

**INVESTIGATION OF HOME FACTORS AFFECTING  
CHILDREN'S ACQUISITION OF READING AND WRITING  
ABILITIES IN TANZANIA: A CASE OF MOROGORO REGION**

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By

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Education of the University of Dodoma.

The University of Dodoma

October, 2017

**CERTIFICATION**

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance by the University of Dodoma a Dissertation entitled *“Investigation of home factors affecting children’s acquisition of reading and writing abilities in Tanzania a case of Morogoro region”* in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education of the University of Tanzania.

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**DECLARATION**

**AND**

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my late husband, Stanslaus Clemence Komba, whose influence, encouragement, support, loyalty and understanding encouraged me mentally and psychologically in accomplishing my master programme. He will forever be remembered. May his soul find a resting place with the Almighty God.

## **ABSTRACT**

This research investigated the home factors affecting children's acquisition of reading and writing in Tanzania. This research was conducted in Mvomero and Kilosa district of Morogoro Region involving 4 schools of which involves 92 participants were interviewed and the other 80 were engaged in focused group discussion. The study employed simple random sampling technique to obtain parents who were involved in interview and focus group discussion. Furthermore, the study employed a case study design through qualitative approach where semi-structured interview and focused group discussion analysis were involved in data collection. The data were analysed based on themes and resulted into the emergence of different sub-themes.

Data obtained through semi-structured interviews, focused group discussion, and (FGD) documentary review provided an opportunity to understand factors that hinder children development of reading and writing skills. The study findings revealed that most factors that hinder learning are based on home environment. The study revealed that parents and other caretakers should play their role in assisting children to develop their reading and writing skills. Also there should be cooperation between parents and teachers to assist the children in developing their reading and writing skills. The study concludes that parents and teachers should work collaboratively to develop reading and writing in children.

Lastly, it is recommended that parents should buy materials like books, and they make time to assist their children at home.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ECD	Early Childhood Development and Education
EFA	Education For All
FDG	Focused Group Discussion
KKK	Kusoma, Kuandika kuhesabu
LANES	Literacy and Numeracy Educational Support
MoEVT	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
PPE	Pre-primary Education
SES	Social Economic Status
UNESCO	United Nations, Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **STUDY PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This study investigated how home factors affect children's acquisition of reading and writing abilities in Tanzania. This chapter therefore, presents the background to the problem, statement of the problem, objective of the study and its research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study and the definition of the key terms used throughout this study.

#### **1.2 Background to the Problem**

Literacy skills are fundamental skills in our society today. Learning literacy skills, particularly reading and writing skills, oral skills, develop through the interaction between the child and parents, caregivers and others. Reports from education statistics in Tanzania reveal that, a number of children fail examinations or have poor performance in their examination, as the result of poor reading and writing foundation skills in lower grades (UNESCO, 2010). Therefore, literacy skills are necessary for children to build up the foundation for their further studies.

One of the major objectives of primary education in Tanzania is to enable every child acquire and develop communication skills as well as basic literacy skills (URT, 1995, 2005). The ultimate goal of primary education is to make sure that, every child acquires relevant and adequate Kiswahili language literacy skills that will enable him or her obtain information from various sources. Therefore, in order to achieve educational objectives in Tanzania, literacy skills are the most important skills that must receive greater attention in schools particularly lower classes.

Traditionally, literacy skills were used to mean the ability to read and write. The modern term's meaning has been expanded to include the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create and communicate using printed and written materials to develop knowledge and potentials to an individual (UNESCO, 2010; URT, 1995, 2005). Thus, literacy skills are the skills needed to develop reading and writing skills, which involve awareness of sound of language, awareness of print, and the relationship between letters and sounds (Waisik & Herman, 2004). According to Mapp & Anne (2012) learning to read and write need time, practice and support. To them, reading and writing contains fun creating activities such as talking together, reading food labels that will eventually lead a child to read fluently and write correctly. Therefore, reading and writing to young children are the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that a child develops during the early childhood period starting at birth.

The aim of this study is to investigate the home factors that hinder children in lower grades to develop their reading and writing skills in Kiswahili language. Kiswahili is used as an official language in Tanzania and it is spoken all over the country. Also Kiswahili language is used as the medium of instruction in government primary schools in Tanzania.

Apart from the mother tongue, Kiswahili is used as language for communication in various economic activities in the study area (Kilosa and Mvomero) districts. Mvomero and Kilosa are among the five districts of Morogoro region in Tanzania. The economy of the districts is mainly dominated by agriculture and allied activities such as small scale farming, cattle keeping and trade. According to the Planning Commission Report (1997), most of the families in Mvomero and Kilosa districts

are affected by poverty in a large scale thus, they engage children in income generating activities such as cooking, and looking after cattle, As a result, these children do not attend classroom lesson for long time (Kumburu,2011). Due to difficult home environment, children in Morogoro region particularly Mvomero and Kilosa districts have poor performance in literacy skills which lead to poor National Examination results (MoEVT, 2010).

Mirenda (2005) argues that, creation of quality home learning environment is necessary because learning to read and write begins very early in life for almost all children in literate societies. Therefore, the knowledge, skills and motivation for caregivers and parents are crucial as they lay strong foundation for future success in school and life experiences of young children. UNESCO (2010) points out that, strong parents-school partnership is the major factor in the acquisition and development of reading and writing skills. Learning of young children would potentially contribute to the preparation of the learning environment that would favour reading and writing activities in schools and at home.

The development of a nation depends on how the government invests in education, particularly early childhood education that will emphasize on reading and writing skills to young children .According to UNESCO (2015), reading and writing are the crucial components of literacy whose reciprocal interactions are beneficial to the child and the nation as a whole. Paul (2001) is of the view that, reading and writing skills are vital to an individual's life and they begin almost as soon as an infant is exposed to language. (Fildel & Spangles 1995) Literacy develops over time as students' progress from emerging to be skilled readers who can comprehend, and analyse complex texts (Jakalia, & Mensah, (2012)

Clay (1966) viewed that, development of reading and writing skills is a continuous process that begins at birth. She also believes that, literacy has critical implication to children and it is the potential present to a child. According to Goodman (1980) literacy training must begin before schooling. Adults and peers around the child should assist such a child to respond to print in situational context, book handling, knowledge about writing and ability to talk about written language. Thus, reading and writing for young children needs a positive home environment so as to enable them acquire learning effectively.

Children face reading and writing problems at school because parents and other family members do not assist them to learn (Mudzielwana, 2014). According to Warde & Moor, (2000) parents' involvement in their children's learning is important because it provides opportunity for children to learn from them through interaction and hence make them perform independently. For that reason, parent- child activities, 'learning together time', buying materials for children add what children get from school (Jakalia & Mensah, 2012). Children who are being helped by their parents can read books fluently and can even predict a story (Saracho 2002). In contrast, Saracho (2002) found that children from poor reading parents face difficulties in reading and writing skills at school because they apply uncreative procedures in decoding and comprehending sounds.

Another study by Antila (2013) in America on the effects of early literacy on academic development revealed that, personal attributes and home environmental factors contribute much to failure of reading and writing skills for young children at school. Further, Garelt (2002) added that, the extent to which children are successful with reading and writing and how much they actually read is related to how they feel

about reading. According to Lawson (2006) children who lack lengthy reading opportunities prior to starting school are more likely to have difficulties which unfortunately, continue throughout their elementary and secondary years and therefore affect their performance in all classes. For this reason, a child should receive help from parents and teachers, because the first school of the child is the home and the first teacher of the child is the parent. Mudzielwana (2014) analyses some home factors that negatively affect children's reading and writing skills including- lack of knowledge, parents laziness in assisting the child, orphan children, and those parents who are at work fail to get time to assist their children.

There is a correlation between the meaning of education to parents and children learning literacy skills (Geske& Ozola 2008). Children have been performing poorly in their future studies because education is not valued by their parents and caregivers in their family. Children easily drop out of school because they are unable to cope with school life due to their low literacy levels (Jakalia& Mensah 2012).

Furthermore, Neuman & Dickinson (2002) view that; the home environment supports different aspects of development to children including reading and writing. Early manifestations of how children practise reading are embedded in their family structure within their social contexts. They further argue that, as children enter school, they are differently prepared by their families to benefit from their educational experiences which become manifested in their reading skill, writing skill, academic achievement and socio-emotional development. Therefore, the home environment is conceptually and empirically a context for 'emergent literacy' (Sulzby & Teale, 1991) which provides children with a broad base of literate knowledge before formal schooling. Supporting this argument, Geva & Melech-

Feder, (2010) argues that at the home, children build background knowledge of the nature and function of written language i.e. how to hold a pencil, crayon; holding, positioning a book correctly, studying, entertainment and gaining information.

On the other hand, Whitehurst & Lonigan (2001) argues that, although the home environment provides opportunities for learning about literacy, children engage in literacy activities for purposes other than explicit learning. For example, observing written material cultivates print awareness even without direct instruction.

Studies by different researchers have revealed different home factors that may affect literacy development in young children (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1999). Several potential hosts of stress factors that negatively impact the quality of literacy interactions thus impeding the learning process include family income, family size parents' own literacy habits and the extent to which parents actively embrace school activities at home.

In Tanzania, reading and writing for children has become a problem because many children complete primary education while they are not able to read and write. Surprisingly, some students join secondary education while they are not able to read and write (Twaweza, 2013). A study by the World Bank (2014) observed that 26% of the youth in Tanzania from 15-24 years are not able to read and write. These studies also added that, compared to other countries, the literacy rate in Tanzania is 75% among the youth population (Twaweza, 2013; Hakielimu 2015). A research by TAHEA (2013) conducted in Mwanza which analysed the strength, weaknesses and strategies of improving literacy and numeracy skills in Tanzania observed that, inadequate Basic Numeracy and Literacy skills in child centres , pre-schools and

class one have been contributing to inadequate learning in primary classes in Tanzania (Twaweza, 2013; HakiElimu, 2015).

Further, Ngorosho (2011) added that, one of the factors which contribute to inadequate performance to young children involve low level of education among parents especially in rural areas. The findings of this study reveal that, only 18% of the fathers and 6% of mothers had attained secondary education.

In schools, the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) through its Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) developed and has been implementing new curriculum which focuses mainly on reading, writing and arithmetic (3Rs) as a strategy aimed at improving the acquisition and mastery of competences in the 3Rs. Implementation of 3Rs educational programme is further aimed at reducing the number of the learners who complete primary education (PE) without adequate competences in the 3Rs (Chediell, 2013). Apart from implementing the 3Rs, the curriculum in standard one and two, the government of Tanzania also aimed at combating the illiteracy rates in early grades. This is so because the government realizes that community engagement to national wide campaign is necessary on eradicating the illiteracy rates among the community members. However, in Tanzania, there are limited studies that determine home factors that affect children's learning in acquiring reading and writing skills. The current study therefore, was designed to come up with the home factors that affect children's acquisition of reading and writing abilities in Tanzania and the initiatives that should be employed by parents, and caregivers to assist children in acquiring the skills for the benefits of the the nation at large.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to assess the home factors affecting the achievement of basic reading and writing literacy in public primary schools in Tanzania. There has been an outcry on the low reading and writing literacy levels witnessed among early grade learners in primary schools by various education stakeholders and reports.

For instance, UN Millennium Development Goals Report (2013), Uwezo East Africa (2011), and EQUIPT Tanzania (2015), Kumburu (2011) among others, confirm that the reading and writing literacy levels among primary scholars in African countries area way below the expected standards. According to Kumburu (2011); “There are striking and alarming reports from the educational statistics and research which reveal that, and increasing number of children in Tanzania fail exams and have poor examination results. They seem to have serious problems with reading and writing skills in nearly all primary school in Tanzania”.

Kumburu (2011) found that, 60% of the pupils could not name any of the five letters shown; also 90% of the pupils could not fast read any five two syllable words. While there is evidence that reading literacy rates are low, there are few studies empirically conducted to examine the contributing factors to this phenomenon particularly in Tanzania. However, few studies have been done regarding the improvement of reading and writing in Tanzania, that is, some initiatives have been done to improve the situation. The initiatives done by the government include: introducing pre-primary school system in public schools in Tanzania in which children are exposed to early reading and writing skills. Further, the curricula for early grade classes have been improved to focus on 3RS on which children are trained reading, writing and

arithmetic skills. This has gone hand in hand with training teachers through Kusoma , Kuandika na Kuhesabu (KKK) programme which in English means 3RS(Reading Writing and Arithmetic) to teach lower classes standard one and standard two and also through LANES programme (2015).

The various research studies conducted in Tanzania that include that by Kumburu (2011), Cosmas (2015), and Ngorosho, (2010) are concerned with the situation and the literacy rates among the early grade learners. Therefore, this study covers the gap on the factors that affect children development of reading and writing skills.

Yet, another study conducted by Mbise et al (2010), revealed that, in spite of Kiswahili being the national language in Tanzania, many students were seen good in decoding it but were poor in comprehending it. Furthermore, all these studies focus much on reading, rather than reading and writing literacy skills.

Therefore, due to the situation revealed by these studies there was a dire need to empirically analyse the home factors influencing achievement of reading and writing literacy skills among the early grade learners in Tanzania since knowing these factors would help to escalate appropriate interventions to address the problem of lack of reading and writing literacy among the children who are graduating from primary schools. This need made this study necessary,

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

Thus, this study attempted to investigate the home factors that affect primary school learner's outcomes in reading and writing literacy in Tanzania. In particular, the study analyses the challenges influencing achievement of reading and writing literacy and ways of improving the reading and writing literacy levels within home context.

### **1.5 General Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to investigate how home factors affect children's acquisition of reading and writing abilities in Tanzania.

### **1.6 Specific Objectives of the Study**

Specifically, the study was designed to work on the following objectives:

- 1) To identify some key home factors affecting children's acquisition of reading and writing skills in Tanzania.
- 2) To explore initiatives employed by parents' in improving children's reading and writing skills in Tanzania.
- 3) To establish the best parents' initiatives on improving acquisition of reading and writing skills to children in Tanzania.

### **1.7 Research Questions**

In order to address the above research objectives, the following questions were developed to guide the empirical investigation:

- 1) What are the key home factors affecting children's acquisition of reading and writing skills in Tanzania?
- 2) What are the initiatives taken by parents to improve the acquisition of reading and writing skills?
- 3) What are the best parents' initiatives on improving acquisition of reading and writing skills to children in Tanzania?

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The findings obtained from this study are expected to make important contributions of the home factors in children's reading and writing abilities in Tanzania. In addition, the expected results of this study would be used by the Ministry of

Education Science and Technology to reframe the curriculum for pre-primary and primary education in Tanzania. Furthermore, the findings of this study will guide various educational stakeholders such as teachers and parents and curriculum developers who will be aware of the factors that hinder children and also be able to assist the children in developing reading and writing in Tanzania. Educational researchers will also benefit from this study by getting first-hand information from the findings for further research in this area.

Finally, the findings will prompt other researchers to conduct various studies related to the reading and writing skills to children not only in Tanzania, but in different countries and worldwide.

### **1.9 Delimitation of the Study**

Delimitation involves drawing boundaries or limiting the scope of the study in terms of the study area, respondents and subject matter (Best & Khan, 2003). The study focuses on how home factors affect children acquisition of reading and writing skill. The study is limited to early grade classes in Kilosa and Mvomero Districts especially standard one and two from the public primary schools. Furthermore, the study involves early grade primary school teachers and parents with children in standard one and two as key stakeholders in facilitating learning of the primary school children. Mostly, the study focuses on the factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing but which a result from home environments.

### **1.10 Operational Definition of the Key Terms**

The following terms are defined as they are operationalised in this study

**Literacy** is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts

(UNESCO 2015). According to Jakalia & Mensah (2012), Literacy extends beyond the acquisition of reading and writing skills, it entails the ability to use skills in a socially appropriate context therefore, literacy develops overtime as students' progress from the emerging to skilled readers who can comprehend and analyse a text.

**Reading** is described as an active skill-based process of constructing meaning from oral, visual and written text (see general definition for reading in e.g. Wikipedia, 2011). Tunmer and Greaney (2008) perceive reading as the ability to translate or interpret from print into one's own language from which meaning can be derived. As per this study, reading is a meaningful activity if the reader can comprehend what words convey to him/her and it entails the decoding of words and also a process of breaking words into smaller units, i.e. syllables and phonemes.

**Writing** involves the activity of forming vowels, syllables, words as well as sentences to young children.

**Home-based factors** refer to all the objects, forces and conditions in the home which influence the students physically, intellectually and emotionally.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter includes the review of literatures related to children's reading and writing skills or abilities worldwide. More specifically, the chapter covers literatures related to home factors that affect children in acquiring reading and writing while they are at home which as a result lead to poor reading and writing abilities at school. Therefore, it covers the theoretical framework, and empirical literatures related to this study. Further, it presents the conceptual frame work and synthesis and knowledge gap of the study.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by a Socio-cultural theory by Vygostky (1978)

##### **2.2.1 Social-Cultural Theory**

The theory postulates that individuals in their social world engage in complex interrelations that shape their cognitive, social, and physical development. It is recognized that family and school are both an interactional and an ideological system. As an interactional process, families experience daily life routines and rituals whereas ideology is expressed in symbolically articulated belief systems that govern these interactions (Wozniak, 1993). Research involving the home environment and family interactions bring about varying experiences that are embedded in a number of theories. Core to these theories is Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory which stipulates that knowledge acquisition is rooted in social interactions. In these interactions, children grow into an intellectual life by the help of those around them (Vygotsky, 1978). This growth occurs in the Zone of Proximal

Development (ZPD) which is “the distance between the actual developmental levels as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD is characterized by partial mastery of skills which are successfully employed and eventually internalized with the assistance of an adult (Rogoff, 1990). In the ZPD, the adult monitors the current skills and scaffolds the child’s extension of current skill to a higher level of competence (Wertsch, 1985).

In this process, adult involvement and contribution gradually decreases as the learner competencies increase. As Nelson (1981) puts it, “young children’s scripts are initially acquired within contexts that are highly structured for them by adults. One of the salient facts about social events that they participate in is that they are most often directed by adults and the goals involved are goals of others. Thus, the children’s parts in interactions are determined by the adults who provide directions for activities and even supply the lines. For this study, the development of reading and writing is determined by the support given by an adult at home environment which creates fruitful learning at school.

Another scholar also who has contributed on the importance of social and cultural environment in which children’s learning and development involve is John Dewey (1859-1952). According to him, education should contribute to children’s personal, social and intellectual growth that will result from a well prepared environment based on shared experiences (Zygouris, 2001). Dewey believed that, children are active being, eager to interact and explore the world. Therefore, to enable them

explore the world, encouraging learning and interaction with peers, materials are necessary.

Additionally, Piaget (1896-1980) observed the need of a child to explore the environment. Piaget organizes children learning into stages whereby each stage depends on the intelligent capacity of the child. According to Piaget, Effective planned experiences enable a child to explore the world. Thus, home environment should be prepared to enable a child construct relationship between object, understanding and develop physical and logical mathematics (MacQuillan M, & Coleman, G 2007).

According to social and cultural perspectives, reading and writing is defined as a social practice which involves the accepted and valued ways of practising literacy in a particular society (Rowe 2008). Another study by Aram, (2007) observed that, children build complex competencies such as reading and writing by interacting with more skilled adults and peers through scaffolding. Also social cultural perspective accepts that, children learn procedures, reading and writing processes, textual intentions and ideology demonstrated and valued by their teacher, parents, and peers in a specific context. Burton & Hamitton (2000) added that, in assisting children to acquire reading and writing skills, there should be relationship between people within groups and communities whereby children can participate in literate events to construct cultural model of literacy such as ways of talking, pronunciation, and appropriate way of handling literacy materials, texts and objects. Therefore, the social cultural perspective agrees that, learning to read and write is a social practice which is shaped by complex coordination of people, places, institution and materials

available in children's natural context rather than individual achievement (Clay, 2004, Vygotsky, 1978).

Clay (1982) invokes Vygotsky's (1978) idea of zone of proximal development where more knowledgeable others are critical. According to her, reading recovery focuses on working to assist a child go beyond the actual development that will lead to further learning. Also Clay (1982) accepts the idea that learners be engaged in the meaningful activities where she emphasises on reading recovery practice in connected text rather than participating in sheet activities. In addition, Clay (1978) puts emphasis on reading recovery learning that intends to meet the needs of the learners who experience difficulty in stabilising effective reading and writing strategies.

### **2.2.2 Application of Social Cultural Theory in this Study**

Interaction with adults and peers is viewed as an effective way of developing skills and strategies.

At home, a child needs to be assisted by an expert who is educated and has the skills of reading and writing. Further, the environment surrounding the child must be rich in reading and writing resources that will help the learner to learn effectively at home. This is also supported by McLeod (2007) who argues that guided learning within the ZPD can lead to greater understanding or performance than working alone. Guided learning can be structured by 'the more knowledgeable other'. Therefore, if learners are helped by experts at home they will be at a good position of developing good reading and writing skills.

## **2.3 Theoretical Literature Review Studies**

### **2.3.1 The Concept of Literacy**

The term literacy is viewed differently by different scholars especially those who focus on reading and writing skills in early childhood and primary education. Zygouris (2001) defines literacy as the process that begins well before the elementary grades and continues throughout adulthood. Yetta Goodman (1984) viewed literacy as far more than just reading words, it about understands of language that is found in many places such as books magazines, on website manual or sign in advertisement in films or even conversation. He further added that, literacy begins before the child starts schooling where a child experiences 'roots' at the home environment. According to Goodman (1984) The 'roots' means giving awareness of forms and function of language to a child that are found in signs, advertisement posters, stickers and logos that are context based. Thus, literacy develops out of experiences and interactions with direct social group. Cooper (1997) perceives literacy as the ability of an individual to communicate effectively for real life applications, it involves the ability to read, speak, listen, view and think.

Additionally, Schikedanz (1999) declared that literacy focuses on the first years of life, by giving meaning to the interaction young children have with books and stories. He added that, the early first three years in early Literacy involve children playing with books, singing nursery rhymes, listening to stories and recognizing words building blocks. Vazir & Ismail (2009) explained about the environment in which young children can acquire literacy skills whereby teachers, adults and caregivers need to prepare readymade materials which will foster active participation in reading and writing activities. Materials such as readymade black

booklets, draft papers markers and pens are necessary for young children to learn how to read and write.

According to the National Institute of Literacy (2002) early literacy have a clear and consistently strong relationship with later convectional literacy skills, such as decoding, oral reading, fluency, comprehension writing and spelling. They also added that, even before children start schools, they can become aware of the systematic patterns of sounds in spoken language through manipulation of sound in words, recognizing words and breaking them smaller apart. Lynch, (2007) explained about the importance of parents in facilitating literacy skills to their children before they start schooling This is because they are the major socializing force in most young children's lives although sibling and peers as well as pre-school teachers are involved in this process as well. Interaction between children and adults are seen as the primary medium by which literacy is acquired (Pianta, 2004). Thus, in order to enable children acquire literacy skills, parents and caregivers should prepare literacy-rich environment where a learner can engage in variety of listening, talking, reading, and writing activities.

### **2.3.2 The Concept of Reading and Writing skills**

Learning to read and write is critical to a child's success in school and later in life. One of the best predictors of whether a child will function completely in school and go to contribute actively in increasingly literate society is the level to which the child progresses in reading and writing (Stevens, 2001).

According to Kane & Ogdon (1993) writing is the process which is true and yet misleading. It is true in a manner that, it is rational activity that involves thinking by cognizant efforts or simply intuition and it is misleading because the term ' process'

indicates neat and well defined steps to be attempted in a sequence. There is no systematic ways to follow when writing. Vazir & Ismail (1995) contend that, children learn by 'doing'. Doing is about taking meaningful activities which are relevant to children's lives.

Further they added that, classroom observations show that children's writing is seldom related to their real or personal life experiences or contextual situation. This is because, in early years, children are not expected to write stories, plays or poetry in a systematic manner as adults do. Therefore, teachers should expose the learners to the experience and knowledge of print which they observe around them (Denton, 2000).

It should be noted that reading literacy is the skill which is the ground of almost all processes of learning and is necessary for students; not only to acquire language and study literature but also to teach other subjects (Geske & Ozola, 2008). According to Denton (2000) socio-economic conditions are significant for achievement in reading whereby parents need to read aloud to their children at home frequently. Vygotsky (1978) added that, learning is enhanced when interacting with more knowledgeable others. As a part of scaffold, older siblings of young children sometimes assume the responsibility of reading for the young children something which exposes young children to a function of print, vocabulary as well as question and answer patterns which children will experience in early schooling (Geske & Ozola, 2008).

### **2.3.3 Reading and Writing Situation in Early Grade Classes in Tanzania**

Education system in Tanzania primarily serves the wealthy population as well as the majority of the Tanzanian citizens to achieve the best and mandatory pre- primary

education and primary education in Tanzania (Rao, 2002). In addition, Rao (2002) observed that, compared to other developing countries, the quality of pre-primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa has been considered to be poor and practice in these countries have been closely related to policy.

A study conducted by Kumburu (2011) observed that, the education form 2+7+4+2+3 denotes the number of years allocated to pre-primary education, primary education, Ordinary secondary, Advance Secondary and higher education. Pre-primary theoretically serves children from 5 years although some attend before that age. (MoEVT, 2006). Mtahabwa & Rao (2009) added that, Pre-primary education is regarded as a preparation for primary education and the curriculum focuses on the development of literacy and numeracy skills but the social skills tend to be neglected. Such education tends to be of low quality with inappropriate teaching approaches (Mbise, 1996). Thus, this leads to poor reading and writing skills in pre-primary children as a result, a large number of children join primary school, proceed and complete such level of education without basic skills which would lay a foundation of a child to speak, to read and write properly (Kumburu, 2011).

#### **2.4 Review of Empirical Studies**

This part contains the empirical studies that relate to the current study. The presentation begins with the studies conducted Worldwide (Global level), and studies conducted in Tanzania.

## **2.4.1 Studies from Developed and Developing Countries**

### **2.4.1.1 Influence of Home Environment on Acquisition of Reading and Writing Literacy Skills**

A number of researches have been conducted to show the home environment and school factors affect children acquisition of reading and writing skills. Some of the studies have explained the role of the parents and caretakers at home environment while others pointed out the school environment and the role of pre-school teachers in enhancing children's acquisition of reading and writing skills.

Early literacy activities in family and preschool are considered important for promoting children's early reading literacy skills (Lehrl, Smidt, Grosse & Richter, 2013). The themes of home environment variable emerging from the literature review include social economic status, parent's educational level and occupation, pre-school literacy and numeracy related activities as well as educational resources found at home.

Lehrl et al. (2013) conducted a longitudinal study in two German federal states to identify patterns of literacy and numeracy activities in preschools and their relation to structural preschool characteristics and to attributes of the home learning environment. The sample comprised of 421 children between the ages of 3-10 years attending 89 preschool classes (Lehrl et al., 2013). Among their key findings was that children who are less exposed to literacy-related educational experiences at home find themselves in some kind of imperilment: they are more likely to attend a preschool where the occurrence of literacy- and numeracy-related activities is comparatively low.

Their study was informative on the role of home literacy in determining which type of school and level the child joins in preschool. The study revealed that most of the children attended preschools which provided comparatively low levels of activities in the domain of literacy. The study did not however inform on whether the level of engagement in reading and writing literacy activities at home have any effect on how the pupils continued to acquire the same skills in school. William and Rask (2003), carried out a study in the UK to identify factors that enable young children to develop and extend their literacy skills. The study involved 4 classes of 6 year olds. In each class they interviewed 2 children, their parents and teacher (William & Rask, 2003).

Their study also sought to find out if preschool experiences had a significant bearing in development of literacy skills and if there are any additional factors that influence their learning of literacy.

Their study findings revealed that early literacy experiences in everyday context in the home provided a useful foundation for successful literacy learning in school. In the view of the interviewed teachers, experiences that were actively encouraged by interested and supportive adults provided a useful foundation for successful literacy learning in school. The meaningful contexts offered through play helped children gain metacognitive awareness of why it is important to be literate. In conclusion, William & Rask (2003) noted that the influence of home on literacy development among the interviewed pupils, had been considerable and through it, they readily initiated literacy activities in play settings at both home and school. They added that these children chose to undertake more reading and writing tasks than their peers

because they were already motivated by their successes and knew that literacy was an important means of communicating and finding out information.

William and Rask (2003) study was very informative on the importance of home literacy experiences on development of literacy in school. However, the sample of the study was too small and was not specific on reading literacy. There is no evidence that their findings can be generalized to all other cultures particularly in Africa.

A study by Chimombo et al (2000) in Malawi investigated classroom, school, and home factors that negatively affect girls Education. In this study, teachers and parents were interviewed on the factors that affect girls at school, home as well as classroom context. The study findings revealed that, parents are children's first teachers. Therefore, parents' knowledge of early childhood education, expectations and parenting style were seen as influencing children's functioning in ways to be reflected later in life. Further, the study revealed that the cooperation between parents as well as teachers have influence in girls education.

Among the mentioned factors included parents follow up of children development at school as well as teachers interest on children academic development. Furthermore, the study revealed that, in most of the African societies child labour is among the factors which hinder the acquisition of reading and writing skills in young children. In rural areas, boys become cow and goat herders while girls spend their time in child minding their siblings.

A study by Eivers et al. (2010) in primary schools in Ireland Lower pupil achievement was linked to a number of demographic characteristics, including

familial low socioeconomic status (SES), parental unemployment, membership of the Traveller community, speaking a first language other than English or Irish, living in a lone-parent household, or being part of a large family. Home literacy activities that were positively related to achievement included parents reading for enjoyment, the availability of resources such as books in the home, parental confidence in their ability to assist their child with reading or mathematics homework, and pupils spending no more than a moderate amount of time on school days on the internet or playing computer games. Lynch (2007) conducted a longitudinal study in New York adopting a mixed research approach to investigate on the nature of the family and its influence on reading and writing literacy. The study involved the use of interview, observation as well as questionnaires. The result of the study revealed that, socio economic factors are associated with children's literacy knowledge whereby children from low socio economic status (SES) families achieve less reading and writing skills compared to children from high social economic status. These finding led to the suggestions that, activities engaged in by parents together with the overall quality of the home learning environment can lead to success in children's acquisition of reading and writing skills.

The studies above reveal that home literacy and experiences, social economic background of children and parents level of education influence achievement of literacy skills development which include reading literacy. However there is no literature on similar studies carried out in Africa. There is no evidence that the findings in those countries are applicable in African cultures. This study investigated the factors in the home environment that influence achievement of basic reading literacy skills among children in the African.

#### **2.4.1.2 Factors behind Reading and Writing Delays**

There are many explanations for reading and writing delays. Some of them are biological and neurologically based and some are related to environmental and educational factors. Over the years, many neurologically based theories have been used in efforts to explain and find reasons for reading and writing difficulties and especially for dyslexia. The role of the different parts and regions of the brain (e.g. Hallahan & Mock, 2003; Wagner, 2008) and the role of the eyes (e.g. Wagner, 2008) have been discussed. Recently, researchers in the field of learning disabilities have proposed that reading and writing difficulties can be explained by using neurological theory (Stein, 2008). In short, we can state that, some of the factors pertaining to reading difficulties could be explained using cognitive and neuropsychological indices: phonological processing and rapid naming (Frijters, Lovett, Steinbach, Wolf, Sevcik & Morris, 2011). However, the major focus in this study is on the environmental and especially the educational perspective. Therefore, factors related to the home are thus in focus.

There is a large amount of research, mainly from developed countries, which posits that among factors in the home, the socioeconomic situation has a major impact on the development of the child and thus also on the development of the child's literacy development (e.g. Cameron & Williams, 2005). In most of the studies, the education of the parents and the income level of the family have been used as indicators. The amount of research from developing countries, including Africa, is limited. During the few years there has, however, been an increasing interest in the field which can be seen, e.g. in Tanzanian studies. The relation between the home environment and the development of literacy skills in Tanzania has been analyzed and described in recent studies (Ngorosho, 2010, Ngorosho, 2011). These studies were carried out in

poor rural areas in eastern Tanzania. The summarized findings (Ngorosho, 2011) show that the family's socio-economic situation and literacy support was important. Indicators like parent's education, house wall material, the amount of schoolbooks at home and parental involvement in school homework were found to be significant predictors of reading and writing ability.

The results also show that phonological awareness was predicted by the father's education and mother's occupation.

The idea in the actual study is that many children coming from low socioeconomic areas do not have a literacy-supporting environment and thus there is a risk that their literacy skills will not develop well without special attention and support. Families and homes in such areas do not have strong possibilities to support their children's literacy development. Studies have indicated that poverty in the families, lack of books in the homes and lack of parental support, are some of the major reasons for delayed literacy development among children (Lyon & Fletcher, 2001). According to several reports, it is obvious that most families in Tanzania, due to low income and poverty, do not have the possibility to adequately support the education of their children (e.g. World Bank, 2004; Linderboom, 2005).

In homes where the parents have to struggle for their daily living and food, it is likely and understandable that literacy interest and activities are not in the foreground. But the consequences are also obvious. In such context, children do not get models of reading and writing and the home environment is not stimulating and supportive of literacy activities. Further, family structure, especially in developing nations, has been accorded as one of the factors for literacy skills problems (World Bank, 2004; Linderboom, 2005). In single parent families, the parent might not have

the possibility to use time for guidance of the children's literacy development. The struggle for the survival of the parent and family takes all the available time and resources. A single parent does not have the possibility to seriously support the education of the child in terms of, for example school materials and literacy coaching and interaction with the child. The consequence can be that the child feels isolated, less cared for, and as a result, the literacy development can be delayed.

Studies have also revealed that the cultures of the community mould the language of the child (Lybolt, & Gottfred 2003). This is realised through social interactions that the community directs the child's language along paths of the cultural practices of the community and the kind of language used to express those cultural activities in society. It is through such paths that children learn to express and demonstrate their cultural practices and develop their language communicative rules. In these interactions, children learn to correct their own errors in the use of different words for different purposes. These interactions also result in the total growth of the child's own language, experiences and mastery of the language principles even before they enter formal schooling (Morrow, 1990). In some cultures, the social interaction and communication are not optimal from the child's language development perspective and thus the language development can be delayed or problematic.

#### **2.4.1.3 Challenges Facing Teaching and Learning of Reading and Writing Literacy**

O'Connor and Geiger (2009) carried out a study in South Africa in Western Cape Town aimed at establishing the challenges facing primary school educators of English as second or other language learners. The study sample comprised of 100 educators from 21 schools. The educators were either grade 1, 2 or 3 teachers

(O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). They used a mixed-methods descriptive design, self-administered questionnaire and three focus groups for data collection.

Among the key findings on the challenges included: having large classes, large proportions, shortage of educators able to speak isiXhosa, the most frequently occurring first (or home) language of the learners. Other challenges faced by educators when teaching learners included learners' academic and socio-emotional difficulties and a lack of parent involvement in their children's education.

Each year since 2009, Uwezo has been undertaking a large scale survey of children and schools throughout Kenya, as well as in Uganda and mainland Tanzania. The objective of these surveys has been to provide an independent assessment on the extent to which children aged six to sixteen years are actually learning, as well as to collect data about the characteristics of government primary schools across the country.

Jones (2012) did an analysis focusing on the Uwezo survey findings on the characteristics of government primary schools across Kenya. He used data covering nearly three thousand and five hundred schools, which were representative at the district level. From the analysis, it was revealed that there were several challenges faced by the government public schools in Kenya which included pupils and teacher absenteeism, large class sizes beyond the recommended forty pupils per class. The arid regions in Kenya had more challenges especially in retention of both the teachers and the students. These regions had especially difficulty attracting and retaining experienced head teachers. Jones' (2012) analysis did not implicitly relate these challenges with the evidenced low academic achievement especially in reading literacy.

Bunyi (2006) in the paper commissioned for EFA Global Monitoring Report, advanced several challenges facing development of literacy in Kenya. Among the challenges is introducing children to literacy in three languages simultaneously – in mother tongue, Kiswahili and English which do not promote fast or effective reading literacy acquisition. Further, she adds that, majority of Kenyan children do not enrol in any ECDE programmes. In addition, the Pre-primary syllabus does not directly teach reading and writing, yet there is an unofficial requirement that Standard one children are able to read and write. Literacy development is not given adequate attention in teacher training programmes. For example, there is no special training for lower primary teachers who are expected to teach initial reading. Low morale and lack of commitment have also characterized the teaching profession for a long time. Gender insensitive and child unfriendly school environments are yet other contributory factors. Free primary education has compounded the quality issues with issues such as very large classes and increased diversity of pupils and over age emerging.

#### **2.4.2 Empirical Studies from Tanzania**

There are numerous studies which were undertaken in the Tanzanian context that relate with the factors that hinder acquisition of reading and writing skills to young children. This studies focus on home environmental factors and school factors as well as measures to be taken to improve literacy skills to young children. Below are some of the studies conducted in Tanzania by various researchers on the same.

A study by Mtahabwa & Rao (2009) on observation of pre-primary education in Tanzania (rural & urban classrooms) among other findings, it mentioned some of the environment factors which hinder learning literacy skills in Tanzania. The factors

revealed by the study were poor quality of pre-primary education, inappropriate teaching approaches, inappropriate teacher-child interaction whereby teachers were seen to focus on academic skills. The study further proposed that children need to interact with various materials and their peers in learning as social interaction is the cornerstone of learning. The study by Mtahabwa and Rao focused on the practices of schools that may affect young children's literacy in general. Furthermore, the study did not take into account the contributing factors resulting from home environment.

Furthermore, a research by Uwezo (2013) revealed the problem of reading and writing in primary schools where by only 1 out of 4 children in Standard 3 could read a story in Kiswahili. With regard to Standard 7 pupils, only 8 out of 10 children could read and comprehend the story. This reveals a problem that a study at hand needed to investigate whether such factors are associated with school or home environment. Additionally, Kumburu (2011) did a study on the effectiveness of the short term literacy skills intervention on children at risk reading and writing difficulties in Tanzania.

The findings of the study show that, among the major challenges hindering children to acquire reading and writing skills were poor quality of education provision and lack of teaching and learning materials. Furthermore, the then MoEVT (2010) observed that, the home situation may hinder children in acquiring reading and writing skills. This is because, children are engaged in social economic activities like, farming, looking after animals, and taking care of their babies during school hours (MoEVT, 2010).

Another study was conducted by Tandika (2010). This study was about characteristics and quality of the literacy and numeracy teaching and learning

materials in the early childhood education. The findings of the study revealed that numeracy and literacy skills were not taught as required by teachers in most of the Tanzania pre-primary schools. According to the findings, most of the schools had no quality materials, were characterised by poor decision making on how to run literacy and numeracy skills and shortage of qualified teachers to teach in all schools in the country. Finally, the study suggested that education planners and decision makers ensure that there is proper selection, availability and utilization of materials for the better performance in learning.

Another study was conducted by Mbise et al (2010). It focused on oral reading and writing Kiswahili language. The study was conducted in Bagamoyo in Tanzania. The findings of the study revealed that, most of the Tanzanian children were good in decoding and not speaking (comprehending) words in Kiswahili language. The study also revealed that, such children were able to read words aloud in Kiswahili but they failed to understand the message from those words. Furthermore, a study conducted by Tanzania Gender Network Programme (2001) observed that, tradition and culture contribute a lot for children's failure to acquire reading and writing skills because in some societies, children are involved in traditional initiation ceremonies during school hours.

A study by Cosmas (2015) that was conducted in Tanzania, apart from other issues, it revealed that the poor literacy and numeracy teaching in Tanzania is a product of many factors. The study findings depicted that, in many schools, learning environment is not conducive to teach and learn, lack of toilets, water and electricity and inadequate supply of teachers contribute to poor literacy and numeracy outcomes. Thus, if the government wants to improve literacy skills in a country,

should ensure all skills get enough materials, qualified teachers availability of water and electricity to mention a few.

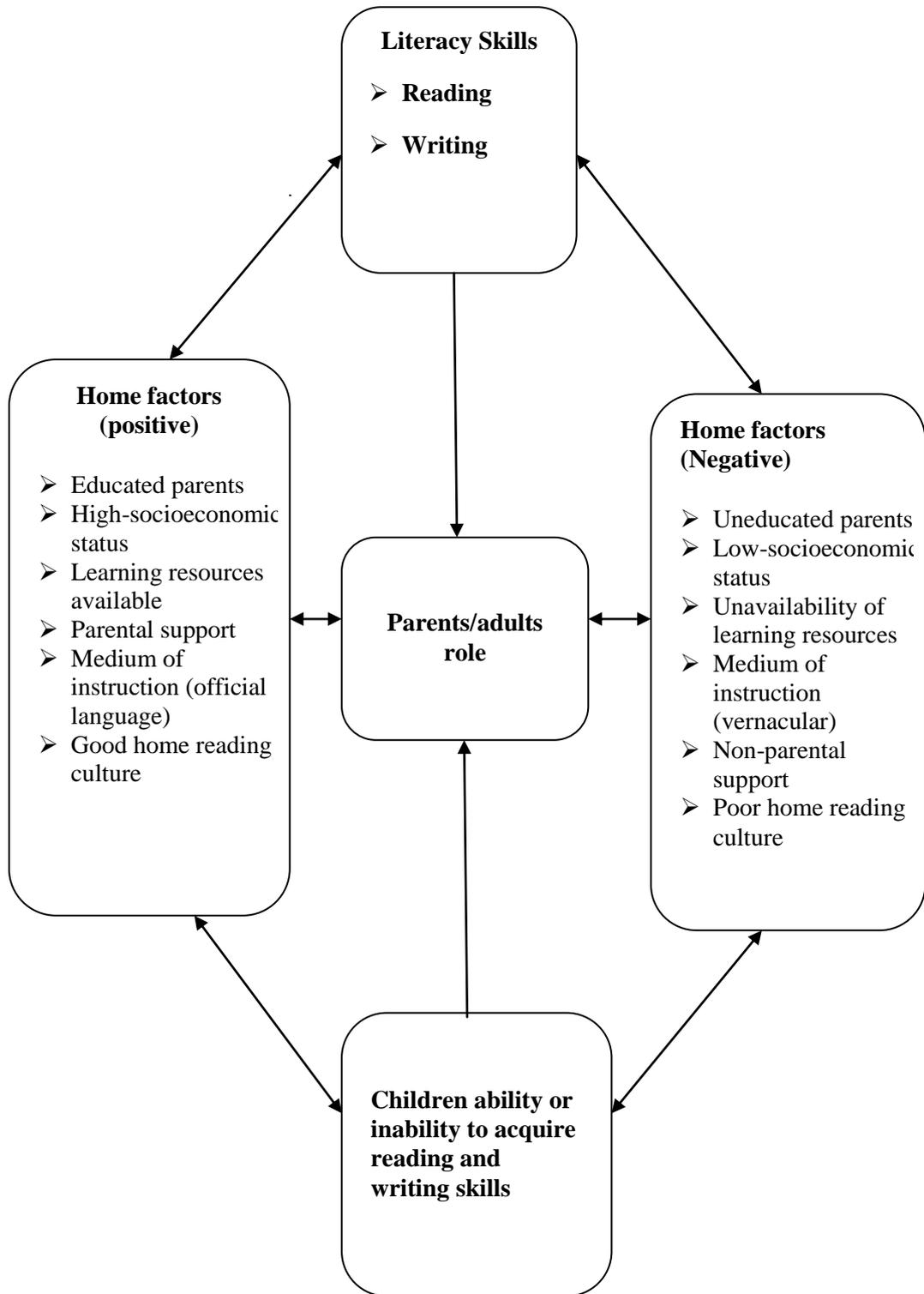
## **2.5 Synthesis of the Reviewed Literature and Research Gaps**

Generally, various literature reviewed worldwide has shown the importance of school-home environment on the development of writing and reading skills. However, many studies conducted in Tanzania tended to focus on the impact of home-school environment to learning and performance of the child in general (Kumburu 2011: Mwaura 2014). Furthermore many studies have concentrated on the effects of either home environment or school environment on reading and writing ability in Tanzania (Ngorosho 2011, UWEZO 2013, Kumburu 2011). There seems to be little literature that integrates the effects of home environment on the acquisition of reading and writing in Tanzania. Therefore, the current study was designed to bridge this gap.

## **2.6 Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatic representation of how variables interact. It Provides a clear concept of the areas in which meaningful relationship are likely to exist (Cargan, 2007).

**Figure 2. 1: The Conceptual Framework on Factors Influencing the Achievement of Basic Reading and Writing Literacy among School Pupils**



Source: Modified from Maxwell (2005)

Several factors interact during the process of developing reading and writing literacy skills among pupils. These factors include the extent to which parents create a conducive home environment and the pupils' characteristics. In Figure 2.1, the achievement in basic reading and writing literacy depend on the effective pupils' home environment. If there is a positive home environment, such as availability of books, exercise books, writing boards, other reading materials such as newspapers, reading cards as well as home reading culture, the child is likely to develop reading and writing abilities.

Despite the fact that a child may have a facilitative home environment, there must be an assistance of an adult who is an expert in order to help such child where he/she fails to acquire necessary skills. On the other hand, if there is no positive home environment, there is the likelihood of children to delay in developing reading and writing skills. One of the factors behind the facilitative home environment that may lead to delay in acquisition of reading and writing abilities in young children has to do with poor economy of the family that may lead to families' failure to buy necessary materials for supporting their children's reading and writing abilities.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter discusses research approach, research design, location of the study and its rationale, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, methods of data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Approach**

Research approach involves the way through which data are collected and analysed. It takes into account the nature or form of data collected and the way they are analysed. Creswell (2009) and Yin (2011) argue that, there are three types of research approaches employed by researchers in understanding an educational problem or phenomenon. These are quantitative, qualitative and mixed method research approaches. This study applied a qualitative research approach during data collection, analysis and reporting of the study findings. Creswell (2003) informs that, qualitative approach is an approach in which the enquirer generates knowledge based primarily on multiple meanings of individuals' experiences, which are socially and historically constructed (constructivist perspective) for developing a theory or pattern. Therefore, qualitative approach was mainly selected because it allows the researcher to acquire first-hand information from the participants on the factors affecting the acquisition of children reading and writing abilities in Tanzania. Further, the study proposed the use of qualitative approach because the approach is flexible in data collection and analysis (Walliman, 2007).

### **3.3 Research Design**

Research design is an arrangement of conditions for data collection and analysis in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. It is a blue print for collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari 2004). The current study employed a case study design.

The case study methodology fitted the needs of this study, which were to investigate the home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing to early grade learners in Tanzania. Stake (1995) states that; the aim of the case study research is to fully develop an understanding of the case at hand. Case studies are chosen because the research requires the close examination of people, topics, issues, or programmes (Hays, 2004). Each of the preceding items constitutes a case or what is termed a “bounded system.” A Bounded system is the term used to define the focal point of the study (Stake, 1995). The bounded units for this study were home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing in early grade learners in Tanzania.

Yin (2003) argues that, the system can be studied with one of the three types of case studies, depending on the purpose: exploratory case studies, explanatory case studies, and descriptive case studies. Exploratory case studies are often used to define the framework of a future study. In this type of case study, fieldwork and data collection are undertaken prior to the final definition of study questions and hypotheses (Yin, 2003). Explanatory case studies, seek to define how and or why an experience took place. Their purpose is to suggest “clues to possible cause-and-effect relationships” (Yin, 2003). Finally, the descriptive case study is used to develop a document that fully illuminates the intricacies of an experience (Stake,

1995). These are often used to present answers to a series of questions based on theoretical constructs (Yin, 2003).

The descriptive case study was chosen for this study for two main reasons. First, one of the goals of all case study research is to develop an understanding of the bounded system. The main purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing to early grade learners in Tanzania. Second, descriptive case studies answer questions based on theory. The descriptions of the factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing to be developed throughout the research process helped to define the theoretical constructs under which the acquisition of reading and writing abilities operate.

### **3.4 Location of the Study**

This study was conducted in Morogoro region, specifically in Kilosa and Mvomero Districts. Dawson (2002), comments that, the location of the study should have the required informants that have the required data and should be in the reach of the researcher in terms of expenses. Therefore, Kilosa and Mvomero Districts were selected as cases to represent other districts facing the challenges of reading and writing in Tanzania. Morogoro region was selected in reflection to the report by UWEZO, (2013) Morogoro is one of the regions with moderate illiteracy rate where some of its districts perform better while some of them underperform. Therefore, this study focused on investigating the reasons for underperformance of the districts.

Mvomero and Kilosa were selected because they are among the districts that are underperforming in reading skills (UWEZO 2013). Mvomero and Kilosa are among the districts with below 50% of their children who know how to read. While Kilosa had 38.1% of its children aged 9-13 with the ability to read Kiswahili text, Mvomero

had 30.3 % (UWEZO 2013). Therefore, these districts were good areas to investigate the factors attributing to such problem.

### **3.5 Target Population**

According to Nkipa (1991) the study population refers to the population to which the researcher intends to generalize his or her findings. The population of this study involved parents, early grade teachers as well as early grade learners. Parents were selected to participate in this study because they are regarded as the first teachers of children at home and that the preparation of fruitful home environment accelerates good learning of young children. Furthermore, parents were selected to be involved in this study because they are the ones who act as the early teachers of emergent literacy such as reading, writing who teach their children at their early stages prior to their joining formal education. Thus, parents know a lot of issues about their children; hence it was thought possible for the researcher to get relevant data from them.

Teachers were selected to be involved because are the ones who know better what is in the curriculum and whether the contents found in the curriculum enable children to know how to read and write properly or otherwise. Therefore, they can be in a better position to help in suggesting the best home factors and what environment parents can create that can help children acquire reading and writing abilities easily.

The population selected to be involved in this study therefore, was appropriate to provide data that could answer the research questions and hence meeting its objectives.

### **3.6 Sample Size**

According to Kothari (2002) a sample is a small group drawn from the larger population a researcher is interested in gaining information from and draw conclusion about the universe, if randomly obtained. It is a small group of research participants drawn from a population which the researcher is interested in gaining data and drawing conclusions (Walliman, 2007; Yin, 2011). Literature shows that qualitative studies usually use small samples of the research participants so as to study the topic of the interest in details. In addition, qualitative researches are not interested in the number of participants but they are interested in the data saturation (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2011). Thus, when the saturation point is reached, there is no need for a researcher to add more samples as they will provide the same data (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, the sample size in the current research was determined by the saturation of the data.

### **3.7 Sampling Techniques**

Dooley (2008) defines sampling as a selection of a part of the total population to represent the whole. Moreover, Sarantakos (1998) elaborates sampling as a procedure employed by the researcher to select some elements of population in such a way that it represents the actual characteristics of the total population. There are two types of sampling procedures namely, probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Yin, 2011). According to Nkpa (1997), probability sampling is one in which chance factors determine which element from the population will be included in the sample. On the other hand, on-probability sampling is one whereby the probability of a member of population being selected cannot be calculated. The study at hand used simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques as explained below.

### **3.7.1 Purposive Sampling**

Cohen *et al* (2007) argue that, purposive sampling is the process by which researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their possession of the particular characteristics being sought. This means, the sample is included for specific purpose. In this study, purposive sampling was used to select early grade teachers. Early grade teachers were chosen because they are the ones teaching standard one and two and have close relationships with parents as well as pupils which results to accessing pupils' information at home and school environment. Therefore, they helped in reaching the parents for interview and group discussion since they had all necessary information regarding children' parents.

### **3.7.2 Simple Random Sampling**

Data were collected from the four selected schools in Mvomero and Kilosa Districts found in Morogoro region. Two schools were selected from Mvomero district and the other two schools were selected from Kilosa District. The schools from each district were selected based on the geographical location of the area. One school was from the centre and another one from the peripheral. This enabled the researcher to come up with similarities and differences of the factors that may hinder children's learning in urban centres and in peripheral areas of the selected districts.

Simple random sampling method was used to select parents. From each primary school, children were randomly sampled from the list provided by teachers. Then, parents of the sampled children were selected to participate in this study. With the assistance of the class attendance registers, the student's names were written and assigned with serial numbers. These serial numbers were folded and placed in the

boxes named boys and girls. The researcher and the teacher picked up the pieces from the box respectively. The selected papers were opened and the parents' names from the students' selected were registered as the sample for the research. Simple random sampling was used because this technique increases the likelihood of all parents in the sampled schools to be involved in the study. Moreover, through random sampling method parents of different demographic characteristics had chances of being involved in the study.

### **3.8 Methods of Data Collection**

In this study, both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were collected through focused group discussion and interviews. In addition, secondary data were collected through reviewing various documents including primary education curriculum, students' test/examination results and children's attendance report.

#### **3.8.1 Interviews**

In this study, semi-structured interview was used to collect first-hand information through probing deeper into participants' feelings, opinions, experiences and perspectives in relation to the children's reading and writing abilities in their area of jurisdiction. The interview was conducted in Kiswahili language and the researcher translated it into English language because the researcher intends to publish the paper internationally. Yin (2011) argues that semi-structured interviews allow discussion to flow between the interviewer and the interviewees. Thus, semi-structured interviews allow free and detailed discussions between the researcher and the research participants during the interview session and hence it is possible for the researcher to obtain detailed data on the topic in question. Basing on their advantages, semi-structured interview were used to get data from parents and early

grade teachers. Information from parents was related to the effects of home environment on acquisition of the children's reading and writing skills.

### **3.8.2 Focused Group**

The study gathered data through focused group discussion whereby one group was for the parents whose pupils were in standard one and the other group was for the parents with pupils in standard two. The groups involved parents of different status. Specifically, parents gave their views on the home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing to young children (early grade learners).

A focused group discussion is a type of in-depth interview accomplished in a group whose meetings presents characteristics defined with respect to the proposal, size, composition and interview procedures. It consists of small groups of people who are brought together by the researcher to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a specific topic (Denscombe, 2007). The focus or objective of analysis is in the interaction inside the group. The participants influence each other through their answers to the ideas and contributions during the discussions. The moderator stimulates discussion with comments or subjects. The fundamental data produced by these techniques are the transcripts of the group discussion and the mediator's reflections and annotations.

The method is led by a mediator who introduces the topic, asks specific questions, controls deviations, and stops (break-away) conversations. The facilitator makes sure that no one person dominates the discussion whilst trying to ensure that each of the participants makes contributions. The method is said to be advantageous because participants ask questions to each other lessening the impact of research bias. Also, they produce qualitative data that provide insights into the attitude and opinions of

the participants (Patton, 2002). Focus group discussion can be recruited through random selection if all participants came from a large definite group (Wong, 2005). According to Eliot & Associate, (2005) 6- 12 numbers of the participants are recommended to be involved in the Focus Group Discussion, fewer than six participants tend to limit the conversation while more than the number limits other participants to participate in the discussion. A Focus group discussion needs to be large enough to generate rich discussion but not so large for some participant left out. In this study, four groups from each school with the parents whose pupils were in class one and two were selected to be involved in focus group discussion. In this study, 8 groups were formed and each group had 9 parents. Two groups were formed per school whereby one group was for parents whose children were in standard one and the other group was for parents whose children were in standard two. With the teacher's assistance, the researcher randomly selected the names of the parents from the list of the interview selected previously. The names of the parents were written on a paper and every 3<sup>rd</sup> parent was selected to be involved in the FGD. The similar group of parents who were involved in the interview was also selected to participate in the FDG because it was expected to enable the researcher to get detailed information and deep insight from the participants (Wong, 2005). Also, it created the environment for the participants to thoughtfully answer questions in their own words and add meaning to their answers.

### **3.8.3 Documentary Review**

Blessing and Chakrabarti (2009) argue that, retrieving documents related to a particular project, topic or product from a variety of sources can be a very useful additional data collection method. Documentary review is a type of qualitative investigation involving the study of written communications that are found in the

field setting. Gall *et al.* (2005), point that documents, both historical and contemporary are a rich source of data for a social research.

This method was employed to obtain data from documented sources. Among the reviewed documents included the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 1995 and 2014 that enabled to relate the relevance of what should be involved in the curriculum as well as the content to be included in the syllabi. Also the syllabi for pre-primary and primary education (2014) were revised to find out the relevance of what learners learnt in pre- primary and primary school level. The schemes of work and lesson plans prepared by teachers in class one and two were revised to find out if the strategies used reflect the curriculum. Other documents included learners' books, and hands on activities done by the learners such as drawings. The researcher critically examined and took notes on important information from those documents. Such information helped to establish the home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing skills to young children.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

#### **3.9.1 Qualitative data**

Cohenet al. (2007) argue that, qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data. In short, it means making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. Dawson (2002) argues that, data analysis in qualitative research takes place through data collection process. Therefore, all data analysis was done simultaneously with data collection process. The study applied Miles and Huberman's (1994) thematic qualitative data analysis, which involved three procedures of data reduction, data display, conclusion and verification.

Data reduction involves simplifying raw data obtained in the field through coding. Neuman (2006) argues that coding system is a set of instructions or rules on how to systematically observe and record content from text. Therefore, in this study all important constructs, themes, and patterns that emerged from semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and documentary review were coded as other procedures preceded by coding of data collected (Dawson, 2002).

Data display involves organizing of data for easy understanding. Miles and Huberman's (1994) assert that data display is a step further to conclusion drawing from data reduction through which the mass of data are displayed in the form of Tables, charts, and other graphics. Doing so helps to compare and contrast data in order to draw conclusions. In this study, the different values regarding the home factors affecting children's acquisition of reading and writing abilities were displayed accordingly in order to come with realistic conclusion. Drawing conclusions and verification involved creating meanings from the data collected and analysis of the themes and subthemes that emerged during data collection. In this study, thematic analysis was done in order to reach the conclusions and verification of the contribution of home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing to early grade learners. Dawson (2002) argues that themes emerge themselves from the data and are not imposed by the researcher. Therefore, themes were recorded by the researcher and analysed in relation to the research objectives and data to be gathered.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness and justifiability of data are words used in qualitative studies as equivalent to reliability and validity in quantitative studies. They are also named as

qualitative reliability and quantitative validity (Creswell, 2009). Trustworthiness enables the researcher to avoid biases in data collection and analysis (Yin, 2011). In this study, some strategies were employed to ensure credibility of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The first strategy which a researcher used to ensure credibility is to employ triangulation technique. Triangulation involves the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study (Cohen et al 2007). Interviews, focused group discussion and documentary review were used to collect data.

The study also employed back translation technique in order to maintain validity of the study findings. Chrisler and McCreary (2010) argue that back translation is the process of translating materials from its original language to different languages. This was done to simplify the process of communication. Therefore, in conducting semi-structured interviews, the guidelines in English were translated into Kiswahili for easy communication. Furthermore, the participants were given an opportunity to express themselves in whatever language they wish and where local language was necessary, the interpreter was involved.

Other strategies the researcher employed to ensure trustworthiness are transferability of data and to stay for a long time in the field so as to understand participants' beliefs, perception and experiences on children's reading and writing abilities in their local environment.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics refers to rules of conduct in research (Walliman, 2007). An ethic is a moral principle guiding conducts which are held by a group or even a professional (Wellington, 2000). In the field of research, several formal codes of conducts or ethics have been developed to guide all researchers in social science studies. A good

example of ethics developed to which require all researchers to observe in conducting research include voluntary participation of the respondents in the study, confidentiality, the need for the permission from the relevant authorities, anonymity and privacy of the research participants to mention a few. In order to ensure ethical conducts in this study, the following issues were done:

The researcher requested the research permit from all necessary authorities. First, the researcher requested an introduction letter from the University of Dodoma which stated the purpose of the study and introduced the researcher to Morogoro regional authorities. Second, the researcher requested the permit from the District offices, (Kilosa and Mvomero) in order to be recognized by the heads of schools, teachers and parents to conduct the research.

Informed consent was adhered to, as Neuman (2006) explains, a researcher should never coerce anyone into participating; participation must be voluntary at all times. In this study, the participants were requested and informed of the purpose of the study before their decision to participate. Furthermore, their participation was indeed voluntary at all times.

Furthermore, the data obtained were kept confidential. The data collected were used for the purpose of this study only, thus they were not disclosed anywhere than in the research report. In addition, the informants are kept anonymous. Neuman (2007) argues that keeping someone anonymous means protecting their identity from being known. Therefore, letters instead of personal names were used in the process of data analysis and presentation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA, PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings and discussions in relation to the objectives of the study. The objectives to be achieved were to identify some key home factors affecting children's acquisition of reading and writing skills in Tanzania, explore initiatives employed by parents' in improving children's reading and writing skills in Tanzania as well as establishing the best parents' initiatives on improving acquisition of reading and writing skills to children in Tanzania.

The demographic information are presented first, and then followed by descriptive and results according to the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

#### **4.2 Demographic Information of the Parents**

The study involved a total of 92 Participants, involving (80) parents and (12) teachers from four schools in two districts. Only 40 parents were involved in the interview while all 80 parents were involved in the FGD. The demographic information of respondents included age, gender, educational level and type of occupation. These are presented in the following sub-sections.

##### **4.2.1 Parents**

Parents who participated in this study were residents of Kilosa and Mvomero districts for not less than 15 years. Thus they had a social knowledge of culture and the surrounding environments. A peculiar feature of these parents was that different from the researcher's expectation. In both areas many females appeared for the interview as well as FDG. When the researcher asked them about their spouses, they said they were busy with other responsibilities.

**Table 4. 1: Background Information of the Parents**

Sex		Education Level	Occupation	
M	F		Formal employment	Informal employment
7	25	Primary Education	0	5
10	21	Secondary Education	2	2
4	8	Tertiary Education	1	1
2	2	Higher Education	2	0

**Source:** Field work (2017)

#### **4.2.2 Teachers**

In this study, the researcher involved a total of 12 teachers who were obtained from public primary school. Most of them were females indicating that teaching lower classes especially pre-primary, class one and two in Tanzania is still viewed as predominantly women's occupation. All teachers were teaching class one and two. Among them, 7 teachers were teaching standard one and the other 5 were teaching standard two.

**Table 4. 2: Background Information for Teachers**

Teacher	Sex	Marital status	Age	Years of work	Level of education	Class	No. of years teaching class one and two
1	M	Married	41	36	Certificate	I	34
2	F	Married	38	32	Certificate	II	29
3	M	Married	43	24	Certificate	I	21
4	F	Married	53	34	Certificate	I	32
5	F	Married	39	37	Certificate	I	28
6	F	Married	54	34	Certificate	II	34
7	F	Married	39	34	Certificate	II	34
8	F	Married	50	27	Certificate	II	24
9	F	Married	51	30	Certificate	I	36
10	F	Married	55	35	Certificate	I	31
11	F	Married	55	31	Certificate	II	32
12	F	Married	26	3	Certificate	I	02

**Source:** Field work (2017)

### **4.3 Key Home Factors Affecting Children’s Acquisition of Reading and Writing Skills in Tanzania**

This section presents and discusses home factors affecting children acquisition of reading and writing skills in Tanzania. To achieve this objective, data collection involved the use of interview as well as focused group discussion method to parents with pupils in standard I and II in public primary schools. First, parents were interviewed to elicit each individual’s views on home factors affecting reading and writing skills of young children. Then, two days later after the interview, parents were involved in a focused group discussion, where they got more chances to explain collaboratively and share experience with others.

During the interview with parents, several factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing skills to young children were reported by parents in varying magnitudes. It was revealed that, factors ranged from pupils related factors, parents related factors and materials related factors as well as teacher related factors as presented in details in Table 4.

**Table 4. 3: Home Factors Affecting Children Acquisition of Reading and Writing skills.**

Category	Home Factor	Freq	%
Parents related factors	- Poor parents follow up	26	65
	- Engaging pupils in many home activities	22	60
	- Poor parents supervision	14	45
	- Low parents income	12	30
	- Low parents education	14	45
	- Poor relationship between parents and teachers	06	15
	- Parents activities	06	15
Pupils related factors	- children plays and games	36	90
	- Watching television	14	35
	- Difficulties in learning	10	25
Teacher related factors	- Teachers not providing home work	14	35
Material related	- Lack of reading and writing material	24	60

**Source:** Field work (2017)

As presented in Table4.3, it can be seen that, the factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing skills to young children vary from parents related, pupils related, teachers related and material related.

#### **4.3.1 Parents Related Factors**

The data analysed from the interview with parents revealed that parents are the core aspects in helping children develop reading and writing abilities. This is because;

most of the factors mentioned by parents are to be solved by parents themselves. Therefore, failure of acquiring reading as well as writing skills may greatly be caused by parents at home environment. The major factors that received a great attention involved poor parents' follow-up (65%) and engaging pupils in many activities at home (60%). Other factors included low parents supervision and low parents education (45%) respectively. Further, low income of the parents was also reported to affect the acquisition of reading and writing skills with (30%) of the respondents. Other two factors that received a minimal attention involved poor relationship of parents as well as parents' activities (occupation) (15%). The detailed analysis is presented in the next part.

#### **4.3.2 Poor Parent's Follows ups**

The data gathered revealed that most of the parents are not making follows up of their children learning at school and therefore fail to provide support to their children. During the interview with parents two kinds of follow ups were pointed out. First parents spoke that, some of them did not make follows ups on pupil's progress at school. Therefore, they did not know the academic development of their children specifically their reading and writing abilities. On the other hand, other parents reported that parents were not making follows ups of what their children learning at school when they reach at home. Therefore, they were not able to provide any support to their children that would develop their reading and writing abilities.

One female parent illustrated that:-

*“Children's learning is built on parents' follow up at school and at home environment. Making follow-up at school helps to facilitate collaboration between parents and teachers that enables parents to give assistance to child at home. Therefore, parents will be in a good position to help the child according to the instructions given by the teacher” (17<sup>th</sup> March 2017).*

Another parent added that:"

*“Most of the children fail to read and write because their parents do not make follow-ups on what they learn at school. They do not know whether they have written something at school or not. They do not know whether they have attended school or not. In these circumstances, it is not easy for such parent to help the child to develop reading and writing skills” (18<sup>th</sup> March 2017).*

From the above contentions by parents, it can be argued that apart from school and teacher’s efforts in teaching reading and writing, parents agreed that, they were supposed to support the efforts done by the teachers. Lack of support and close follow-up by parents as well as other siblings at home, makes it difficult for children to reading and writing skills.

#### **4.3.3 Engaging Pupils in Many Home Activities**

The data collected from parents revealed that among other home factors hindering the acquisition of reading and writing to young children included parents’ engaging pupils in many home activities. Among the activities mentioned by parents included cooking, farming, keeping cattle and petty business. It was reported that when pupils came home from school, their parents would give them several activities to do and therefore, this was making pupils lack an ample time at home to do revision of what they had learnt at school. Thus the school remained the area where they met issues related to academic issues on the day to day basis

Furthermore, parents were of the view that, when children came from school, they needed time to rest because they are usually tired due the school activities. Therefore, when they rest, they will refresh their mind such that they would be ready to latter engage themselves effectively in studies. These parents also added that when their children came from school, they didn’t get time to rest because they would be engaged in other home activities that usually made them become more

tired thus failing to get time to engage themselves in reading and writing activities at home.

For example one male parent said that:

*“Children are engaged in income generating activities .When you walk around the streets after school hours, you will find many children selling groundnut bananas and other fruits. How do they get time for revision? Also when they are at home, they engage in other home activities and lack time for revision.” (Interview with male parent, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017).*

The quotation above by the parent reveals that not only at school do children need to learn; rather, they must also get time at home to make revision and study. But this was not done because they are were engaged in home activities which were making them t become more tired and thus lack enough time to make revision and engage in other reading and writing activities.

#### **4.3.4 Low Parent Education**

With regard to parents’ education 14 parents out equal to (45%) were of the view that, education was another home factor affecting the acquisition of reading and writing skills to young children. Parents were of the view that when parents are educated they have awareness of what is going on and how to help their children at home. On the other side, when parents are not educated, it becomes difficult for them to help their children at home. Therefore, parents’ education becomes one of the big factors which have positive or negative impact on children’s acquisition of reading and writing skills.

Some of the parents said that sometimes, it became it difficult for them to understand even what important materials that could help develop reading and writing skills for their children. Therefore, they failed to buy materials for their

children because of their low understanding of relevant materials for developing reading and writing skills. This adversely affects the process of helping their children at home.

In most cases, pupils who seemed to have good reading and writing results during documentary review revealed that, most of their parents were educated and were public servants. During the interview with one parent whose daughter was reported to perform better she had these to state:

*“My daughter is receiving help at home by her grandmother who is a retired teacher. Her grandmother has prepared a timetable for her and she always engaged in reading and writing accordingly after school hours” (female parent 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017).*

With the above parent’s statement, it can be seen that, parents who have education play an important role in helping their children develop appropriate reading and writing abilities. Parents with low or lack of education face difficulties in helping their children in reading and writing skills because of not understanding what exactly and how should they help their children.

#### **4.3.5 Income of the Parents**

The data from the interview with parents also revealed that the income level of parents is another home factor that affects’ the acquisition of reading and writing of young children. On this regard, parents argued that income is related to buying of relevant materials such as books, pencils and exercise books for children to make them revise what they have learnt. It was reported that parents who are good economically have the ability of creating conducive environment that can facilitate good reading and writing skills to their children including buying relevant textbooks, and exercise books. Further, parents reported that parents who are economically successful can also pay teachers to teach their children after school hours.

On this aspect, parents were also of the view that because of poverty, children are forced to engage in different activities after school hours in order to support the economy of the family and therefore lack opportunity to engage in reading and writing activities.

One of the parents asked:

*“I always engage in selling my labour to find money for food. The money I get is enough to fulfil the basic needs for my family. How can I get money to buy books for my children? While I have to buy food for them? I am the only provider for the family therefore, I cannot afford the burden of offering them some reading and writing materials at home” (Female parent 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017).*

This question was asked by the parent above is an evidence which shows that children coming from low economy families have a great possibility of lagging behind in reading and writing skills because their parents are not able to buy them materials which can make them learn how to read and write,

#### **4.3.6 Poor Relationship between Parents between Themselves**

It was also argued that the relationship between parents also affects the acquisition of reading and writing skills of young children. The reported relationship between parents is based on the fact that: when parents are in harmony, they can work together to help their children in reading and writing skills. On the other hand, it was reported that if parents are not in good harmony, it is difficult for them to work together and develop young children’s reading and writing skills. Additionally, parents talked of poor relationship between such as father and mother which was usually resulting to family disintegration and therefore making a child belong in a single parent family, something which made that one parent fail to make an effective or close follow up of her or his child’s schooling progress. On this aspect, parents also reported that, most of the children were staying with their grandparents who

were too old to take care of them. Also, the parents added that, most of the children who were staying with their grandparents were not performing better in reading and writing because they were not being assisted to learn at home. This assistance was not only limited to academic issues, , but it was also reported that most of the children staying with their grandparents lacked necessary materials such school uniform, school bags, shoes, exercise books and pencils something which was hindering their learning at school and a thus adversely affecting their reading and writing skills. Additionally, parent respondents reported that in some cases, pupils who were staying with their fathers were the only children with poor attendances at school because fathers were usually busy with their activities and therefore, failed to make follow-ups on their children's attendance to school and as a result, they lacked reading writing skills because of absenteeism. On this aspect, it was argued that, female parents were the ones mostly taking a close and keen look at children's academic development whether at school or home. Thus it was argued that they were better at ensuring that their children got the reading and writing skills unlike the male parents who did not fulfil such a role by claiming that they were very busy with income generating activities.

#### **4.3.7 Parents' Activity/Occupation**

Six out of 40 (15%) parents were of the view that, parents' activities/ occupations was also one of the home factors affecting the acquisition or reading and writing of young children. They reported that some activities done by some of the parents did not provide them with an opportunity to help their children develop their reading and writing skills at home. Some of the parents reported that they were going to work in the morning and come back late at night when they were tired and their children were already asleep. Therefore, they lacked the time to pass through children's

exercise books to see what they had learnt at school and therefore provide necessary assistance where required. On this issue, one male parent said:-

*“I am a mechanic; I always wake up early in the morning to attend my job and get back home at late hours already tired. Therefore, it is difficult for me to get time to help my daughter in school matters. I have never passed through my daughter’s exercise books, but what I always do, is to ask her sisters and brothers to help her when she fails to read or write” (Interview with female parent 17<sup>th</sup> march 2017).*

With this expression, it can be argued that, parents who engage themselves in activities that make them come back home early can have time to help their children in the acquisition of reading and writing skills. On the other hand, parents whose activities force them to come back late at home do not have sufficient time to helping their children in acquisition of reading and writing skills.

#### **4.4 Pupils’ Related Factors**

During the interview with parents, it was highly reported that children themselves were also the cause of poor reading and writing skills because they allowed their children to engage much in plays and games after school hours (90%) and were those parents who gave their children more time to watch television (35%) rather than studying or making revision of what they had learnt at school. Another factor that was reported by parents involved some difficulty in learning by children themselves (25%).

##### **4.4.1 Engaging in Plays and Games**

It was reported by the parents that most of the children liked to engage too much in plays and games with their follows when they came from school. These plays and games were making them get tired thus sleeping too early and therefore lacking time to make revision of what they had learnt at school. Further, they lacked the time to

ask help from their parents or siblings what they had learnt at school but did not understand. Despite this fact, most of the parents regarded this factor as a problem related to children themselves.

Among the plays and games that were reported by parents involved playing football for boys and “rede” for girls. Therefore, it was revealed that the more children spent much time playing at home rather than studying, the more it resulted into such children’s poor acquisition of reading and writing skills. On this issue parent had this to say:

*“Usually, after our children arrive from school, they engage in different plays and forget about school. They go to play far away from home, when they come back they are tired and too late for them to engage in learning activities. For this situation, they perform poor in reading and writing”. (Interview with female parent 18th March 2017).*

Another one added:

*“Children play too much after school hours. They cannot take trouble to read by themselves unless they are supervised. Sometimes we parents lack time to supervise them due to poor learning motivation among parents” (interview with male parent 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017).*

All of the two contentions by the parents prove that parents regard children play and games at home as one of the factors that affect the acquisition of reading and writing skills. Therefore, if supervision is done and pupils get time for self-reading and writing exercises, they can develop good reading and writing skills.

#### **4.4.2 Watching Television**

Another pupil related factor that was reported by parents involved spending much of the time watching television. Parents reported that children were very much interested in watching television programmes rather than studying. On this aspect parents were of the view that if children could be spending much of their time

reading and writing on the same scale they were using that time to watch television they could have good reading and writing skills.

#### **4.4.3 Difficulty in Learning**

Another factor that was reported by parents was pupils' difficulty in learning. Parents reported that despite the fact that some pupils were given all the supportive materials, yet they could not read and write instead they focused much on plays and games. For example, one parent reported that she had had prepared good environment for his child including buying him books, and different reading writing materials but yet he could not afford reading and writing. On this aspect, other parents reported that they had taken their children to remedial classes known as tuition but still they could not manage reading and writing accordingly. Therefore, from this finding, it can be said that some children did not manage to write and read well despite the fact that they were given all the facilities by their parents.

#### **4.5 Materials related Factors**

Another striking home factor that was reported by parents involved lack of reading and writing material at home such as books pencils and exercise books. Parents argued that one of the home factors that was leading to poor reading and writing ability was the poor home environment which was made of lack of supportive materials that money with which to buy books and other materials Therefore, as a result pupils from such lacked the materials to make reading exercise as well as writing exercise. Apart from lack of money to buy materials, parents argued that they lacked awareness of the relevant materials which they could buy to facilitate reading and writing skills for their young children.

For example one parent said that:-

*“I do not have money to buy books for my child; therefore the book she receives at school is the one that she uses every day. If I were able to buy other books for making her practise writing and reading, they would assist my child in reading very well unlike she is doing now” (Interview with female parent 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017).*

Another parent added that:

*“At home children lack necessary books for them to read and improve their reading and writing abilities. Therefore, it is not easy for them to read and write easily, we a lack awareness on what books we should buy because there are many standard one and two books nowadays” (FDG with standard one parents 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017).*

With these responses from parents, it can be argued that pupils at home lack materials for improving their reading and writing because their parents do not have the ability to buy supporting materials for their children. Another, reason is that they are not aware of the relevant materials to buy in order improve the acquisition of reading and writing. Therefore, reading and writing abilities of young children remains at stake.

#### **4.5.1 Teacher related Challenges**

During the interview with parents, it was further revealed that another home factor, that was affecting children’s acquisition of reading and writing were the result of teachers’ problems at school. Parents reported that they were expecting to help their children at home relying on the directions from school. Therefore, parents reported that teachers were not giving their pupils’ home work (35%) is the factor resulting to pupil’s low acquisition of reading and writing abilities.

#### **4.5.2 Home Reading Culture**

During the discussion with parents, most of them agreed that home reading culture had impact on acquisition of reading and writing abilities to children. Parents were of the view that if at home there were other children who were schooling and at the

same time involving themselves in studying at home. This was seen to help them concentrate on reading and writing. Further, it was argued that, many families had poor reading culture and therefore pupils/children were not interacting in reading culture environment. With that reason it became difficult for children to acquire reading and writing abilities because they were not modelled by their parents and other members in their societies.

On this regard, one parent said:-

*“If there is no book at home and no one is engaging in reading at home, whether a Bible or Quran how do you expect a child to develop reading or writing interest? They see that this is normal life style and they grow that way, when they fail to read and write we ask ourselves why don't they know how to read and write? However we forget that they have grown in an environment which does not support reading or writing” (FGD with STD II parents 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017).*

Such argument from the FGD reveals that pupils learn from the role model and what they see. Therefore, when they see people at home involving themselves in reading and writing activities it is easy for them to engage in reading and writing activities at home. Therefore, if the home environment has good reading and writing culture it is easy for children to acquire reading and writing skills.

#### **4.5.3 Parenting Style**

Another home factor that was raised during the FGD was the issue of parenting. Parents reported that, some children failed to acquire reading and writing abilities because of poor parenting. It was argued that, children who were living with different parents such as stepmothers or fathers were being given more chores to do at home and therefore they lacked time to engage themselves in reading and writing activities. Parents further argued that parenting also had impacts on developing children reading and writing. Again, those children who were living with their

grandparents were reported to have low reading and writing abilities because their grandparents lacked financial abilities or academic abilities to help their grandchildren. In terms of financial matters, it was reported that their grandparents had no money with which to buy materials such as books, exercise books, pens and other materials so as to reading and writing skills for their grandchildren. For the case of academic support, it was argued that most of the grandparents had low or had no formal education and therefore, lacked sufficient skills to help their grandchildren in improving their reading and writing abilities.

The findings presented above are in line with different literatures within and outside Tanzania. For instance the study by Lehl, Smidt, Grosse & Richter, (2013) revealed that early literacy activities in family and preschool are considered important for promoting children's early reading literacy skills. Likewise, the current study revealed that for children to develop literacy skills especially reading and writing, the home environment must be well prepared in order to facilitate learning. On the other hand, the study by Chimombo et al (2000) in Malawi investigated classroom, school, and home factors that were thought to negatively affect girls' education. In this study, teachers and parents were interviewed on the factors they thought were affecting girls at school, home as well as classroom context. The study findings revealed that, parents were children's first teachers. Therefore, parents' knowledge of early childhood education, expectations and parenting style were seen as influencing children's functioning in ways to be reflected later in life. Further, the study revealed that cooperation between parents as well as teachers had influence on girls' education. The findings by Chimombo (2000) concur with the current study's findings in which the study suggested of teachers to be teaching their children at

home and that the parents who were teaching their children at home such children did better at school than those who were not taught at home.

The current study further revealed that parents were engaging their children in petty businesses at home. These study findings are also revealed by Chibombo (2000) in his study whereby he reports that, in most of African societies child labour is one of the factors which hinder the acquisition of reading and writing skills in young children. In rural areas boys become cow and goats herders while girls spend their time in child minding their siblings. The current study revealed that children were also being engaged in petty business and domestic activities such as selling vegetables, groundnuts, and herding animals especially cows and goats.

Another home factor that was revealed was the economic ability of parents as the home factors affecting young children's reading and writing abilities in Tanzania. It was revealed that because of the parents' lack of money with which to buy relevant materials for their young children it became difficult for them to make different practices and therefore lagged behind. Such findings are in line with the study by Lehl, Smidt, Grosse & Richter, (2013) who in their study, the themes of home environment affecting children reading and writing varied in terms of social economic status, parent's educational level and occupation, pre-school literacy and numeracy related activities as well as educational resources found at home. On their study they came to a conclusion that the social economic status of the family had direct impact to children learning and the effects were reported to be negative to low social economic status while positive ones to the family with high social economic status.

Not only that but also the study by Eivers et al. (2010) on primary schools in Ireland, revealed that lower pupil achievement was linked to a number of demographic characteristics, including familial low socioeconomic status (SES) and parental unemployment as some of the factors that resulted to poor reading and writing abilities of young children. It was reported that those children who were coming from low social economic status had low ability of reading and writing. Further, unemployed parents were reported to be busy finding what the families could consume and therefore lacked the time to help their children at home as a result; they developed poor reading and writing abilities at school. This is further supported by several reports on the researchers conducted by the World Bank in Tanzania that due to low income and poverty, most families in Tanzania do not have the possibility to adequately support the education of their children and therefore, this results to failure in achieving literacy and numeracy to young children (World Bank, 2004; Linderboom, 2005).

Another home factor that was revealed in this study involved children' parenting style, where it was reported that some children were living with their grandparents or were living with only single parents. It was reported that those children living with their grandparents lacked academic support as well as material support. Therefore, they lagged behind in reading and writing. Furthermore, those children who were living with single parents were reported to lack close supervision at home as well as at school and this was greatly reported to be the case with male parents, while to female parents it was reported that they lacked necessary materials to serve their children. Such results are in line with the study findings by Mudziwana, (2014) who reported that in single parent families, the parent might not have the possibility to use time for guidance of the children's literacy development. The

struggle for the survival of the parent and family took all the available time and resources. A single parent therefore cannot have the possibility to seriously support the education of the child in terms of for example, school materials and literacy coaching and interaction with the child. The consequence can be that the child feels isolated, less cared for, and as a result the literacy development can be delayed.

Likewise, the study in Tanzania by Ngorosho, (2011) shows that family's socio-economic situation and literacy support are important. Indicators like parents' education, house wall material, the amount of schoolbooks at home and parental involvement in school homework were found to be significant predictors of reading and writing ability.

Furthermore, the findings by MoEVT (2010) also proved that, Children in Tanzania perform poor in reading and writing skills because they are engaged in social economic activities like, farming, looking after animals, and taking care of their babies during school hours (MoEVT, 2010).

Dewey believed that, children are active being, eager to interact and explore the world. Therefore, to enable them to explore the world, encourage learning, interaction with peers, materials are necessary. Vygotsky (1978) added that, learning is enhanced when interacting with more knowledgeable others. The current research revealed the reality also that parents' education and the availability of materials have a great impact on reading and writing abilities in Tanzania.

From the above discussion it is evident that the current study findings are in line with other studies done in the world investigating the factors affecting reading and

writing abilities of young children. Therefore necessary initiatives/measures are to be taken in order to improve the situation.

#### **4.6 Initiatives Employed by Parent in Improving Children’s Reading and Writing Skills in Tanzania**

Data to this objective was collected via interview and FGD with parents. During the interview as well as focused group discussion, it was revealed that several initiatives were being employed by parents at home in order to improve their children’s reading and writing skills. Among the reported initiatives done by parents included providing regular homework, inspecting pupils books, tuition, making close follow up, buying books and materials and helping them via their brothers and sisters when they failed in what they were doing. These initiatives are as presented in Table 4.4

**Table 4. 4: Initiatives Taken by Parents to Improve Reading and Writing skills**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Quotation</b>
Regular home work	I do provide him with home work immediately as he arrives from school, this helps him be able to read and write.
Inspecting pupils books	As you inspect what they have learnt you know what they are learning and how best you can help them.
Tuition	I am always busy, Tuition teacher help much to improve their learning.
Close follow up	Supervision is the only means which improve their reading and writing skills.
Buying books and other materials	When children have reading and writing materials they are in a good position to improve their reading and writing skills.
Help from their elder brothers and sisters	I always tell their brothers and sisters to help them where they fail at school.

**Source:** Field Work (2017)

#### 4.6.1 Regular Home Work

During the interview with parents it was revealed, that 12 parents out of 40 ( ) were of the view that they were providing regular home works to their children especially when they were coming from school as one of the means of improving their reading and writing abilities. Parents argued that when children came back from school they immediately became engaged in writing numbers or writing what they had learnt at school. They were also reading different materials available in the home environment. This was reported to be one of the initiatives they were using in improving pupils' reading and writing at home.

Likewise, during the FGD, parents had the same view that providing works to do at home was one of the initiatives done by parents to improve the acquisition of reading and writing of their children. For example, in improving the acquisition of reading and writing of their children parents said that; without engaging pupils/ children in regular reading and writing activities at home, it became difficult for them to develop their reading and writing skills. During the FGD one parent pointed out that:-

*“I make sure that when my children have the afternoon lunch, they sleep and as they wake up, they find some works to do. They know, and they ask for it immediately as they wake up. This has helped my children to improve their reading and writing skills” (FGD) with standard two parents” (22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2017).*

From the explanations given by parents as well as the contention by the parents, it can be argued that, when children at home are provided with regular works to do, it is possible that they can improve their reading skills because they revise what they have learnt at school. Furthermore, providing them with home activities helps to keep them busy and thus reducing much time they spend on playing and watching television.

#### 4.6.2 Inspecting Pupils' Exercise Books

Another initiative that was addressed by parents involved inspecting pupil's exercise books when they come back home from school. On this particular regard, parents argued that inspecting pupil's exercise books helped parents understand what their children had learnt at school and the challenges such children were encountering in learning thus making them be in a good position to give them assistance where needed. Additionally, parents reported that when they inspected pupils' exercise books, they got to know how their children were being taught and therefore they could help them according to the instructions given by the teachers. During the FGD, parents argued that, inspecting pupils exercise books had several advantages such as knowing the books used in learning at school so that parents may buy for their children .Also they added that, it helps the parents to know pupil's attendance at school and therefore work collaboratively with teachers to develop reading and writing abilities to their children.

For example during the interview one parents reported that:-

*"I always inspect my child's exercise book; I know what she has learnt. I ask her to make corrections on what she has done wrong and teachers are happy with me. But also my child is improving because she get assistance from home as well as school" (Female parent 19<sup>th</sup> March 2017).*

Another one added that:-

*"Inspecting children's exercise book at home helps us to know whether a child has attended school and you can monitor the progress as you identify the areas of strength and weaknesses. But also you can buy books which are used in learning at school and teach her in advance" (FGD STD I parents 23rd March 2017).*

From the above quotations from the two parents, it is evident that parents are of the view that among the initiatives they take is inspecting pupils exercise book and they can yield positive results especially on reading and writing skills of young children

because they get the opportunity of helping their children at home especially to areas where they have failed to understand at school.

#### **4.6.3 Tuition**

During the discussion with parents it was argued that they use tuition as one of the strategies for improving reading and writing to young children. To them tuition was in two forms: first it involved using of teachers teaching standard one and two classes as well as other teachers teaching children in different centres. Parents were of the view that because of being busy with daily activities that is why they looked for the alternative which was taking their children to tuition centres. Others reported that they were taking their children to tuition centres and they were taking that as an initiative because they were lacking necessary skills for teaching reading and writing. Therefore, the tuition centres were regarded as places where they could be helped with developing reading and writing skills. On this aspect, one of the parents had the following views:

*“I take my children for tuition because I believe there they can get assistance of developing reading and writing. This is because they receive help from skilled and knowledgeable people than me. Therefore, I believe that they are in the best position to help my children more than I do. After all I am paying them some money. Therefore, I can question and supervise the process very easily”  
(Interview 18th March 2017).*

With these explanations by the parent, it is revealed that most of the parents were taking this initiative because they believed that they would get an important person who would shoulder their burden after class hours. Not only that but also the issue of knowledge increase for their children in this case. This is because, some parents lacked necessary skills of helping their children develop reading and writing skills. In this context, tuition teachers became important personnel to help the development of reading and writing the young children on behalf of their parents.

Apart from lack of the necessary skills in reading and writing as a reason of parent taking their children tuition centres, parents were also known to be . For example one male parent illuminated that:

*“It is difficult for me to get time to sit down with children and help them to learn apart from what they get from school. Therefore, I opt to take them to tuition centres so that they may learn. Also get an opportunity to engage in learning activities than playing too much” (Interview 19th March 2017).*

As the parent reported, this initiative was being taken in order to help even those parents who were busy in their activities or jobs. Therefore, parents who lacked time of helping their children fully filled this noble responsibility through engaging their children in tuition. Not only was this the case with parents but also as it was reported that children were taking too much time playing, therefore that was the reason why their parents were taking them to tuition centres to reduce the time they spent on playing therefore making them concentrate on learning how to read and write or do other relevant learning activities.

#### **4.6.4 Close Follow up**

During the interview with parents, it was revealed that one of the other initiatives parents took involved close follow up of their children at home as well as at school. Parents were of the view that they were following the progress of their children at school in order to know how to help them. Furthermore, parents argued that they were making close follow up of what their children were learning at school in order to help them in areas in which they found their children had failed. Parents were of the view that when children are supervised by closely monitoring their progress every day it became easy for them to put much energy for themselves also and therefore improving their reading and writing abilities. On this aspect, parents argued that when pupils knew that the parents were not taking time to make follow

up on what they were learning at school they did not bother to put initiatives in learning at school as well as at home.

Not only that but also parents argued that close follow-ups helped to stop pupils' absenteeism at school since children knew that when they arrived at home they would be required to submit what they had learnt at school. On the other hand, parents reported that those parents who were closely following up their children's progress, it was difficult for them to improve their learning. Further, it was argued that without making close follow up, it was difficult to stop pupils' absenteeism as some of the pupils were moving from home claiming that they were going to school but did not get and therefore they did not engage in the learning process.

#### **4.6.5 Buying books and other reading and Writing Materials**

Another initiative that was reported by parents during the discussion was buying books for improving reading as well as writing abilities of young children at home. Parents reported that they were buying books for their children as an initiative to help them improve reading and writing. Not only books were reported by parents as an initiative, but also other materials such as writing boards, pencils and exercise books for children to practise writing on. These materials helped children develop reading and writing abilities since as they were involved in writing as well as reading. For example one parent said that:

*“I buy different materials for my children that support their reading and writing. I am also encouraged with their good performance in reading and writing” (Interview male parent 19th March, 2017)*

From the claim given by the parents it can be argued that parents were using different materials that enabled their children develop writing skills as an initiative that made them develop reading abilities on the other side.

Despite the fact some parent reported buying materials as the initiative they were using in developing children's reading and writing there were some of the parents who reported of being in need of buying books as well as other materials but they failed because they lacked money with which to buy those materials. On this particular regard, one parent reported that:

*“Buying books for children is one of the initiatives I do but they are insufficient because of my economic capacity. I fail to buy sufficient materials for them, but those I afford buying for them they help them very much on developing their academic abilities especially reading and writing” (FDG with male parent 22nd March 2017).*

As it was reported by the parent above, regardless of their economic ability, parents were struggling to buy relevant materials for their children in order to make them improve their reading and writing abilities. Therefore, most of the parents were of the view that buying books as well as materials was the initiative that they were using so as to improve the reading and writing abilities of young children.

#### **4.6.6 Help from Elder Brothers and Sisters**

Another initiative that was reported by parents involved requesting elder brothers and sisters to help their young brothers and sisters improve their reading and writing abilities. Parents argued that because they were busy with other activities including being tight in their jobs, they were asking the siblings available at home to make sure that they helped their young brothers and sisters studying standard one and two improve their reading and writing. Among the siblings that were reported to help young children with reading and writing involved those who were studying the upper classes such as standard five up to seven and those who studying in secondary schools. Furthermore, those children who reported to do well in class in the reading and writing skills were reported to be helped by their brothers and sisters if not their

mothers. Fathers were reported to help their children very rarely on this aspect one parent remarked:

*“My children help each other in learning. In most cases, when I am tired my daughters who study in secondary schools take an active role of helping their young brother. This is a good substitute of parents who are busy with family matters and fail to get time to help their children in learning”. (Interview 19th March 2017).*

From the above argument given by the parent it can be summed up that parents use the available educated siblings at home as one of the initiatives to help young children develop reading and writing abilities at home. The findings presented above in one way or another concurs with the studies done worldwide as well differing from some of such studies’ The current study revealed several initiatives taken by parents such as providing regular home work to children, inspecting pupils’ exercise books, close follow up, tuition, buying books and other materials as well as requesting elder brothers to assist their young brothers and sisters. The current study findings are in line with different study findings and theories. For example, Vygostky, (1978) believed that a child learns from the assistance of an expert. Dewey (1988) believed that, children are active beings who are eager to interact and explore the world. Therefore, to enable them explore the world, encouraging learning, interaction with peers and materials is necessary. Vygosky (1978) added that, learning is enhanced to children when they interact with more knowledgeable others.

Parents follow ups was also reported as an initiative that parents took in order to improve reading and writing abilities of young children. Likewise the findings of the study by Chimombo (2000) are in line with the current study findings which reported that, parents’ follow up of their children’s development at school enhanced development of their children specifically their reading and writing abilities.

On the other hand the study findings by Vazir & Ismail (2009) concurs with the current study findings in the aspect of buying materials necessary for improving young children reading and writing abilities. Vazir & Ismail (2009) explained about the environment in which young children can acquire literacy skills whereby teachers, adults and caregivers need to prepare readymade materials which will foster active participation in reading and writing activities, materials such as readymade black booklets, draft papers markers and pens are necessary for young children to make them learn how to read and write. Vazir & Ismail (1995) contend that, children learn by ‘doing’. Doing is about taking meaningful activities which are relevant to children’s lives. Likewise the current study reported that parents were buying materials such as books, pencils and exercise books aiming at assisting young children develop reading and writing abilities.

#### **4.7 Best Initiatives Suggested by Parents**

Data to this objective were collected through interview as well as FDG with parents. During the interview with parents, it was revealed that most of the parents were of the view that teacher-parent cooperation, remedial classes as well as schools lending books to parents for helping their children at home were the best initiatives for improving reading and writing of young children. More details are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. 5: Best Initiatives Suggested by Parents on Improving Children’s Reading and Writing Abilities**

<b>Best Initiative</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
Borrowing books from schools	35	87.5
Remedial Classes	32	80
Teacher-parent relationships	27	67.5
Inspecting Pupils’ exercise books	18	45
Preparing reading and writing timetable at home	18	45
Teaching Children at home	14	35

**Source:** Field work (2017)

As presented in the Table 4.4 interview with parents revealed that borrowing books from school which was supported by 35 (87.5%) respondents remedial classes which was supported by 32 respondents (80%), and Teacher-parent relationship which was supported by 27 (67.5%) were the leading best initiatives in improving reading and writing to young children. Furthermore, other initiatives that received attention as the best initiatives in improving young children reading and writing abilities by parents included inspecting pupils’ exercise books which was supported by 18 respondents (45%), preparing reading and writing timetable at home was equally supported by 18 (45%) and teaching children at home was supported by 14 respondents (35%).

#### **4.7.1 Borrowing Books from Schools**

During the interview with parents, it was revealed that the best initiatives that could improve children’s reading and writing ability were to borrow books from school. On this aspect, parents were of the view that if schools had enough books they would help parents get some relevant materials through borrowing them from school. Parents argued that they would like to have the required books that were

being used at school since they made clear and relevant instructions to their children. Despite the fact that parents saw this as the best initiative to improve reading and writing at home, it was argued that even schools themselves did not have enough books for school uses. Parents reported that even if they went to borrow a book from the school they found that the school itself had insufficient books therefore it became difficult for them to get such books from the schools. On this aspect one parent argued that:

*“Schools do not have enough books. Therefore, it is impossible for us to borrow books from them and help our children. However, if it were possible to borrow such books, from the schools this could be the only solution that could enhance cooperation in helping children at both home and school environment. Therefore, schools should be equipped with enough books that can be easy for parents to borrow for their children to develop reading and writing skills.” (Interview with female parent 18th March 2017).*

On this aspect, parents were of the view that the best initiatives were to have a system that allowed schools to lend reading and writing books to parents so that they could help their children at home. These books should be returned at the end of the term. This could help parents have relevant materials to use in helping their children. Additionally, parents argued that they regarded this as the best initiative to be employed because it was likely to help even those parents from low income backgrounds on the view that they would have an opportunity to borrow books and help their children at home.

Therefore, apart from helping parents, this could enable all children have equal opportunity of engaging themselves in reading and writing activities regardless of their family background. Not only that but also teachers would get an opportunity to give assistance and directions to children on the important matters which parents at

home would need to put emphasis on hence having a joint effort in helping children succeed in their reading and writing enterprise.

#### **4.7.2 Remedial Classes**

Remedial class was defined by parents as the classes after normal class hours that are to be conducted by teachers at school. Parents reported that when they were called at school during parents' meetings they discussed a lot of issues. Among the reported issues that were being discussed in those meetings was about helping children who were lagging behind in reading and writing abilities. Therefore, one of the strategies they were always agreeing upon with each other was the use of remedial classes. Parents reported that after normal class hours those children, who have low ability in reading and writing, were usually remaining behind at school for at least one to two hours in order to be helped by teachers. But also they reported that if they were coming in the afternoon session, they were always required to come early in the morning in order to receive assistance from the school. Remedial class was reported as an initiative used by parents because it was helping children get more practices at school which they could not receive at home.

One male parent during the FGD reported that:

*“Teachers know very well the academic development of every pupil in their class. Therefore, we always discuss with them to have remedial classes for those who do not know how to read or to write. We do contribute some money for our teachers to help them because they work beyond the normal school timetable. This helps much those who are lagging behind and at the end they develop necessary abilities of reading and writing” (FGD with standard one female parent 21st 2017).*

From the expression by the parent it can be seen that parents invest much to teachers in helping children develop reading and writing more than they do by themselves. This shows that there is still a lot to do in order to enable parents take a very active

role especially at home in helping their children develop appropriate reading and writing abilities.

#### **4.7.3 Teacher parents Relationships**

Another best initiative that was reported by parents involved teacher-parent relationship. Parents reported that the relationship between teachers and parents was the best initiative to be adopted in order to improve reading and writing of young children. It was reported that teachers knew very well the academic progress of young children more than parents. Therefore, they were in the best position to know and inform parents on on important matters they were to focus on in improving children' reading and writing abilities.

The teacher-parent relationship was considered best initiative because parents reported that teaching and learning of young children was a two sided process that required teachers and parents to cooperate in helping children achieve academic progress. Therefore, if parents and teachers would cooperate, it would be easy for children to develop reading and writing abilities. On this particular regard, one parent reported that:

*“Without cooperation between teachers and parents there is no way we can improve children’s academic performance . As parents, we expect much from teachers and teachers expect much from us parents. When we discuss with teachers we get information about our children and it help us to work upon the challenges we have discussed with the teacher.” (Interview with female parent 18th March 2017).*

From the argument given by the parent above, it is evident that learning is a complementary process that requires parents and teachers to work as a team in order to help young children excel in academic related matters. Teachers are professionals

who know what exactly should be done to pupils to improve their reading and writing skills of young children. Parents are also regarded as first teachers of young children at home. On top of that, they spend much time with their children at home environment more than the time teachers spend with children at school. Therefore, if mutual cooperation is created among teachers and parents, it will be a best strategy that will facilitate the improvement of reading and writing to young children.

#### **4.7.4 Preparing Reading and Writing Time table at Home**

One of the other initiative parents considered to be the best was to ensure that children observed the time table for reading and writing activities at home. Parents said that learning at home was generally becoming difficult because there was no fixed timetable for children learning like at school. Therefore, in order to solve the problem, they argued that parents should work hand in hand with children through giving them the time table immediately as they come from school. One of the activities that parents said to be involved in the time table involved sleep, reading time and writing time. Another activity that parents suggested to be involved in the timetable involved games for children as parents acknowledged that young children enjoyed playing much and therefore they should be given that opportunity as they were done with the academic timetable. Responding to this, one female parent had these to say:

*“Our children perform poor in reading and writing because we do not have timetable for them learn at home. They do what they need to do at their own time, therefore they spend much time playing rather than learning which makes it difficult for them to develop reading and writing abilities” (Interview with a standard one parent 21st March 2017)*

Another parent added that:

*“The difference between home and school environment lies on the time table. At school each and everything is done according to the time table. This is the reason why children at school perform better and are disciplined more than at home” (Interview with standard two male parent 21st March 2017)*

Following the above quotations from the parents, it can be concluded that time table helps in doing things in a planned manner. Therefore, if the timetable will be prepared at home environment it will help very much to improve children’s learning especially reading and writing skills since children will not spend time on plays only as it was reported by parents, instead each activity will get an opportunity to be performed and children will feel comfortable because they will have an opportunity to engage in all activities they need. Furthermore, parents will have enough time to supervise their children’s activities because this time table will not apply only to pupils instead it will apply to both parties that is parents and children. Therefore, parents can do other activities on the time when the child is playing or when he/she is sleeping and when reading and writing time reaches then the parent will take an instructional role on which this will not have affected his/her timetable.

#### **4.7.5 Teaching Children at Home**

Among the problems that were raised is that parents did not bother to teach their children at home on the belief that they were going to school in order to be taught and therefore there was no need for them to teach their children at home. Other parents argued that teachers were being paid salaries in order for them to teach children and therefore, if a child failed teachers should be held responsible for that failure.

With this reason, parents saw that the best initiative to take in order to improve pupils learning was to teach them at home. It was argued that if parent didn't take an active role of teaching their children they would be lagging behind in class since there were some of the children who were receiving assistance at home. Therefore, in order to keep uniformity, parents agreed in principle that teaching their children at home was important. On this aspect, one parent illuminated that:

*“I teach my child at home and I can see the way he has started to improve in reading and writing. Also teachers are happy and they called me to inform me on other matters concerning my child's progress. I came to notice that teachers like assistance from us because they have many children in a single class. Therefore, when they get parents who do their part in assisting children learn at home, they see that they have been relieved of some hard responsibility” (Interview with a standard two female parent 19th march 2017).*

The contention by the parents shows that when children are also helped at home apart from what they get from school, they improve their academic performance since they do make revision of what they have learnt but also it helps them to know different issues that they have failed to understand at school.

Likewise, the data to this objective was collected through FGD conducted to parents involved in the study. The data gathered revealed that during the discussion parents had more views on the best initiatives to be taken in order to improve reading and writing abilities of the young children. Despite the fact that most of the best initiatives reported by parents for improving reading and writing had emerged during the interview with parents, the FGD with parents revealed that buying books at home was supported by 31 parents (77.5%), providing education to parents was supported by 29 parents (72.5%) and tuition to young children was supported by 22 parents (55%) as the best initiatives to be taken by parents in order to improve reading and writing abilities of young children. Table 4 presents these findings

**Table 4. 6: Focused Group Discussion Results**

<b>Best Initiatives</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
Buying books at home	<b>31</b>	<b>77.5</b>
Providing Education to Parents	<b>29</b>	<b>72.5</b>
Tuition	<b>22</b>	<b>55</b>

**Source:** Field work (2017)

#### **4.7.6 Buying Books at Home**

As presented in Table 4. The FDG with parents revealed that buying books at home was thought the best initiative that should be done in order to improve reading and writing of young children. Parents reported that children needed to have reading materials in order to improve their reading ability. Further, parents argued that children needed to have books for taking important things to write in order to develop their writing ability. Without having books for reading such as story books, it would be difficult for them to develop reading abilities. These parents reported that during the time when they were studying they had several story books that enabled them develop reading abilities such as “mfalme ana masikio kama ya punda” ( meaning the King who had ears like a Donkey ) and “Chopeko na mnofu”(Chepeko and a piece of meat) because those stories were interesting and motivating to children to continue reading them. Therefore, parents argued that if story books such as those mentioned above were given to children, it would make their learning so interesting. On this particular regard, one male parent noted:

*“Without buying books for our children to read they will not develop their reading and writing ability. And in most cases we are to buy story books. We are supposed to agree that story books help them to develop a reading culture and therefore, our children will see reading as part and parcel of their life and by so doing we shall have developed their reading skill (FDG with standard two parents” 23rd March 2017).*

The argument given by the parent above reveals that at home parents, as well as children did not have the reading culture and therefore the way to develop reading culture for them was to buy reading materials especially story books that would make children read them naturally (intrinsically). By so doing, children would build a reading culture and develop their reading abilities.

Apart from reading, parents argued that even writing required writing books that were directed by the Ministry of Education to be used in improving writing skills to young children. Parents argued that these books could be attained from schools and therefore help them buy relevant ones from the book shops. On this view parents reported that without buying books, it would be difficult for them to know what exactly they should help their children so as to improve their writing abilities. Therefore, books serve as the basis for helping children develop writing abilities because parents get instructional activities for their children from those books.

#### **4.7.7 Providing Education to Parents**

Another initiative that was considered best was to provide education to parents so as develop an awareness on the duties and obligations towards learning of their children. Some of the parents did not take into consideration helping their children at home because they believed that they were supposed to be taught at school only. Therefore, they isolated themselves from the process of helping their children develop appropriate necessary skills of reading and writing. During the FDG, parents argued that there was a t necessity of providing education to parents in general in order that such kinds of parents knew what their responsibilities towards the education of their children were.

Parents reported that without having a common understanding, it would be difficult to reach the goal because some parents would be helping their children at home while others would not be doing so and at the end they would have children who did not know how to read and write. Therefore, the best initiative was to help parents know what they were supposed to do at home with the reading and writing activities of their children which would be more shaped at school as well as at home.

#### **4.7.8 Tuition**

During the FGD with parents it was also suggested that the best initiative to be used by parents was to take their children to tuition centres. Parents argued that sometimes school teachers were denied of the chance to conduct tuition in streets on the view that the government does not allow school teachers to conduct tuition. Parents argued that it was better that teachers be allowed to conduct tuition if possible at school environments because they will be motivated to teach as they would be receiving other amount of money apart from the normal salary they were usually receiving. Parents were of the view that in most cases, they were busy with their daily activities something that make them sustain life and handle family matters therefore it became difficult for them to get enough time to help their children in learning activities especially reading and writing activities. On this, one parent remarked:

*“Life is very difficult, most parents are involving in activities that can help them to live. They lack an opportunity to engage their children in reading and writing at home. Due to this, it is better to send our children to tuition after school where they are helped by teachers to improve their reading and writing abilities”. (FDG with male parent 23rd March 2017).*

As the quotation above reveals, tuition may be the right initiative that may help to develop reading and writing abilities as parents were seen to be very much busy with

family chores and therefore, lacked enough time to help their children at home. With this reason therefore, in order for children to get the right to participate in learning apart from school environment, tuition is an appropriate strategy to fulfil this need.

Apart from being busy and lacking time to help their children at home and therefore, forcing tuition to be a best alternative, also the knowledge about the related matters was another factor that made parents agree in principle that tuition was important in order to help children get the required reading and writing skills. Therefore, because parents were lacking necessary skills to direct their children, therefore tuition teachers would become the right people to help these children in developing their reading and writing skills

The current study revealed several best initiatives to be done by parents in order to develop reading and writing of young children such as borrowing books from school, teacher-parent relationship, preparing timetable at home, tuition, buying books and other materials, educating parents, as well as teaching children at home. Such study findings are in line with different studies conducted worldwide. For example, Ngorosho, (2011) also revealed the same reporting that among the factors that were seen hinder children's learning how to read in Tanzania were shortage of books in schools where children did have enough books for students to borrow.

Further, parents suggested that borrowing books was one of the best initiatives that would develop reading and writing in young children. They also added that when children were provided with materials they would be able to make revision after school. This idea is also supported by Goodman (1984) that reading and writing skills can be developed through various ways depending on the child's home environment. He further explained that children can also learn how to read and write through other media such as books, website, advertisement in films or even

conversation, therefore, schools should have books for pupils to borrow. Also parents suggested that remedial classes should be organized for the pupil to enhance their learning activities as Vygotsky (1978) suggested that, there is a time when a child needs assistance from an adult or more knowledgeable peers that is zone of proximal development (ZPD) in order to learn effectively. Thus for a child to acquire reading and writing effectively, teachers should monitor their level of achievement of pupil who have low learning abilities by providing them with remedial classes to scaffold them to a higher level of competence.

With teacher parent relationship, the findings revealed that, the relation between the home and school environment was said to be crucial for the development of literacy skills in pupils. It was analysed and described in recent studies (Ngorosho, 2010, Ngorosho, 2011) that parental involvement in school homework was found to be a significant predictor of reading and writing ability. Therefore, parents suggested that if there were a good relationship between teachers and parent, it would enlighten parents on how to give assistance to their children at home.

Also parents suggested that preparing personal timetable for studies at home and inspecting children's books would enable them to get time for studies after school. The World Bank, (2004) observed that the struggle for the survival of the parent and family takes all the available time and resources and therefore leads to poor performance in reading and writing in children. Therefore, parents suggested that in order to enable their children develop their reading and writing skills, parents have to make time to interact with their children in order to know their difficulties in reading and writing. Also parents suggested that teaching children at home was the best way to assist children reading and writing as revealed by Clay, (2004) that learning to read and write is a social practice which is shaped by complex

coordination of people, places, institutions and materials available in children's natural context rather than individual achievement.

According to her, parents should assist the learners to go beyond the actual development that will lead to further learning. Also Clay (1982) accepts the idea that learners be engaged in meaningful activities, she also emphasises on reading recovery practice in connected text rather than participating in sheet activities.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations made by the study. It begins by highlighting the major findings of the study followed by conclusions drawn basing on the objectives of the study. Finally, it presents the recommendations for action, policy and for further research based on the study findings.

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

This study investigated the home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing abilities to young children in Tanzania especially in Kilosa and Mvomero districts. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to identify some key home factors affecting children's acquisition of reading and writing skills in Tanzania, to explore the initiatives employed by parents' in improving children's reading and writing skills in Tanzania as well as establishing the best parents' initiatives on improving acquisition of reading and writing skills to children in Tanzania.

The study sampled four (4) public primary schools found in Morogoro region two from each district that is Mvomero and Kilosa in order to obtain parents of standard I and II pupils as well as parents. A total of (92) informant: 12 standard one and two school teachers, 80 parents having children in standard one and two classes were involved. Among the 12 standard one and two school teachers, two were males and 10 were females. For parents, 23 were male and 57 were females.

Data were collected through semi- structured interviews, FGD and documentary review. Semi-structured interviews as well as FDG were note-taken and tape-recorded and transcribed into themes and sub-themes before drawing conclusions. On the other hand, documentary review was subjected to content analysis in order to deduce relevant information to the study.

## **5.2 Summary of the Results**

### **5.2.1 Home factors affecting the Acquisition of Reading and Writing in**

#### **Tanzania**

The study findings revealed that, 46% of the parents and 78.5% home environments were the most important environments in helping children develop reading and writing abilities.

Furthermore, parents and teachers were of the view that there were several home factors affecting reading and writing of young children which could be categorized as parents related (poor parents follow up, engaging pupils in many home activities, poor parents supervision, low parents income, low parents education, poor relationship between parents and teachers, parents activities), pupils related (children plays and games, watching television, difficulties in learning), teacher related (teachers not providing homework) as well as material related factors(lack of reading and writing material).Following the home factors affecting children reading and writing, parents were of the view that parents at home needed to prepare an environment that would enable young children at home engage in learning activities especially reading and writing skills. Apart from the home factors revealed by parents, it was argued that teaching and learning of young children was a

cooperative process that needed parents, teachers and pupils themselves to collaborate together in improving reading and writing abilities.

### **5.2.2 Initiatives Employed by Parent in Improving Children's Reading and Writing Skills in Tanzania**

The study findings indicated that despite the fact there were several home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing parents were required to take several initiatives to improve reading and writing abilities at home. It was revealed that Parents were using several initiatives which involved regular homework, inspecting pupils' books, tuition, close follow up, buying books and other materials and help children were receiving from their elder brothers and sisters. Parents reported that they were using the mentioned initiatives at home in order to improve young children' reading and writing abilities.

Despite the fact that parents were several initiatives as pointed above, some of them were still facing difficulties in helping their children develop appropriate and necessary skills for reading and writing. On the other hand, children also were facing difficulties in developing reading and writing skills. Therefore, this resulted to finding the best alternatives that would be used by parents at home in order to improve the acquisition of reading and writing in Tanzania.

### **5.2.3 The Best Parents' Initiatives on Improving Acquisition of Reading and Writing Skills to Children in Tanzania**

The study findings exposed that, borrowing books from schools, remedial Classes, teacher-parent relationships, inspecting pupils' exercise books, preparing reading and writing timetable at home, Teaching Children at home tuition as well as

providing education to parents on the importance of helping their children would reading and writing abilities as the best initiatives to be taken.

Most of the parents capitalized on borrowing books from school as the best initiative because it could serve to know exactly what was to be taught to children and that would help those with insufficient fund to buy books. On the other hand, teacher-parent relationship was seen as best initiatives since parents were of the view that teaching and learning needed cooperation of those staying with children that is parents at home and teachers at school. Another best alternative that received great attention during the FDG was educating parents on the importance of helping their children with reading and writing skills. This is because some of them believed that it was the role of teachers and not parents to teach their children.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

In the light of the research findings and discussion presented above, the following conclusions are made, specifically, basing on the objectives of the study. First, parents agreed that they were required to play a key role in facilitating reading and writing of young children at home environment.

Therefore, in order to improve reading and writing abilities of young children there is a need for parents, learners and teachers to work jointly in order to make sure that each individual plays his/her active role.

Second, it was revealed that parents were taking different initiatives in improving reading and writing of young children. Among the initiatives that teachers were reported to take in order to improve reading and writing abilities of young children included providing regular home works, inspecting pupils' exercise books, close

follow ups, tuition and requesting elder brothers and sisters help young children with reading and writing abilities.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

This study has three categories of recommendations: recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research.

##### **5.4.1 Recommendations for Action**

The current study puts forward some recommendations for action in order to improve reading and writing abilities to early grade learners especially standard I and II at home environment in Tanzania. These recommendations are:

1. Parents with children in standard one and two classes should ensure that they provide assistance to their children at home in order that they may develop reading and writing abilities. This should be done by giving those activities to do at home such as reading story books as well as writing as they come from school. Furthermore, if parents lack time to help their children at home, they must find some alternatives that will make their children engage in reading and writing activities such as tuition and requesting the elder brothers and sisters help them in developing reading and writing abilities
2. Parents are to be educated on the importance of helping their children at home and the necessary materials to buy for their children in order to help their children make practices at home. Parents are supposed to take the active role of buying materials that will enable their children develop self-reading and writing culture at home. These materials may involve buying books especially story books and other books that may develop such writing abilities. Furthermore, different materials such as exercise books, pencils,

writing boards are necessary for improving children's writing abilities of which all of them must be facilitated by parents.

3. Furthermore, in order to develop reading and writing abilities of young children, there must be a joint effort between parents, learners themselves as well as teachers at school. Therefore, children at home must ensure reading and writing activities, parents must prepare necessary home environments that will facilitate reading and writing abilities of young children. On top of that, cooperation between teachers and parents is paramount and therefore, teachers must ensure providing home works to young children and direct parents on appropriate measures to take in order to improve reading and writing of young children. Furthermore, schools must have enough books in order to help those children coming from economically underprivileged families in order that they may borrow books from school and help their children in reading and writing process.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research**

This study proposes more studies to be conducted on the use of drawing in PPE.

1. This study focused on the home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing to young children in Tanzania. However, the study adopted a qualitative approach. Therefore, another study adopting a quantitative approach is needed for generalization.
2. This study was limited to two districts only, that is, Kilosa and Mvomero. It is therefore recommended that other studies covering a wider part of Tanzania be done in order to provide the wider picture of the home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing to young children. The present study focused on parents, and teachers as key informants of

the home factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing abilities to young children. A study covering a wider aspect of early grade class stake holders such as curriculum developers, policy makers and education supervisors is needed in order to get a broader picture of the factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing in early grade classes.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Interview Guide for Teachers**

My name is Agnes Lyimo, a student at the University of Dodoma. I am carrying out a study on “*Home Factors Affecting children’s Achievement of Reading and Writing in Public Primary Schools in Tanzania*”. The study is purely for academic purposes and the information you give, will solely be used for this study. Your identity and the information will be treated confidential and the name of your institution will not be used anywhere.

1. How many children do you have?
2. What is your occupation?
3. Have you ever taught reading and writing subjects in your class?
4. Which challenges do you face when teaching reading and writing in your class?
5. How do you address the challenges that you face in teaching and learning of reading and writing skills?
6. What challenges do the pupils face at home that hinder their acquisition of reading and writing literacy skills?
7. What improvement in the pupils’ home environment can enhance acquisition of reading and writing literacy skills?
8. What students’ behaviour if any, poses a challenge in achieving reading and writing literacy skills?
9. What should be done in order to overcome pupils’ behaviours that hinder the acquisition of reading and writing literacy skills?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

## Appendix B: Interview Guide for parents

My name is Agnes Lyimo, a student at the University of Dodoma. I am carrying out a study on “**Investigation of home factors affecting children’s acquisition of reading and writing abilities in Tanzania**” The study is purely for academic purposes and the information you give will solely be used for this study. Your identity and the information will be treated confidentially.

1. Sex
2. What is your highest level of education?
3. What is your occupation?
4. What is your marital status?  
(i) Single ( ) (ii) Married ( ) (iii) Divorced ( ) (iv) Widowed ( )
5. What major economic activities do you carry out?  
(i) .....  
(ii) .....  
(iii) .....
6. What is your income level?  
(i) Low (ii) Middle (iii) High
7. Do you live together with your family members/spouse? If No, why?
8. What do you think can happen to children when their parents stay separately with their family members?
9. Is the ability of your child/children in reading and writing: (i) Low (ii) Middle (iii) High?
10. What are the major causes that relate to home environment which hinder pupils’ reading and writing abilities?

11. Do you think your level of education influences the reading and writing abilities of your child? How?
12. How does your attitude influence the reading and writing abilities of your child?
13. How does your economic status affect the reading and writing abilities of your child?
14. How does the home environment affect the reading and writing abilities of your child in school? E.g. availability of reading books, writing materials, helpful peers, reading culture etc
15. What initiatives do you employ in order to improve your children writing and writing abilities?
16. What can be done to address the parental related factors affecting pupils' reading and writing abilities?

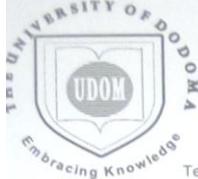
### **Appendix C: Guideline for focused group discussion (FGD) to parents**

My name is Agnes Lyimo a student at The University of Dodoma. I am carrying out a study on “**Investigation of home factors affecting children’s acquisition of reading and writing abilities in Tanzania**” The study is purely for academic purposes and the information you will give will solely be used for this study. Your identity and the information will be treated confidentially and the name of your institution will not be used anywhere.

1. What are the factors affecting the acquisition of reading and writing of children at home e.g.
  - a) Economic background?
  - b) Parents’ education?
  - c) Parents occupations?
  - d) Materials?
  - e) Home activities?
  - f) Home reading and writing culture?
2. How do the above mentioned factors affect the acquisition of reading and writing to young children?
3. Who helps children mostly with reading and writing at home? Father, mother, siblings?
4. How do you help your children to develop reading and writing skills at home?
5. What do you think can be done in order to improve pupils reading and writing at home and school context?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

## Appendix D: Research Permit



**THE UNIVERSITY OF DODOMA**  
DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR ACADEMIC, RESEARCH & CONSULTANCY  
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Wednesday, 01 March 2017

REF: UDOM/GSR/2016/115

**To Whom It May Concern:**

**RE: INTRODUCING MS. LYIMO AGNES J**

The above named candidate is enrolled at the University of Dodoma for the degree of Master of Arts in Education (MAED) with registration number HD/UDOM/169/T.2015

As an essential requirement of the study programme, each candidate is required to submit a dissertation report on a research undertaken within an industry and supervised by a member of the University's academic staff. Where possible the research should relate to a practical situation in an organisation or firm selected by the candidate. Candidates are expected to use their own initiative to identify a possible research and negotiate access with a local firm or organization.

The above named candidate has developed the proposal titled "INVESTIGATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL FACTORS AFFECTING CHILDREN'S ACQUISITION OF READING AND WRITING ABILITIES IN TANZANIA: A CASE OF DODOMA REGION" which has been approved for data collection. The work may take the form of a survey, ethnography, case studies, etc. Where the research may contain confidential information and its publication could be harmful to the organization, confidentiality is assured by the University. Such reports will be seen only by the Supervisor and Examiner for examination purposes.

I would be grateful if you would provide the candidate with this opportunity to facilitate her studies while at the same time gaining some useful inputs for your own organization through the results of the research report.

Sincerely,  
  
Humbaro, A.  
**For: Director, Graduate Studies and Continuing Education**



C.c: Director, GS&CE

### Appendix E: External Examiner Corrections

<b>S/N</b>	<b>External Examiner's Observations</b>	<b>Candidate's Response</b>	<b>Pages</b>
1.	Preliminary pages	Grammatical errors	page V.
2.	Background of the Study	Grammatical errors, spaces errors	Page 1,2,7,8,9,10
3.	Literature Review	Grammatical errors	Page 27
4.	Research Methodology	Grammatical error	Page 37
5.	Data presentation, Analysis and discussion.	Grammatical errors.	Page 56,58,68,70, 71, & 79.