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The Role of Parental Beliefs in Shaping Learners' Reading Skills

♣***Maricon Balansag***: *Mandaue City Central School, Philippines.*

Helen Revalde: *Cebu Technological University, Philippines.*

Kaitlin Marie Opingo: *Cebu Technological University, Philippines.*

Lilibeth Pinili: *Cebu Technological University, Philippines.*

ABSTRACT: *This study examined the relationship between parental beliefs and the reading skills of elementary learners, focusing on seven domains: teaching efficacy, positive affect, verbal participation, reading instruction, knowledge base, resources, and environmental input. Using survey questionnaires with 126 parents and a reading skills assessment for their children, data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and a t-test for independence. Results revealed high to very high parental beliefs in teaching efficacy, positive affect, verbal participation, reading instruction, and knowledge base, while beliefs related to resources were low and environmental input was moderate. Most learners (78.57%) were classified as transitioning readers, and only 21.43% were reading at grade level. Statistical analysis indicated no significant relationship between overall parental self-beliefs and learners' reading skills ($p = 0.578$). These findings suggest that while parents hold strong positive beliefs about their role in literacy development, these beliefs alone may not directly translate into measurable reading achievement. The study underscores the need for interventions that bridge the gap between beliefs and consistent, high-quality literacy practices at home to support children's reading proficiency.*

Key words*: Environmental input, knowledge base, Parental self-beliefs, positive affect, reading instruction, reading skills, resources, teaching efficacy, verbal participation.*

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♣*Corresponding Author: Maricon Balansag*

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1. Introduction

Parental beliefs about children's literacy are a cornerstone of the home literacy environment and exert a strong influence on children's reading development (Niklas & Schneider, 2017). These beliefs affect not only how often and how well parents engage in shared reading but also the strategies they employ to foster literacy growth (Hamilton et al., 2016). Parents who perceive themselves as competent and essential partners in their child's learning are more likely to participate in interactive reading activities, supply diverse literacy resources, and cultivate a language-rich atmosphere at home (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Positive attitudes toward reading have been consistently linked to better early literacy outcomes, including improved vocabulary, comprehension, and print awareness (Martini & Sénéchal, 2012; Silinskas et al., 2020). In contrast, parents who undervalue their role or place full responsibility for literacy development on schools may be less engaged in fostering reading habits outside the classroom (Manolitsis et al., 2013; Hood et al.,

2008). Ultimately, parental beliefs are more than personal opinions—they shape the quality and quantity of literacy experiences children encounter.

Parental reading beliefs can be examined across multiple dimensions, such as teaching efficacy, positive affect, verbal participation, reading instruction, knowledge base, resources, and environmental input. According to Hamilton et al. (2016), these domains reflect parents' perceived instructional capacity, emotional attitudes toward reading, and the environmental support they provide. Instruments like the Parent Reading Belief Inventory (PRBI) capture these components and have been validated across diverse populations (DeBaryshe, 1995). Empirical evidence suggests that beliefs directly influence parental behaviors, which in turn shape literacy outcomes (Niklas & Schneider, 2017; Silinskas et al., 2020). For instance, Ratka-Pauler et al. (2024) emphasize that both normative beliefs (what parents think they should do) and behavioral beliefs (what they actually do) affect engagement in shared reading. This supports the importance of assessing each dimension individually, rather than relying solely on aggregate scores.

Two often overlooked yet crucial dimensions are resources and environmental input. Access to books, library visits, and literacy-rich materials significantly predicts children's literacy development, especially when paired with strong parental engagement (van Steensel, 2006). While the PRBI includes measures for environmental input, some studies have reported lower reliability for these subscales (DeBaryshe, 1995), highlighting a need for refinement. Socioeconomic disparities further complicate this picture families from lower-SES backgrounds often have fewer literacy materials and fewer opportunities for enriched language interactions (Niklas et al., 2016). Thus, research should examine not just the availability of resources, but also the extent to which parents believe and act on the belief that such resources are critical for their child's literacy growth.

Verbal participation and parental knowledge of literacy processes act as key mediators between beliefs and outcomes. Parents with strong self-efficacy tend to ask more questions, encourage children to retell stories, and engage in deeper discussions during shared reading (Hindman et al., 2012). Such behaviors are linked to better comprehension and narrative skills. Active teaching strategies, such as drawing attention to letters and words, often have a greater impact on literacy than passive exposure to print (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). When parents combine confidence in their teaching role with positive emotional engagement, they create more interactive and meaningful literacy experiences for their children (Silinskas et al., 2020).

Despite considerable progress, several gaps remain in the literature. Many studies focus on overall PRBI scores or a limited set of domains, overlooking aspects such as resources and environmental input. Some subscales, including Reading Instruction and Environmental Input, show inconsistent reliability (DeBaryshe, 1995), indicating the need for improved measurement tools. Furthermore, evidence on the predictive power of individual belief dimensions is mixed while some research highlights the direct effect of beliefs, others suggest that actual parental behaviors play a stronger role (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014; Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Cultural and socio-demographic factors also remain underexplored in moderating the link between beliefs and outcomes (Hood et al., 2008). Given the complex and multidimensional nature of parental reading beliefs, investigating these domains in relation to measurable reading outcomes is essential. Such research can inform interventions aimed at strengthening both parental attitudes and literacy practices, ensuring that positive beliefs are translated into consistent, high-quality home literacy experiences that support children's reading success.

Existing studies on parental beliefs and children's reading skills often treat these beliefs in general terms, without analyzing how specific dimensions such as teaching efficacy, positive affect, verbal participation, reading instruction, knowledge base, resources, and environmental input uniquely relate to literacy outcomes. Much of the literature is concentrated in Western or high-income contexts, leaving limited understanding of how these relationships unfold in settings like the Philippines, where cultural practices, parental roles, and access to resources may differ. Furthermore, few studies link parental beliefs directly to children measured reading performance using standardized assessments, making it unclear how beliefs translate into actual literacy achievement. These gaps highlight the need for localized, domain-specific research to better understand and enhance the role of parental beliefs in developing children's reading skills.

2. Literature Review

Parental beliefs regarding reading are pivotal in shaping the home literacy environment and directly influencing early literacy outcomes. These beliefs determine how frequently parents engage in shared reading,

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the quality of literacy materials provided, and the richness of language-based interactions at home. Parents who view themselves as active partners in their child's education tend to use strategies such as interactive storytelling, questioning, and linking book content to everyday experiences, which have been shown to enhance vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation to read (Anderson et al., 2015; Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Research further indicates that a positive parental attitude toward reading is associated with stronger early literacy skills, including phonological awareness and print knowledge (Manolitsis et al., 2013; Silinskas et al., 2020). Conversely, when parents believe reading instruction is primarily the responsibility of schools, home-based literacy activities may be less frequent or less effective, potentially hindering children's progress in early reading (Hamilton et al., 2016). This highlights parental beliefs as crucial factors in fostering children's literacy development.

Beyond the PRBI framework, the broader home literacy environment (HLE) including material resources and parent engagement has also been linked to children's reading development. Yeomans-Maldonado (2021) emphasized that access to print materials such as books, library visits, and literacy-related subscriptions is foundational to literacy engagement, especially when coupled with strong parental beliefs about the importance of reading (Yeomans-Maldonado 2021). Similarly, Çalışkan & Ulaş (2022) found that structured parent-involved reading activities led to marked improvements in elementary students' reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading attitudes, underscoring the practical impact of parental engagement (Çalışkan & Ulaş 2022). Adding to this, Wu (2025) confirmed that parents' involvement in early book reading shaped by their beliefs about literacy plays a significant role in boosting young children's language and literacy development. These findings collectively underscore that beyond attitudes tangible actions anchored in parental beliefs are essential for cultivating reading skills in children.

3. Methodology

Parental beliefs about reading play a central role in shaping the home literacy environment and exert a significant influence on early literacy outcomes. These beliefs guide how often parents engage in shared reading, the variety and quality of literacy materials they provide, and the richness of language interactions in the home. Parents who see themselves as active contributors to their child's education are more likely to adopt strategies such as interactive storytelling, asking open-ended questions, and relating book content to everyday life practices shown to enhance vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation to read (Klauda & Wigfield, 2012; Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Studies further demonstrate that positive parental attitudes toward reading are strongly associated with higher levels of early literacy skills, including phonological awareness and print knowledge (Hornburg et al., 2021; Silinskas et al., 2020). In contrast, when parents perceive reading instruction as solely the responsibility of schools, home-based literacy engagement often decreases, potentially limiting children's early reading progress (Hood et al., 2008). This positions parental beliefs as a crucial driver of children's literacy development. Beyond individual attitudes, the broader home literacy environment (HLE) encompassing material resources, parental involvement, and the frequency of literacy activities has been linked to children's reading achievement. For example, Lehrl et al. (2020) found that access to books, educational media, and literacy-rich experiences predicts early reading competence, especially when paired with consistent parental engagement. Similarly, Sénéchal and LeFevre (2014) reported that structured parent-child reading activities significantly improve reading comprehension, motivation, and attitudes toward reading. More recent evidence from Niklas et al. (2020) confirms that early shared reading, shaped by parents' literacy beliefs, substantially boosts children's language and literacy development over time. Together, these findings emphasize that while parental beliefs set the foundation, their translation into tangible and sustained literacy practices is essential for fostering strong reading skills in children.

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4. Results

Table 1. Level of beliefs of parents in developing the reading skills of the learners in terms of teaching efficacy.

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	As a parent, I play an important role in my child's development.	4.85	0.38	Very High
2	There is little I can do to help my child get ready to do well in school.	2.52	1.42	Low
3	My child learns many important things from me.	4.52	0.64	Very High
4	I would like to help my child learn, but I don't know how.	2.76	1.27	Moderate
5	I am my child's most important teacher.	4.35	0.92	Very High
6	Schools are responsible for teaching children, not parents.	2.64	1.25	Moderate
7	Parents need to be involved in their children's education.	4.51	0.85	Very High
8	When my child goes to school, the teacher will teach my child everything my child needs to know so I don't need to worry.	3.53	1.38	High
9	Children do better in school when their parents also teach them things at home.	4.67	0.78	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.82		High
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.99	

The results in Table 1 show that, overall, parents have a high level of belief in their role in developing their child's reading skills, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.82. Most strongly agree that they play an important role in their child's development (WM = 4.85), that their child learns many important things from them (WM = 4.52), that they are their child's most important teacher (WM = 4.35), that parents need to be involved in education (WM = 4.51), and that children do better when parents also teach them at home (WM = 4.67). These items received very high ratings, showing strong confidence in active parental involvement. However, some parents showed moderate agreement with statements such as not knowing how to help their child learn (WM = 2.76) and thinking schools are responsible for teaching (WM = 2.64). A few items received low ratings, such as feeling there is little, they can do to prepare their child for school (WM = 2.52), suggesting that while most parents believe in their importance, some feel unsure or dependent on the school for their child's learning. The standard deviation of 0.99 indicates some variation in parents' views.

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Table 2. Level of beliefs of parents in developing the reading skills of the learners in terms of positive affect

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I find it boring or difficult to read to my child.	2.16	1.27	Low
2	I enjoy reading with my child.	4.46	0.74	Very High
3	I have good memories of being read to when I was a child.	4.28	0.83	Very High
4	Reading with my child is a special time that we love to share.	4.57	0.78	Very High
5	My child does not like to be read to.	2.21	1.16	Low
6	I feel warm and close to my child when we read.	4.29	0.96	Very High
7	I have to scold or discipline my child when we try to read.	2.94	1.29	Moderate
8	I want my child to love books.	4.33	0.88	Very High
9	I don't read to my child because he or she won't sit still.	2.23	1.06	Low
10	I read to my child whenever he or she wants.	2.68	1.33	Moderate
11	When we read I try to sound excited so my child stays interested.	4.54	0.72	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.52		High
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.00	

The results in Table 2 show that parents generally have a high level of positive affect toward developing their child's reading skills, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.52. Most parents strongly agree with positive statements such as enjoying reading with their child (WM = 4.46), having good memories of being read to as a child (WM = 4.28), feeling that reading together is a special time (WM = 4.57), feeling warm and close during reading (WM = 4.29), wanting their child to love books (WM = 4.33), and trying to sound excited to keep their child interested (WM = 4.54). These very high ratings indicate that parents see reading as an enjoyable and emotionally rewarding activity. However, some items received low ratings, such as finding reading boring or difficult (WM = 2.16), believing the child does not like being read to (WM = 2.21), or avoiding reading because the child won't sit still (WM = 2.23). Moderate ratings were noted for having to discipline the child during reading (WM = 2.94) and reading only when the child requests (WM = 2.68), suggesting that some parents face challenges in maintaining consistent and smooth reading sessions. The standard deviation of 1.00 shows variation in experiences and attitudes among parents.

Table 3. Level of beliefs of parents in developing the reading skills of the learners in terms of verbal participation.

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	When we read, I try to sound excited so my child stays interested.	4.56	0.64	Very High
2	Children learn new words, colors, names, etc., from books.	4.58	0.61	Very High
3	Reading helps children be better talkers and better listeners.	4.73	0.51	Very High
4	My child knows the names of many things he or she has seen in books.	4.2	0.82	High
5	When we read, I want my child to help me tell the story.	4.34	0.75	Very High
6	I ask my child a lot of questions when we read.	4.28	0.74	Very High
7	When we read, I want my child to ask questions about the book.	4.38	0.67	Very High
8	When we read we talk about the pictures as much as we read the story.	4.44	0.64	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.44		Very High
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.72	

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The results in Table 3 indicate that parents have a very high level of belief in the importance of verbal participation in developing their child's reading skills, with an aggregate weighted mean of 4.44. Almost all indicators received very high ratings, such as believing that reading helps children become better talkers and listeners (WM = 4.73), that children learn new words, colors, and names from books (WM = 4.58), and that making reading interactive by letting the child help tell the story (WM = 4.34) or encouraging them to ask questions (WM = 4.38) is important. Parents also strongly agree with discussing pictures as much as reading the story (WM = 4.44) and asking the child questions during reading (WM = 4.28). The lowest score, though still high, was for the belief that their child knows the names of many things seen in books (WM = 4.20). The relatively low standard deviation of 0.72 suggests consistent agreement among parents, showing a shared understanding that verbal engagement is a key factor in fostering comprehension and language skills during reading.

The results in Table 4 show that parents generally have a high level of belief in their role in providing reading instruction to their children, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.91. Most parents strongly agree that they should actively teach their children to read before starting school (WM = 4.53), read with them to help them learn letters and simple words (WM = 4.58), and engage in interactive practices such as having the child point out letters or numbers during reading (WM = 4.35). However, there is low agreement with the idea that their child is too young to learn about reading (WM = 2.19), indicating that most parents reject the notion of delaying reading instruction. The standard deviation of 0.89 shows some variation in responses, but overall, the data suggest that parents view themselves as important facilitators of early reading skills and believe in introducing literacy concepts before formal schooling begins.

Table 4. Level of beliefs of parents in developing the reading skills of the learners in terms of reading instruction.

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I read with my child so he/she will learn the letters and how to read simple words.	4.58	0.64	Very High
2	Parents should teach children how to read before they start school.	4.53	0.84	Very High
3	My child is too young to learn about reading.	2.19	1.25	Low
4	When we read, I have my child point out different letters or numbers that are printed in the book.	4.35	0.82	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.91		High
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.89	

Table 5. Level of beliefs of parents in developing the reading skills of the learners in terms of knowledge base.

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I try to make the story more real to my child by relating the story to his or her life.	4.41	0.61	Very High
2	Stories help build my child's imagination.	4.51	0.59	Very High
3	My child learns lessons and morals from the stories we read.	4.52	0.59	Very High
4	Reading helps children learn about things they never see in real life (like Eskimos and polar bears).	4.4	0.65	Very High
5	My child learns important life skills from books (like how to follow a cooking recipe, how to protect themselves from strangers).	4.28	0.85	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.42		Very High
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.66	

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The results in Table 5 indicate that parents have a very high level of belief in the value of reading for expanding their child's knowledge base, with an aggregate weighted mean of 4.42. Parents strongly agree that stories help build imagination (WM = 4.51), teach lessons and morals (WM = 4.52), and expose children to things they may never encounter in real life (WM = 4.40). They also believe in making stories more relatable by connecting them to the child's own experiences (WM = 4.41) and see books as a source of important life skills, such as following instructions or learning about safety (WM = 4.28). The low standard deviation of 0.66 indicates a high level of consistency in these beliefs among parents. Overall, the data show that parents recognize reading as not only a literacy activity but also a means of fostering imagination, moral development, real-world knowledge, and essential life skills in their children.

Table 6. Level of beliefs of parents in developing the reading skills of the learners in terms of resources.

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Even if I would like to, I'm just too busy and too tired to read to my child.	2.34	1.10	Low
2	I don't read to my child because we have nothing to read.	1.90	0.98	Low
3	I don't read to my child because there is no room and no quiet place in the house.	1.89	0.95	Low
4	I don't read to my child because I have other, more important things to do as a parent.	1.96	1.08	Low
Aggregate Weighted Mean		2.02		Low
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.03	

The results in Table 6 show that parents have a low level of belief in resource-related barriers as reasons for not reading to their children, with an aggregate weighted mean of 2.02. The lowest ratings were given to the lack of reading materials (WM = 1.90) and the absence of a quiet space at home (WM = 1.89), indicating that most parents do not see these as significant obstacles. Similarly, being too busy or tired (WM = 2.34) and having other more important things to do (WM = 1.96) also scored low, suggesting that parents generally do not consider time constraints or competing priorities as major reasons to avoid reading with their children. The standard deviation of 1.03 shows some variation in responses, but overall, the data indicate that most parents believe they have sufficient resources and a conducive environment to support their child's reading development.

Table 7. Level of beliefs of parents in developing the reading skills of the learners in terms of environmental input.

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Some children are natural talkers, others are silent. Parents do not have much influence over this.	2.99	1.18	Moderate
2	Children inherit their language ability from their parents, it's in their genes.	3.51	1.10	High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.25		
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.14	Moderate

The results in Table 7 reveal that parents hold a moderate level of belief in environmental input as a factor in developing their child's reading skills, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.25. Many parents moderately agree with the statement that some children are naturally talkative while others are quiet, and that parental influence over this trait is limited (WM = 2.99). A slightly higher score, falling into the high range, was given to the belief that language ability is inherited from parents and determined by genetics (WM = 3.51). The relatively high standard deviation of 1.14 indicates that opinions vary widely among parents. Overall, the findings suggest that while some parents recognize the role of environmental factors, a significant number place greater emphasis on innate or genetic factors, which may influence how actively they engage in language-enriching and reading-related activities at home.

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Table 8. Level of Reading Skills of the Learners.

Reading Skills	f	%
Reading at Grade Level	27	21.43
Transitioning Reader	99	78.57
Total	126	100.00

The results in Table 8 show that the majority of learners are transitioning readers, with 99 students (78.57%) falling into this category. This means that while they have acquired some basic reading skills, they are still developing the fluency, comprehension, and accuracy needed to reach full grade-level proficiency. Only 27 learners (21.43%) are reading at grade level, indicating that a smaller portion of the class demonstrates the expected literacy competencies for their grade. This distribution highlights a significant gap in reading performance, suggesting the need for targeted support and interventions both at school and at home to help transitioning readers progress toward grade-level proficiency. The data emphasize the importance of strengthening reading instruction and fostering consistent literacy practices to improve overall reading achievement.

Table 9. Test of relationship between Parental Self-Beliefs and Reading Skills of the Learners.

Variables	df	χ^2 -value	p - value	Decision	Remarks
Parental Beliefs and Reading Skills	1	1.309	0.578	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

Note: *significant at p<0.05 (two-tailed).

The results in Table 9 indicate that there is no significant relationship between parental self-beliefs and the reading skills of the learners, as shown by the p-value of 0.578, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. With a computed t-value of 1.309 and the decision to "do not reject Ho," the findings suggest that differences in parents' self-beliefs about their role in their child's reading development are not statistically associated with whether a learner is a transitioning reader or reading at grade level. This means that while parents may hold strong beliefs about the importance of their involvement, these beliefs alone do not appear to directly influence measurable reading performance. Other factors, such as the quality and frequency of actual reading practices at home, the effectiveness of school instruction, and individual learner differences, may have a stronger impact on reading outcomes.

5. Conclusion

The study found that parents generally hold strong, positive beliefs about their role in developing their child's reading skills, especially in teaching efficacy, positive affect, verbal participation, reading instruction, and knowledge base. However, most learners are still transitioning readers, and there was no significant link between parental beliefs and actual reading performance. This suggests that while positive beliefs are important, they must be paired with effective reading practices and targeted support to improve literacy outcomes.

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Corresponding Author: Maricon Balansag

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