

Lifewide Learning for Early Reading Development

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This study examined the relationships between children's reading abilities and the enabling environment for learning in the context of Save the Children's Literacy Boost programme. Using the longitudinal reading scores of 6,874 students from

424 schools at 12 sites across Africa and Asia, results suggested there was 1) a modest but consistent relationship between students' home literacy environments and reading scores, and 2) a strong relationship between reading gains and participation in community reading activities, suggesting that interventions should consider both home and community learning environments and their differential influences on interventions across different low-resource settings.

- Repeated attempts to affect student learning exclusively through schools have largely failed.
- Learning is influenced by the enabling environment outside school, whether captured as materials, being surrounded by readers, good reading habits, or reading together.

Defining Literacy Boost

- This aims to improve classroom reading pedagogy and to engage students, families, and communities in reading activities outside of school.
- The programme focuses on lifewide learning: children's engagement in enjoyable, cognitively demanding, literacy-related activities not only in school but also in their homes and communities.
- The programme provides child-friendly reading materials and encourages caregivers to undertake literacy-supporting activities (such as reading and talking with their children).
- The programme provides opportunities to participate in community activities, such as reading in groups or pairs or borrowing materials from a local mini-library.
- The programme reaches over 1.5 million children in 32 countries and has two intervention components: teacher training and community action.



The study

This study investigated how home- and community-enabling environments contribute to children's learning. This was achieved using longitudinal data from 12 sites across Bangladesh, Burundi, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Malawi, the Philippines, and Rwanda.

Research hypotheses:

H1: At baseline, the enabling environment of the home (specifically reading materials and literacy habits) will be positively associated with students' reading achievement, controlling for demographic and school characteristics.

H2: At endline, the enabling environment of the community (specifically the amount of community reading activities in which a student participates) will be positively associated with how much the student learned, regardless of starting achievement level, baseline home learning environment, demographic, and school characteristics.

The sample was drawn from 12 sites (each of which had between 25 and 85 schools). In each school, 20 students (10 boys and 10 girls) were randomly selected to participate in the study. Datasets include between 338 and 827 students in Grades 1–4.

Measures

Reading Assessment

- Untimed letter identification
- Fluency
- Comprehension

Home Enabling Environment

- The reading materials index sums the different reading material types at home, with child-friendly materials (×3).
- The reading habits index sums the number of times in the past week household members a) were seen reading, b) read to the student, c) helped or encouraged the student to study, and d) told the student a story.

Community Enabling Environment

- This refers to the degree of participation in Literacy Boost community reading activities during past week, as follows: a) meeting with a reading buddy, b) borrowing books from a book bank, c) attending a reading camp, d) participating in a 'make-and-take' activity to create reading materials to take home, and e) participating in a read-a-thon.



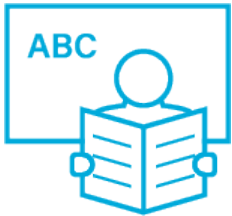
Findings

Hypothesis 1

- It was found that 5 of the 12 sites featured a statistically significant but small positive relationship between reading habits and baseline skills, whereas one site showed a negative relationship.
- It was found that 3 sites featured a small statistically significant positive relationship between reading materials and baseline skills, and one site featured a small statistically significant negative relationship.

Hypothesis 2

- In 7 out of 12 sites, participation in community reading activities was significantly and positively related to reading gains across skills with effect sizes that range from small to quite large.



Implications

Home environment influences reading skills, even taking other background characteristics into account. Reading habits significantly predict achievement more often than reading materials. Participation in community reading activities is typically positively related to students' reading gains, and the magnitude of the effect is greater for advanced skills.