

Parental involvement and adult-child reading activities in Roma and non-Roma low-income

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ISOTIS

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT
TO TACKLE INEQUALITIES IN SOCIETY



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INTRODUCTION

Literature shows that parent-child home reading activities positively affect young children's literacy development and achievement (e.g., Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Chow & Chang, 2003). Therefore, it is important to understand which factors predict it to better intervene and improve children's learning environment.

Previous research suggest that high parental educational aspirations as well as parents' education and language skills are positively associated with child or parent-child home reading activities (Davis-Kean, 2005; Yarosz & Barnett, 2010; Skwarchuck, Sowinski & LeFevre, 2014). However, to our knowledge, few studies have considered the effect of parental participation in preschool events in the home literacy environment (e.g., parent-child home reading) and parental involvement in home reading activities in ethnically diverse families (Machida, Taylor & Kim, 2002; Yarosz & Barnett, 2010). Furthermore, there seems to be no such studies with Roma families, given that most studies focusing on this group focus primarily on parents' involvement in (pre)school (Pahic, Vidovic, & Miljevic-Ridicki, 2011; Wauters et al., 2015).

As part of the European research project ISOTIS, that aims to tackle inequalities in education and society, this study explores the relation between mothers' participation in preschool activities, educational aspirations for the child, and frequency of adult-child home reading activities in two disadvantaged groups – Portuguese Roma (RO) and Portuguese non-Roma low-income families (LI) with 3 to 6 year-old children.

OBJECTIVE

To investigate the effect of individual child and mother's characteristics, parental involvement in preschool, and parental beliefs, on the frequency of adult-child home reading activities, in Portuguese Roma (RO) and non-Roma low-income (LI) families.

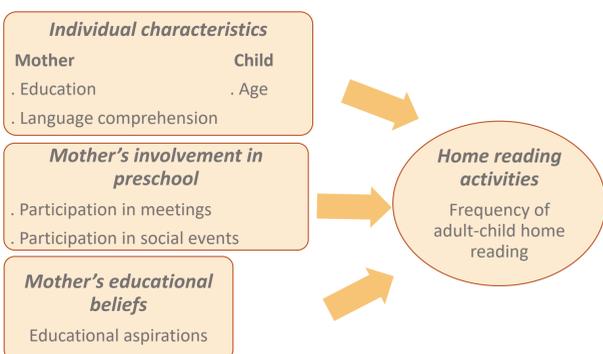


Fig.1. Study Model

METHOD

Context and participants

Table 1. Participants (mothers/primary caregivers*, N = 238)

Target Group	Roma (RO)	(Non-Roma) Low-income (LI)
	121	117
Age	M = 30, SD = 7.4	M = 34, SD = 7.1
Educational Level	1-4 th grade = 58% > 4 th grade = 35%	1-4 th grade = 14.5% > 4 th grade = 85.5%
Child's age	3-4 38% 5-6 62%	3-4 40% 5-6 60%
Site		
M.A. Lisbon	66	48 Total = 114
M.A. Oporto	55	69 Total = 124

* The child's father (N=2) or a female main caregiver (e.g., grandmother) participated when the mother was not involved in his/her life.

- Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Oporto - largest urban areas in Portugal, with higher number of Roma (9051 and 3654; Mendes, Magano & Candeias, 2014) and low-income residents (M.A. Lisbon/Oporto: 12.9/15.7% unemployed, 3/5% receiving social security benefits, 29126/23261 preschoolers receiving School Financial Assistance (ASE) in 2015/2016; PORDATA, 2011, 2016; DGEEC, 2015/2016).

- Recruitment supported by local school clusters, community-based organizations working with one or both target groups, and Roma mediators.

Procedure

Participants completed an online survey with the help of a researcher, in one face-to-face meeting.

Table 2. Study Variables

Outcome Variable	Items	Response scale	α
Frequency of adult-child home reading	How often does an adult in the home...	1 = (Almost) Never to 6 = Every day	.79
	...read or narrate a picture book to [target-child/TC]?		
	...read a story book to [TC]?		
	...read a book on a topic of interest (history, dinosaurs, space...) to [TC]?		
Educational Level	(Dichotomized variable by median split per target-group)	RO /LI 1 = Up to 4 th / 7 th 2 = From 5 th / 8 th	
Language comprehension	. When reading newspapers...		
	. When listening to the Portuguese news on the television/radio...	1 = Always to 5 = Never	.73
	. When talking with your child's teacher/(family) doctor... ...do you have difficulty understanding the type of language that is used?		
Educational aspirations for child	What level of qualification would you like [TC] to complete?	1 = ISCED 1-2 2 = ISCED 3 3 = ISCED 4 4 = ISCED 6 5 = ISCED 7-8	
Parental participation in preschool	How often an adult from the home got involved in the following activities at your child's preschool?...	1 = Never to 5 = More than once a month	
	- Participation in preschool meetings	...Taking part in meetings offered by the preschool to hear about what my child learns in preschool and how I can help my child's learning at home.	
- Participation in preschool social events	...Taking part in social events organized for parents and families at my child's preschool.		

RESULTS

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and t-test results

	RO		LI		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Educational level	1.1	.32	1.5	.50	-7.15	<.001
Language Comprehension	4.0	1.0	4.4	.73	-3.49	<.001
Educational aspirations for child	3.3	1.6	3.6	1.29	-1.29	.198
Participation in preschool meetings	2.1	.80	2.2	.80	-0.73	.469
Participation in preschool social events	1.7	.58	2.0	.73	-3.8	<.001
Frequency of adult-child home reading	3.2	1.41	3.5	1.39	-1.9	.059

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis

	Frequency of adult-child home reading					
	RO			LI		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Child's Age	.21	.17	.13	.04	.14	.03
Educational Level	.40	.33	.13	.01	.28	.01
Language comprehension	.17	.17	.11	.41	.19	.23**
Participation in preschool meetings	.22	.19	.12	.05	.17	.03
Participation in preschool social events	.13	.26	.05	.38	.18	.21*
Educational aspirations for child	.27	.10	.30**	.17	.11	.16
	R ² =.17			R ² =.14		

*p < .05. **p < .01.

CONCLUSIONS

Roma mothers reported lower educational levels and lower language comprehension than non-Roma low-income mothers, and participated less in preschool social activities.

For Roma mothers, only educational aspirations for the child predicted (positively) adult-child home reading. This contradicts previous findings of parental academic expectations predicting formal (e.g., help child to read words) but not informal (e.g., storybook exposure) home literacy practices (Skwarchuck, Sowinski, & LeFevre, 2014).

For non-Roma low-income families, language comprehension, as well as participation in preschool social events predicted adult-child home reading. Findings suggests that informal, more than formal, interactions with preschools (and with other parents), are associated with involvement in home literacy activities with children.

Our findings suggest the need for:

- Strategies to increase Roma families' educational aspirations for their children such as school staff positive feedback on children's learning and achievement.
- More opportunities for positive social interactions between parents in the preschool setting, particularly for low-income families.

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