

# The Relationship Between Parental Literacy Involvement, Socio-Economic Status and Reading Literacy

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Multilevel analyses of a survey of 43,870 pupils (with an average age of 10) in Western European regions reveal a positive relation between early parental involvement in literacy activities and an increasing level of reading literacy and parental education. Students with a lower socioeconomic status (SES) also have lower reading literacy and reading attitudes than students with a higher SES. Children with a lower SES experience later parental involvement in literacy activities than children with a higher SES.

**Authors: Kenneth Hemmerechts, Orhan Arigdag & Dimokritos Kavadias**

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This study explored the relationship between parental literacy activities with the child, SES and reading literacy. Multilevel analyses of a survey of 43,870 pupils (with an

average age of 10) in Western European regions reveal a positive relation between early parental involvement in literacy activities and an increasing level of reading literacy and parental education. Students with a lower SES also have lower reading literacy and reading attitudes than students with a higher SES. Children with a lower SES experience later parental involvement in literacy activities than children with a higher SES.

- The socialisation process through which children begin to learn different ideas and skills and develop an identity is important.
- The socialisation process is initiated during early childhood in the family environment and continues into the school environment.
- Literacy activity is a specific form of this socialisation relevant to children's academic development.
- We expect that parents with a higher SES tend to spend more time instilling skills and attitudes before primary school begins, which then helps children to be more successful in school later on.
- We expect that early parental literacy involvement is related to pupils' reading literacy skills and attitudes toward reading.
- The primary habitus of children with a higher SES might be better suited to the primary school environment, and thus their parents have to interfere less in reading literacy during primary school.

### **The Bourdieusian theory of habitus development**

Children enter the school environment after they have already experienced a specific family upbringing conditioned by the family's SES. This upbringing entails the development of deeply ingrained skills and attitudes. In school, children are taught specific skills and attitudes, but this socialisation depends on the primary habitus that the child learned at home.



## The study

### *Hypotheses*

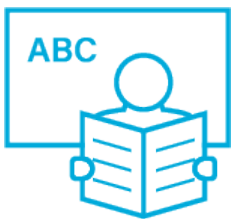
- *Early parental literacy involvement at home (before primary school) is positively related to SES.*
- *Attitudes toward reading (in primary school) are positively related to SES and early literacy involvement.*
- *Early parental literacy involvement is positively related to reading literacy.*
- *Late parental literacy involvement at home (in primary school) is negatively related to SES.*
- *Late parental literacy involvement is related to the reading literacy of children: it is more likely when children have poor reading literacy and less likely when children have good reading literacy.*
- *The transition of a low early parental literacy involvement to a high late parental involvement is more likely for children with a lower SES.*

**Participants** were 43,870 pupils from Western European countries with an average age of 10.3 years old. The early literacy activities that the parents were asked about included reading books, telling stories and singing songs. Late parental literacy involvement included helping the child with reading for school. Children also did a reading literacy test, and their attitudes toward reading were measured.



## Findings

- Parental education is significantly related to early parental involvement; when the level of the education of parents increases, the level of early parental involvement also increases.
- The relative probability of having high rather than low reading attitudes is 37% higher with an increase of one standard deviation of the early literacy variable.
- The relative probability that a child with parents who finished post-secondary, university or higher education has high reading attitudes over low reading attitudes is 136%.
- The effect of parental education on the later form of involvement is significant, but negative, meaning that it is more likely that children with a low-educated parental background experience high levels of late involvement in literacy activities.
- Early parental involvement in literacy activities is positively related to reading literacy.
- Children with parents with a high SES have higher reading literacy.



## Summary

- There was a positive relation between early involvement in literacy activities (before primary school) and reading literacy at the age of 10 years old and parental education.
- Children from a family with a low SES experience the late type of involvement in literacy activities more

than children with a high SES.

- Positive attitudes toward reading are more likely for children in families with a higher SES and who experience a high level of early literacy involvement.
- Late parental literacy involvement is more likely when children have poor reading literacy.
- Those children who experience more late than early involvement have lower reading literacy.