



Review of Literature on Home Intervention Models for Parents

Bani A.

Research Scholar, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan, India

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this review is research literature on the intervention models for parents/caregivers in the home-based academic learning of their preschool age children. Academic learning includes intervention related to school readiness, language learning, mathematics education, and transversal competencies. The review covers the definition of home intervention programs, a theoretical framework based on family resilience theory and evidence-based parental intervention programs. The article concludes with intervention models in the Indian context reported in journals accessed through Google Scholar and ERIC. The studies reviewed in this article are in chronological order, and they include the preschool age from 3 to 6 years.

Keywords: home-based intervention model; parental participation; academic learning; preschool age

1. Introduction

Time and again, all kinds of research have proven through quantitative, qualitative, longitudinal, cross-sectional and phenomenological studies that early years of life are the time for optimum cognitive growth. Then children's transition from preschool to formal education is a crucial period in their life when they are on the threshold of gaining emergent literacy and numeracy to developing skills in language and mathematics. This time is even more crucial for the family and caregivers who are part of children's experiences at home and early learning. During this time and even later, it is important to focus on children's home intervention along with school education for the overall development and smooth academic learning. **Hadeed (2005)** stated, "Intervention programs that are research-based and theory-driven, utilizing careful program design, measurement and analysis, provide the most convincing evidence when determining program effectiveness" (p.3).

COVID-19 was a time in human history when life came to a standstill for a short span. As it bounced back from strains and uncertainties of the upheaval caused by the pandemic, the 'new normal' came with many transformations and adjustments. At that time, the role played by caregivers and families of preschoolers and its impact especially on the future of educational pedagogies also came into spotlight. A theoretical framework of 'Family Resilience' offered by **Walsh (1996, 2002)** became more relevant. Combining ecological and developmental perspectives, this approach provided a positive and pragmatic frame that guided interventions to strengthen the family. "As the family becomes more resourceful, its ability to meet future challenges is enhanced. Thus, each intervention is also a preventive measure" (**Walsh, 2002, p.2**). Walsh further emphasized, "As a broad meta framework, a family resilience approach can be integrated with a variety of practice models and modalities and usefully applied with a wide range of populations and problem situations with respect for family and cultural diversity" (**Walsh, 2002, p.11**). In view of the above, it became imperative to review more literature on home intervention.

2. Review of Literature

This section of literature review is divided in two subsections. The first subsection covers impact studies reported on home intervention models for parents. The second subsection is about intervention models reported in the Indian context. Most of the recent studies reported were part of bigger projects that included academic learning of preschool age children as one of the major components. The focus of this review was to shortlist the models that were recommended for younger age children, preferably preschool age. Also, throughout the article, 'parental intervention' is synonymous with 'intervention for caregivers' and families' of preschool age children.

2.1 Home intervention Models for Parents: Impact Studies

According to **Pomerantz et al. (2007)**, there are two models of home intervention. The first one is 'Skill development model' which means cognitive skills and language learning including reading and writing. This model posits that academic learning gives more information and a better understanding of a child's abilities. Even if these two are not there, learning from practice and instruction happens. The second model is 'Motivational development model'. According to this model, parents motivate the child by highlighting the value of education. When they participate in school activities, they

develop a strategy to deal with school and its challenges. Parents can also make children more familiar with school tasks and feel more competent (Pomerantz et al., 2007).

Maloney et al. (2015) suggested three interventions pertaining to 'Motivational developmental model' focusing on low-income caregivers. The first one developed by Suskind et al. (2015) is personalized coaching and technology-enabled monitoring which improved home environment over 6 weeks' observation period. In second intervention York and Loeb (2014) randomly assigned families of preschoolers to participate in a year-long text messaging campaign and increased the student literacy gains by .21 to .34 standard deviations. In the third one, Mayer et al. (2015) conducted an experiment with Head Start families in Chicago with multi-dimensional intervention to increase parent-child reading time. All the three intervention studies have the potential to improve caregiver efficacy and children's achievement-related outcomes (Maloney et al., 2015).

Webster-Stratton (2016) founded and developed a set of interlocking, comprehensive and cost-effective basic and advance group training programs for parents of (toddler, preschool and school-age) named *Incredible Years*. It is also an evidence-based program working on collaborative therapy process but tailored to each parent, teacher or child's individual needs. The *Incredible Years* Parenting Pyramid serves as the architectural plan for delivering the content of the program covering children's emotional, social and academic learning. Parents also learn how to use specific academic, persistence, social and emotional coaching tools. The Preschool Program is the School Readiness Program for children ages 3-4 years designed to help parents support their children's pre-literacy and interactive reading readiness skills.

Shukla and Vyas (2022) mentioned a highly effective scientifically researched program for parenting interventions created at the University of Queensland in Australia, named **Triple P - Positive Parenting Program**. The program supports parents of children up to 12 years of age and can be delivered in groups, online or in individual sessions. It is also one of the few programs based on ongoing evidence from research.

Developed at the Parenting and Family Support Centre, **Triple P** has been shown to work across hundreds of thousands of families for over 35 years of research. Over 100,000 practitioners working in at least 32 countries have been trained to deliver Triple P, which is available in 23 languages other than English. More than 100 international studies have shown Triple P to be effective across countries, socio-economic groups and in many different family structures. What started as just one program has now developed into a large system of many different programs for parents and children. For the families with preschool aged disabled children, there is **Steppingstones Triple P**.

Wildmon et al. (2024) also proposed a low-cost evidence-based intervention model developed by Anthony and Wildmon (2021) comprising of nine practices which can be used by parents for children in preschools, schools or even for homeschooling. The authors suggested that each of them can be used by parents of preschool children as parent involvement (PI). These practices for parents to follow are - a. Parent modelling learning b. Parent finding and providing resources based on student interests or needs c. Parent providing a home learning environment d. Parent trusting the child to learn e. Parent supporting the child's interests f. Parent making the world a classroom g. Parent developing learner independence/ responsibility h. Parent cooperating with the child to learn and i. Parent expanding their view of education. The authors have explained evidence-based practices and elaborated on each of them with examples appropriate for preschool children.

2.2 Intervention Models in the Indian Context

Gijubhai Badheka (1885-1939) was the first Indian teacher, and a parent himself, whose writings are renowned for parental intervention after the '16 samskaras' mentioned in the ancient Hindu scriptures. Since the earliest times, **Badheka's** words of advice to parents in raising their children are timeless and relevant even today. From making learning fun to teaching children self-regulation, all were encapsulated in his books written for parents, namely, '*Maa Baap Thavu Aakru Chhe*' (It is not easy being parents); '*Aa Te Shee Maathaphod*' (What a Headache This Is), and '*Maa Baap ne*' (To Parents). (Pandya, 2022).

Muralidharan (1997) reported an intervention program for tribal and urban slum mothers developed by Muralidharan and Mishra in 1989. Then Manocha et al. (2008) reported the role of intervention programs to improve maternal stimulation level for the care and education of their own preschool age children. Manocha and Narang (2008) also developed a home-based program to enhance concept development among preschool age children.

Pattnaik (1996) listed some innovative intervention projects that were initiated by the NCERT such as *child-to-child programs*, *school readiness programs* and *home-based programs*. The objective of the *home-based program* was to train mothers of urban and tribal children in developing skills for care and education of their children. Selected community workers trained and evaluated mothers' progress. *Child-to-child programs* trained the older children in some aspects of preschool education through some fun activities, so they could take care of their younger siblings at home. In the *school readiness program*, preschool age children were directly given learning activities for 6 to 8 weeks during the summer before starting formal school (Pattnaik, 1996).

Nair et al. (2020) examined father's involvement in early childhood care among rural Indian parents. The research study was conducted in Tamil Nadu, India using secondary data from Anganwadi Centers (AWC) of the ICDS project. A Cluster Randomized Trial was employed to test the impact of techno-social innovations in improving the involvement of fathers in child-care on child development outcomes. Qualitative studies were used to inform the trial and provide insights into pathways of change. The design, implementation and results of the study were discussed through the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework to provide an understanding of the perceptions among parents and service providers surrounding early child development. The data collected from the formative and qualitative work was used to design, develop and implement the intervention.

The intervention for *Fathers of Preschool Children* took place for 1 year and was incorporated into the ICDS outreach in Tamil Nadu. Beneficiaries of the intervention consisted of 700 children in the 0–3 years' age group and 1,400 parents predominately from low socio-economic status (SES) groups, as well as 57 Anganwadi workers (AWWs), government-based community workers, belonging to the identified Anganwadi centers (AWC), or public crèches. These results will be beneficial in refining future models, scaling in other states, as well as informing policy direction (Nair et al. 2020).

The Pa Pa Pagali programme, a transformative initiative for families by the Women and Child Development, Government of Gujarat, technically supported by UNICEF India, aimed to enhance preschool education across the Anganwadi Centres. The program reached over 1.5 million children, including those in coastal, tribal, and urban areas. Events like **Anganwadi Praveshutsav** and **Bhulka Mela** brought families together to celebrate education and the joy of play (UNICEF India, 2024).

It is evident from the review that in India, the trend for providing home-intervention to parents/ caregivers directly by educators or researchers shifted to research and training institutions like NCERT or UNICEF India and national level programs like ICDS implemented for the ages 3 to 6. The current National Education Policy 2020 of India with greater emphasis on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) is yet another example of this shifting trend.

3. Methodology

This secondary data review of research studies was compiled from mainly two search engines: Google Scholar and Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC). The reason for choosing these two websites was that more recent, peer-reviewed articles, with full text available, could easily be sorted and accessed. The keywords used for the review were: *home-based parental intervention model*; *academic learning*; *preschool age*. The intervention models listed in this review were for normal preschool age children from any socio-economic background.

4. Discussion

Overall, a total of 5 impact studies and 5 studies on home intervention models in the Indian context were reviewed in detail. Out of the impact studies, two studies further stated two intervention models (Pomerantz et al., 2007) and three intervention models (Maloney et al., 2015) which focused on motivational development or skill development in different contexts. Two other intervention models reported more recently by Webster-Stratton (2016) and Shukla and Vyas (2022) were affiliated to universities in the US and Australia respectively and culminated from years of research. Both these models covered a wider range of age group starting from infancy up to 12 years. The most recent home intervention program that specifically referred to preschool age was reported by Wildmon et al. (2024) who recommended nine practices for parents that may be adapted for school years.

In the Indian context, the literature cited about the studies dated back to very early times. In more recent times the home intervention for parents was entrusted with autonomous institutions like the NCERT (programs reported by Pattnaik, 1996), ICDS (an intervention study conducted by Nair et al., 2020) or the programs run by the UNICEF India. The changing dynamics of young families in India with both parents working out of home and government's funding policies more focused on welfare projects rather than education may have contributed to this shifting trend.

5. Conclusion

Despite the 50 years of **Integrated Child Development Scheme [ICDS]** and 74 years of **UNICEF** projects in India, the scientific research conducted on structured home intervention programs for parents especially of preschool children of ages 3 to 6 years was barely available. Intervention programs for caregivers designed, implemented and possibly evaluated by individual researchers or educational institutions need to be reported rigorously in reputed open access publications. The lessons learned from COVID-19, and the role of families and caregivers realized during the lockdown period in educating preschool age children at home were also significant. Studies conducted related to this period and insights gained through the experience by individuals or sponsoring agencies need to be shared. This brings us around to the recommendation stated by Maloney et al. (2015), "*Programs and policies should promote and support aspects of caregiver-child interaction that have been empirically demonstrated to boost early learning and should seek to impede "motivational sinkholes" that threaten to undermine caregivers' desires to engage their children effectively*" (p.727).

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