in reading factual information magazines (40.8%) and newspaper (37.2%). This means only less than 50% of the children interested in these reading types. Newspaper is the most unpopular reading type among others.

**Table 3.** Means and Standard Deviations on Children’s Questionnaire Items of Children Reading Attitude

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Recreational Reading Attitude		
1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy day when you can	2.81	0.887
2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?	3.19	0.638
3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?	3.33	0.690
4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?	3.43	0.579
5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?	3.04	0.651
6. How do you feel about starting a new book?	3.53	0.511
7. How do you feel about reading during your school holidays?	2.84	0.762
8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?	2.19	0.848
9. How do you feel about going to a bookshop?	3.44	0.617
10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of reading materials	3.46	0.542
Academic Reading Attitude		
11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you	2.52	0.637
12. How do you feel about doing worksheets after reading?	2.69	0.896
13. How do you feel about been called to read at school?	2.85	0.859
14. How do you feel about reading your school books?	2.90	0.762
15. How do you feel about learning from a book?	3.36	0.547
16. How do you feel when it’s time for reading lessons?	3.16	0.606
17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading lessons?	3.10	0.666
18. How do you feel when you read aloud in class?	2.93	0.780
19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?	3.07	0.773
20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?	2.77	0.868

Note. Overall Mean=3.03,  $SD=0.706$ , Level=High, ( $n=182$ )

**Table 4.** Frequency and Percentage Distribution on Favorite Types of Reading Material

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Comics	217	86.8
Newspapers	93	37.2
Story picture books	135	54.0
Children's magazines	152	60.8
Chapter books (novels)	156	62.4
Factual information books	147	58.8
Factual information magazines	102	40.8

Note.  $n=182$

### 3.2.1.2 Children's Time spending on Leisure Activities

Children's time spending on leisure activities (Question 22) on the adapted Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was analyzed to ascertain the children's time spending on the leisure activities outside of school on a normal school day. Referring to Table 5, it can be seen that the children most often spend their times in watching television, with a mean of 3.02 ( $SD=0.821$ ). More than half of the children participants (56.0%) spend 1 to 3 hours in watching television. Every child spends at least 1 hour in this activity. The second highest level of activity which children engaged was playing video or computer games ( $M=2.48$ ,  $SD=1.260$ ). Meanwhile, the least activity that children engaged was reading books, magazine, or newspaper, with a mean score of 2.35 ( $SD=0.805$ ).

**Table 5.** Means and Standard Deviations on Children's Questionnaire Items of Time Spend on Leisure Activities Outside of School

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Time spend on watching TV/Video/DVD	3.02	0.821
Time Spend on Playing video or computer games	2.48	1.260
Time Spend on Reading books, magazines or newspaper	2.35	0.805

Note.  $n=182$

### 3.2.2 Levels of Home Literacy Environment Factors

Another objective is to determine the level of HLE factors among the Year Five children. The variables collectively termed "home literacy environment" and measured are early literacy activities, number of books at home and parent's attitude towards reading. Table 6 shows the mean and standard deviation on HLE factors.

#### 3.2.2.1 Early Literacy Activities

Based on the interpretative scale for elements of Early Literacy Activities inventory which has a three-point scale ranging from 1 to 3, the level of early literacy activities in the home of participants is "moderate" as the overall mean is 2.253 ( $SD=0.567$ ). The parents most often engaged in the activity "read books" with a mean of 2.63 ( $SD=0.507$ ). The activity with the lowest level of engagement was "visit a library" ( $M=1.69$ ,  $SD=0.598$ ). None of the activity shows low level of engagement. From the ten early literacy activities listed in the questionnaire, only read books with child was the literacy activity engaged by every parents in their home. None of the participants never or almost never read with their child.

#### 3.2.2.2 Number of Books at Home

Number of books at home which was measured based on parents' reports of two components (i) books, and (ii) children's books. The majority of parents (66.5%) were from homes with 25 books or less than 25 books. Parents' reports on the number of children's books in the home indicated a fairly high level of book ownership, with 47.3% of children are having more than 25 children books at home. The level of number of books at home of participants is "high" as the overall mean is 2.425 ( $SD=1.318$ ). It can be seen that there were relatively high proportions of children from home with well resourced.

#### 3.2.2.3 Parents' Attitudes toward Reading

Three components of parents' attitudes toward reading been investigated: (i) how much time parents spent on reading for themselves at home, (ii) how frequent they read for enjoyment, (iii) how much agreement they have

with the five statements about reading. “Parents weekly reading at home”, “Parents Reading for Enjoyment” and “Parents’ Agreement with Five Statements about Reading” indicate high levels of attitude with a mean of 3.09 ( $SD=0.799$ ), 3.04 ( $SD=0.840$ ) and 3.09 ( $SD=0.739$ ) respectively. The overall mean is 3.08 ( $SD=0.762$ ), and the participants have a high level of reading attitude.

**Table 6.** Means and Standard Deviation on Parent’s Questionnaire Items of Home Literacy Environment Factors

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Early Literacy Activities		
1. Read books	2.63	0.507
2. Tell stories	2.45	0.541
3. Sing songs	2.31	0.572
4. Play with alphabet toys	2.24	0.501
5. Talk about things you had done	2.51	0.554
6. Talk about what you had read	2.53	0.582
7. Play word games	2.08	0.509
8. Write letters or words	2.21	0.651
9. Read aloud signs and labels	1.88	0.650
10. Visit a library	1.69	0.598
Number of Books at Home		
1. About how many books are there in your home? (Do not count magazines, newspapers or children’s books.)	2.05	1.179
2. About how many children’s books are there in your home? (Do not count children’s magazines or school books.)	2.80	1.456
Parents’ Attitudes toward Reading		
1. In a typical week, how much time do you usually spend reading for yourself at home, including books, magazines, newspapers, and materials for work?	3.09	0.799
2. When you are at home, how often do you read for your own enjoyment (relaxing or enjoyment reading materials only)?	3.04	0.840
3. I read only if I have to	3.35	0.703
4. I like talking about books with other people	2.87	0.660
5. I like to spend my spare time reading	3.20	0.709
6. I read only if I need information	2.64	0.891
7. Reading is an important activity in my home	3.38	0.732

Note. Overall Mean=2.576,  $SD=0.718$ , ( $n=182$ )

### 3.3 Inferential Analysis

This section presents the inferential statistics of the research. The key investigation which was to identify any relationship between HLE factors (early literacy activities, number of books at home, and parents’ attitudes toward reading) and children’s reading attitudes among the Year Five children was done by using the Pearson’s “*r*” correlation technique. The significant factors which influences children reading attitude and HLE were investigated by using regression analysis.

#### 3.3.1 Correlation Analysis

The interrelationships between independent variable (HLE factors, parents’ education level, academic achievement and dependent variable (children’s reading attitudes) among the Year Five children. The correlation matrix was presented in Table 7.

Children reading attitude was significantly positively correlated to all the measured variables—all three HLE factors (early literacy activities, number of books at home and parents’ attitudes toward reading,) and both father’s and mother’s education levels, except academic achievement variable.

The correlation analysis between children’s reading attitude and all the three HLE factors showed *p*-value of .000 respectively, which was less than .05. This implies that there were significant relationships between the variables. The strongest correlation for children reading attitude was with number of books at home ( $r=.782$ ). The correlation coefficient, *r*, between early literacy activities and children reading attitude was .590, parents’ attitudes toward reading and children reading attitude was .572, denotes a substantial association between children’s reading attitude and early literacy activities, and parents’ attitudes toward reading. Children reading attitude had rather homogenous correlations with the other variables, except the above already mentioned, was

with mothers' education level with  $r=.672$ , showed second strongest correlation with children reading attitude. The correlation between children reading attitude with Father's education level was also positive and significant with  $r=.490$ . There were no correlation between children reading attitude and academic achievement. Academic achievement also showed no correlation with HLE factors and father's education level, but had a low association with mother's education level at  $r=.194$ . The correlations between the factors of HLE, children reading attitude and parents' education level were all positive and significant, with correlation coefficients varied between  $r=.275$  to  $.782$ .

**Table 7.** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Matrix of Children and Home Literacy Environment Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Children Reading Attitude	1						
2. Early Literacy Activities	.590**	1					
3. Parents' Attitudes toward Reading	.572**	.411**	1				
4. Number of Books at Home	.782**	.419**	.351**	1			
5. Father's Education Level	.490**	.275**	.320**	.485**	1		
6. Mother's Education Level	.672**	.401**	.401**	.644**	.544**	1	
7. Academic Achievement	.100	.033	.066	.118	.126	.194**	1

Note. All correlations significant at \*\*  $p<.01$ .

### 3.3.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was executed to accomplish the purpose of determining whether HLE factors, parents' education levels and academic achievement have an effect on children's reading attitude.

Potential predictors of children reading attitude were entered in blocks. HLE factors, namely number of books at home, early literacy activities and parent's attitude towards reading were entered first. Father's education level and mother's education level were added in the second block, and academic achievement was added in the final block.

The results of the analysis are shown in Table 8. The first block of variables entered in the regression, HLE factors, resulted in a statistically significant increase in explained variable ( $\Delta R^2=.752$ ,  $F[3, 178]=180.041$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), which produced a significant variance of 75.2%. In second step, father's and mother's education levels were entered as a block, explained a statistically significant increase in the variance of children reading attitude ( $\Delta R^2=.018$ ,  $F[2, 176]=7.060$ ,  $p=0.001$ ), which contributed 1.8% variance. As shown in the table, the last entered variable, academic achievement variable did not demonstrate the significant incremental variance on children reading attitude ( $\Delta R^2=.000$ ,  $F[1, 175]=.190$ ,  $p=.663$ ), which did not contribute variance. These findings suggest that HLE factors and parents' education levels may indeed be important for children reading attitude. If so, focusing on family based prerequisites may be important for children reading attitude.

**Table 8.** Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis on Effects of HLE Factors, Parents' Education Levels and Academic Achievement on Children Reading Attitude

BLOCK	$\Delta R^2$	$p$
1 Number of Books at Home Early Literacy Activities Parent's Attitude towards Reading	.752	.000
2 Father's Education Level Mother's Education Level	.018	.001
3 Academic Achievement	.000	.663

## 4. DISCUSSION

This study is a quantitative study, aims to examine the level of children's reading attitude and HLE factors, following by identify the relationship between the attitudes toward reading of children and the HLE in which they were raised. The following discussions are based on the findings in this study.

#### *4.1 Children Reading Attitude, Text Type Preferences and Time Spend on Leisure Activities Outside of School*

Reading attitudes among the Year Five children was investigated. The descriptive analysis of children reading attitude level shows a high level ( $M=3.03$ ,  $SD=0.706$ ). It was found that recreational reading (Question 1 to 10 in Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, ERAS) is more preferred by children than academic reading (Question 11 to 20 in ERAS). This indicated that older children's attitudes are more negative towards academic reading. This supports findings from McKenna et al. (1995) and Worthy et al. (1999). The children in this study had more positive recreational reading attitudes, this contrasts with findings from Davies and Brember (1993) where it was found that recreational reading engagement of children were more negative across primary years, especially those older children in primary schools.

Almost all of the children showed high keen interests in starting a new book, and many of them are happy to have a book for a present, reading different kinds of reading materials and going to a bookshop. Children who like to read were far more likely to get and give books as gifts (Kubis, 1994). But on the contrary, the findings indicated that children prefer playing instead of reading. When there is other form of recreation option exists, children choose not to read and prefer to spend their times in any of the many other forms of recreation rather than reading

Education Technology Department, Ministry of Education launched a reading program namely NILAM in all Malaysia Primary and Secondary schools since year 1999. This program is aimed at instilling the reading habit among school children and gives recognition to them who read the most number of books in a year. As this program was launched, the schools where the study was conducted, children attend weekly library lessons. During these visits, children are introduced to a variety of texts. These sessions have a recreational reading emphasis rather than an academic focus. This may contribute to the positive attitudes of children towards reading.

A glance into children's text type preferences explored types of texts children prefer to read. The findings in previous chapter showed that children in Year Five most preferred comics, followed by chapter books (novels), magazines, factual information books and story picture books. Both female and male children show an equitable level of interest in reading comics. Davies and Brember's (1995) assertions that comics become more popular text types for children than information books (as children grow older) was replicated in this study. Interest in reading comics has been previously reported increase across the primary years, and comics have been stated as being the preferred reading material for upper primary year's children (Worthy et al., 1999). Findings from this study align with these previous findings.

In this study, every child reported that they spend at least one hour in watching television. Watching television is the most popular activity for children, they most often spend their times in this activity. None of them reported that they have no time for it. Meanwhile, 12% of the children reported that they do not have time to read. This finding aligns with McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) that even accomplished readers with average to poor attitudes toward reading may not read when other more enticing options such as television viewing or video games are available.

The multi-lingual literacy situation in Malaysia also gives rise to certain reading problems. As a result of the multi-lingual system of education at the primary level and the bilingual system of education at the secondary level, the student population is made up of those who, depending on their educational background, can read in Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil or a combination of two or three of these four main languages. There is, therefore, the problem of selecting leisure reading materials in terms of not only of subject matter preferred but also of language preference or the readers or the availability of books in the preferred language.

#### *4.2 HLE (Early Literacy Activities, Number of Books at Home and Parent's Attitude towards Reading)*

According to Vygotsky (1978), cognitive development will occur if a child is exposed to social interactions and guided participation by adults. Children who are exposed to early reading experiences make a transition into becoming successful readers in the later years. The fundamental theory of this study was Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory on child development. In this study, there were early literacy activities that encourage the children's literacy learning with the "Zone of Proximal Development". The parents did play their role in structuring a social context that provided scaffolding for their children literacy development. For instance, read books with child were the most frequent engaged activity of the parents. Every parent read books with child. None of the parents never or almost never read with their child.

Another top two early literacy activities which parents most often engaged were "talk about what you had read", and "talk about things you had done". However, the means of the rest of seven items that were tell stories, sing

songs, write letters or words, play with alphabet toys, play word games, read aloud signs and labels and visit a library indicate a moderate level of parents' engagement. The activity with the lowest level of engagement was "visit a library" ( $M=1.69$ ,  $SD=0.598$ ). Most of the participants (36.8%) never or almost never bring their child to visit a library.

The means for three components of parents' reading attitudes, which are "parents reading at home", "parents reading for enjoyment", and "parents' agreement with five statements about reading" have an even level, which indicates more to high levels trends, only one of the three components shows moderate level (parents reading at home). In this study, most of the parents have good reading attitudes.

#### *4.3 Relationship between HLE Factors and Children's Reading Attitudes*

The following discussions are about HLE factors according to the findings in this study. The finding in this study showed that children's reading attitude was positively significant correlated to all the three HLE factors, are similar to the results obtained by Kubis (1994), Metsala (1996), Spiegel (1994), Walberg and Tsai (1983), and Reutzel and Fawson (2002).

The relationship parents' attitudes toward reading and children reading attitude is also inferred from Harris and Sipay's (1990) study which found that children's attitudes toward reading are influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of their parents, and also their own belief and attitude. Therefore, this finding supports Harris and Sipay's study. Furthermore, using Spiegel's (1994) finding of artifacts (number of books at home), parents' attitudes and event (early literacy activities) lead to a positive attitude toward reading, it is evident that in this study, children who were identified as having a positive reading attitude reported experiences at home included early literacy activities, parents' attitudes and many books available at home.

In Metsala's (1996) findings, readily available children's books, frequent reading to and with children, special space and opportunities for reading, positive parental attitudes and models of reading, frequent visits to libraries, and many conversations among parents and children are factors to build up positive reading attitudes. The findings in this current research align with Metsala's (1996) findings.

High proportion of parent participants reported that they read to their children, talk about things they had done and talk about what they had read, but this reports were greater for those children who had positive attitudes. Although Duggins (1989) reported that the value of the library in helping to form positive attitudes toward reading cannot be overstated, and Landy (1977) stated that library had a greater potential to influence the children, but in this study, the researcher found that the activity with the lowest level of engagement was "visit a library" ( $M=1.69$ ,  $SD=0.598$ ).

Smith (1990) reported that adults with most education have the most positive attitudes toward reading. Greaney (1986) and others have found that good readers come from homes where parents have reached higher levels of educational attainment. The findings of the prior researches align with the current research.

Day to day family routines impact upon children's reading attitude to engage in reading activities (Morrow & Young, 1997). Children reading attitudes are influenced over time as they internalize their parents' attitudes and expectations about engaging in reading. Less engagement in reading with children, the influence of parents do not exist since early childhood of children, therefore, the influence of parents much more declined substantially as children progressed to higher grades. A home with good reading models parents who spend a lot of time on reading activities with children and many books available at home, has a high probability of stimulating a positive reading attitudes among children (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

#### *4.4 Effects of HLE Factors, Parents' Education Levels and Academic Achievement on Children Reading Attitude*

In this study, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to find out the significant factors that influence children reading attitude. All the three factors of HLE studied in this research are significant factors to influence children reading attitude. This supports the finding of McCarthy and Moje (2002) that the context of the home can influence children's attitudes and beliefs toward reading. Evans et al. (2005) reported that the number of books at home was important in molding reading attitude. Prior researches indicated that lacking access to book materials may influence the amount of exposure and the opportunities for young children to engage with literacy materials. In this study, most of the families were able to provide many reading materials. More than 50% of the parents were medium-educated which had finished post-secondary or upper-secondary school (Diploma, STPM/Certificate or SPM) but not university. Educated parents will better understand the importance of providing literacy materials for children. Some parents only provide resources in the home, but did not engage in early literacy activities with children. Greaney (1986) and others have found that good readers come from homes where parents have reached higher level of educational attainment. Greaney (1986)'s finding aligned with the

finding in this study.

Academic achievement did not contribute variance on children reading attitude, as it did not demonstrate significant incremental variance on children reading attitude with  $\Delta R^2=.000$ . Parker (2004) examined the relationship between ability and reading attitude by using Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, and found that ability does not have an effect on attitude. Smith and Ryan (1997) also reported that there was no statistically significant relationship between attitude and achievement level. These prior findings are supported in this most recent study. Many of the high achievement children do not have better reading attitudes than low achievers. McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) claims that there was no relationship between academic ability and reading attitude, even for the reader with high academic achievement, poor attitude may make him choose not to read when other options exist, and this phenomenon known as aliteracy. They mentioned that attitude was the core problem but not academic ability. Even though the children are capable readers, may not have a strong positive attitude towards reading if they expect that another activity would give them more satisfying results. The reports mentioned aligned with this research finding.

#### *4.5 Theoretical and Practical Implications*

In Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Human Development, the microsystem is the immediate setting in which the child engages in face-to-face interaction. Such a setting is considered to have a direct impact on experience. Parents have direct impact to children. The current study found that children with parents have positive reading attitudes, engage more in reading. The significant relationship between children reading attitude and home literacy environment factors found in this study provided the evidence to support Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model on microsystem.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory mentioned that social interaction between a child and his or her immediate learning environment is necessary for the child to be enculturated into the learning community (Liu and Matthews, 2005). The interaction between parents and children is important, and resources in the home are the learning tools for children. Vygotsky's theory which called "zone of proximal development (ZPD)" emphasized the influence of culture, peers, and adults on the developing child. Parents' influences such as their attitudes and activities with children are significantly crucial for children. That is, parents scaffold children in literacy activities since early childhood of children is a vital process to help in children's literacy development, included developing children's attitudes and interests in reading. The significant effect of home literacy environment on children reading attitude found in this study, confirmed the Vygotsky's sociocultural theory on this study.

There are several practical implications for parents, based on the findings of this research. According to Morrow (1993), parents are the first teachers that children meet. Parents are clearly important socializing agents, they are their children's role model in promoting literacy. Parents who spend time in reading and implementing literacy activities to their children will provide them the best possible start on the road to literacy. Hansen (in Morrow, 1993) reported that literacy rich environment in the home contribute to children's early literacy development. Many research studies pointed out that the children who do best in literacy skills at school are those who come from homes where there are books, parents spend time reading to their children and where children see their parents engage in reading activities. Homes that provide literacy rich environments including literacy materials such as books which children are free to select will develop the children's interest in reading. But just by providing literacy materials for children is not sufficient. In this study, most of the children were from moderate-literacy home. Children books, computer, daily newspaper and study desk could be found at home, but the parents spend less time to engage literacy activities with children.

This study indicated that the parents have a positive attitude toward reading. But the results showed that the reading habit of parents still have rooms to improve. Parents always underestimate how much their own attitudes and habits influence their children's reading attitude and habits. Thus, parents' attitude toward reading have lasting effects upon children's reading attitude. Parents should read more often and enjoy reading. The excitement and interest in reading from parents will transfer to their children. Most of the families in this study (88.5%) have more than 25 children books at home, but the kind of books was not known. The numbers of books could be increase more. Parents should provide a variety of reading materials at home and buy as many books as possible for children, or borrow them from libraries. This can include magazines, newspapers, books, dictionaries, interesting nonfiction, fiction, picture books and any reference materials.

Besides, this study also suggests that the parents should spend much more times to engage in shared book reading as it facilitates young children's vocabulary development, phonemic skills, print concept knowledge, and positive attitudes toward literacy (Raikes et al., 2006). It is important to consider various literacy activities simultaneously, that is, reciting nursery rhymes and playing rhyming games (Baker, Serpell, and Sonnensehein,

1995), telling or discussing stories (Saracho, 2002; Watson, 2002), and participating in activities such as learning the alphabet, numbers, and letters (Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple, and Peay, 1999). Similarly, learning activities outside the home, such as outings to the library or museum, promote the development of children's receptive and expressive language skills (Senechal et al., 1996). Other than that, parents should build a good relationship with schools as both home and school are critical in promoting reading as a path toward lifelong learning.

#### *4.6 Limitations of the Current Study*

Several limitations need to be noted in the present study. First, with regard to the limited variance explained by home level variables, it may be that other factors not available in the current data set are pertinent to children reading attitude during this time and as the children enter the later grades. Not all the parental influence factors that were related to the children's reading attitudes were included in the questionnaire. In this study, only the psychological factors (attitude towards reading) and the environmental factors (number of books and early literacy activities) were included, yet the physiological factors that cover general maturity, visual, hearing and speech were not included because the researcher does not have the expertise in this field. Demographic factors such as ethnicity and socio-economic status (SES) were not assessed in this study.

Second, sample of this study is restricted to randomly sampling of schools from certain Malay-medium National Schools (*Sekolah Kebangsaan*, SK) in Johor Bahru. Johor Bahru is primarily an urban population with a reasonably large number of primary schools. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalized to other states or geographical areas and other types of primary schools in the suburban area, rural area or private primary schools. Lastly, the findings of this study relied on the response from the parents involved in this study. Therefore, the reliability and validity of this study also relied on the concern and honesty of the participants in answering the questionnaire.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the overall objective of the research has been achieved. The importance of home literacy environment in children's reading attitude has been demonstrated. The study findings are generally consistent with literature. The significant findings in this study imply that continuous research should be carried out. The research findings were discussed by linking them to prior researches. All three of HLE factors (early literacy activities, parents' attitude toward reading and resources in the home) and parents' education level have significant relationship with children's reading attitudes and contributes further effects on children reading attitude.

Therefore, it can be concluded that parents created the home environment created and influence children's home experiences. When children have a positive attitude toward reading, it helps them greatly in their literacy development. HLE factors that are early literacy activities, parents' attitude toward reading and number of books at home contribute to children's attitudes toward reading. A large amount of access to books is important in children's literacy improvement, but without the support, guidance, scaffolding and encouragement of parents, children may not acquire a positive attitude toward reading and may get very little from the books that they read. Through the support, guidance, scaffolding and encouragement of parents, children can experience success, enjoy reading, build their confidence in reading and lead to positive reading attitude forming.

Meanwhile, academic achievement do not have any significant relationship with children's reading attitude, high achievers might not have a positive attitude toward reading. Replication of this study in other states or geographical regions would provide a valuable tool for determining the degree to which research finding can be generalized across geographical regions. Further research into recreational and academic attitudes of children would be valuable. This study reports about the general reading attitudes of the children disregard how their reading attitudes toward recreational and academic reading. Conducting a further study with a qualitative paradigm is suggested as an in-depth investigation interview could glean further attitudinal information from children. Data could illustrate why primary aged children have a positive or negative regards for recreational and academic reading. Current research focuses only on home variables, schools' or teachers' influences have not been done. Future research can survey about teachers' perception to investigate if teachers will benefits the children's reading attitudes as well. This area has not been widely studies and therefore, further qualitative investigation on this would prove fruitful. Understanding the extent to which teachers' perceptions of children's behavior and attitudes matches or mismatches their actual behavior and attitudes is important as it affects the way teachers plan and implement reading activities.

The researcher has shared the research experience from this study, as well as some recommendations for future



studies. Replication studies to improve the generalization of the current study findings would also be excellent alternative follow-ups to the current study.

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