



The Asia Foundation



Let's
Read



(June, 2022)

STUDY ON THE READING HABITS OF PARENTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN IN ULAANBAATAR, MONGOLIA



FOREWORD

Lorinet Foundation is a family foundation, led by the purpose of enabling a positive and sustainable impact on the lives of children, youth, and families living in vulnerable communities in Southeast Asia and Mongolia.

Last year, the Lorinet Foundation partnered with The Asia Foundation to launch 'Let's Read' program in Mongolia. Let's Read is a multi-year intervention aimed at promoting reading as a critical tool for early childhood education. The theme is aligned with Lorinet Foundation's ECE Country Program priorities and very close to Bolor Lorinet, co-founder of the Lorinet Foundation, who developed a love for books at a young age and wishes that "every child grows up reading books so that they can dream about the world they want to live in and the people they want to become."

Let's Read is built strongly on the issue of school preparedness developed during children's preschool year. Besides ensuring a robust implementation approach, The Asia Foundation has also put a strong focus on achieving and measuring impact over the years. In this context, Lorinet Foundation is extremely pleased to invest in data collection and analysis required for the impact evaluation of the program. This Baseline Study on the awareness and reading habits of parents with children aged 0-5 years and the accessibility and availability of books to children serves as the right step towards achieving outcomes.

The key finding of this study that less than 10% of parents in Mongolia read to their children daily for just up to 10 minutes further bolsters the need for having such novel programs. Lorinet Foundation concurs to the finding that parents' habits of reading books and engaging in reading activities with their children is directly correlated with their educational attainment. Therefore, it is imperative that through this program, we not only increase the availability of high-quality Mongolian-language children's books but also build awareness on the importance of reading with preschool-aged children among parents, caregivers, and teachers.

Bolor and Pierre Lorinet

June 2022

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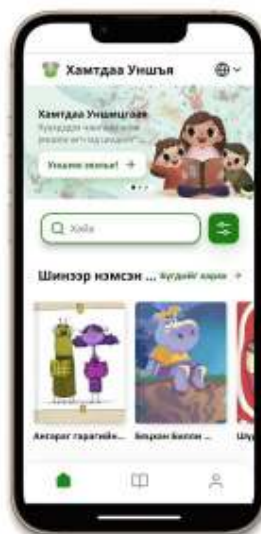
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Commissioned by The Asia Foundation, the Independent Research Institute of Mongolia (IRIM) undertook the Study between November 2021 and March 2022.

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- Bolormaa. Z, Senior Officer in charge of Preschool Education, Municipal Education Department

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SUMMARY

Studies show that developing children’s reading skills improves their communication and comprehension skills. It also builds personality, sparks curiosity, develops concentration, and enhances socio-emotional and cognitive development.

In September 2021, The Asia Foundation introduced its Let’s Read’ Mongolia Initiative to promote reading and improved education outcomes, with funding from the Lorinet Foundation. The initiative is an initial three-year project intended to begin a 10-year effort to increase the availability of high-quality Mongolian language children’s books and encourage adults to establish reading routines with young children. Commissioned by The Asia Foundation, the Independent Research Institute of Mongolia (IRIM) conducted a baseline study from November 2021 through March 2020. They collected data on the reading habits of parents with children aged 0-5, the accessibility and availability of books for children at home and kindergarten, and perceptions of the importance of reading books for the development of children.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

Reading habits and the love of reading among parents and children

- Parents lacked the habit of reading to their children and encouraging them to love books. In particular, 23.6% of parents in the target khoroo¹ (administrative sub-divisions) and 20.7% of those in the non-target khoroo did not read books to their children at all. Only 9.7% of the parents read to their children daily. Reading times usually lasted up to 10 minutes.
- Parents' habits of reading books and engaging in reading activities with their children correlated with their educational attainment. The lower their educational level, the less likely parents were to do such activities or read books themselves. Compared to lower-income households (HH), in higher-income HHs, the higher the income, the less time parents spent reading books to their children, as a lot of time was spent on income-generating activities.
- Parents lacked interaction with their children while reading to them. However, they are willing to embrace any emotions children express during reading time. A small proportion of parents in the target khoroo (4.3%) and non-target khoroo (16.8%) ask questions during reading time. In contrast, the majority of parents in the target khoroo (64.3%) said they "always" and "usually" encourage their children to express their emotions, compared to 61.4% in the non-target khoroo.
- Apart from being busy, the top reasons why parents don't read to their children are the inability of HHs to afford to buy books and problems with the accessibility and availability of books near the khoroo, which hinder adopting the habits of reading books to children.

Perceptions of the importance of reading books to children

- Most parents agreed it was important to develop children's interests and confidence by reading books. Most parents in the target khoroo (95.2%) and non-target khoroo (96.8%) "fully" and "somewhat" agreed that it was important for their children to develop an interest in reading.
- A majority of the parents recognized the positive effects of reading to their children and encouraging them to love books. In particular, a higher percentage of parents believed that reading books to their children had positive effects on their children's cognitive development and academic performance. Yet, the socio-emotional development benefit of children being read to was the benefit least known and recognized by parents. In particular, 78.7% of parents from target khoroo and 73.1% from non-target khoroo fully agreed that reading books to their children was helpful in strengthening the cognitive development of their children. In contrast, 66.3% of parents in the target khoroo and 61% of those in the non-target khoroo believed reading books to their children contributed to their socio-emotional development.
- Most of the parents (40.4%) of the parents from the non-target khoroo said that the most appropriate age of introducing a book to children is 3-5 and it is 47.3% in the target khoroo. 39% of the parents from non-target khoroo and 33% of the parents from the target khoroo regarded the most appropriate age is 0-2.

¹ The target khoroo refers to the selected khoroo/intervention groups (khoroo # 31 and 43 of Songinokhairkhan district and khoroo #21 of Bayangol district), where the projects of the Let's Read Initiative will be implemented.

- Parents with first and second graders were asked if they read books to their children before sending them to primary school and how they saw the benefits of reading for their children's development. Only 10.9% of parents in the target khoroos and 8.8% of parents in the non-target khoroos said they "very often" read books to their children before sending them to school. Looking at gender, the share of mothers who read to their children (11.6%) was higher than that of fathers (0%).
- A majority of parents with first and second graders recognized the importance of reading books to their children for their development. In particular, they believed that reading to their children had a significant effect on cognitive and language development but lesser effects on socio-emotional development and academic performance. Most parents (64%) said that reading books was "very important" to develop children's cognition, language development (59%), and attention span (56%). Socio-emotional development was identified by parents to be the least important benefit (40%) of reading to children.

Access to books and policies and practices regarding the promotion of reading books

- Preschool children had access to books at home and kindergarten, to some extent. The higher the educational attainment of the HH heads, the more children's books there were at home. However, the HH's income was one of the most common challenges to buying books for children. One-third (35.7%) of the surveyed HHs in the target khoroos had more than 20 books at home, compared to 47.9% in the non-target khoroos. In target khoroos, 14.8% of HHs had up to five books, while 24.7% did in non-target khoroos.
- The accessibility and availability of public libraries and bookstores were poor in the surveyed districts; 51.8% of parents said there was no library near their home. Only 21.5% of parents said there was a bookstore near their home, and only 10% of parents said it took 15-30 minutes to get to a library.
- Parents and caregivers considered age-appropriateness first when choosing books for their children; 81.9% in the target khoroos and 74.1% in the non-target khoroos. This was followed by preferences based on children's interests. A preference for reasonable pricing was 22.5% in the target khoroos and 20.3% in the non-target khoroos.
- As highlighted by officials from preschool education institutions, the standards for children's books should be revised, especially those written by Mongolian authors.
- Parents and teachers had a good understanding of the importance of placing books where children can reach them without the help of an adult. A majority of parents in the target (62.1%) - and non-target khoroos (79.7%) said that children could reach books at home without an adult's help. At kindergartens and daycare centers, this was 34.5% in target khoroos and 17.4% in non-target khoroos.
- Digital books were not popular among parents with children aged up to five years. The acquisition of digital books was 18.1% in the target khoroos and 10.8% in non-target khoroos. Other respondents did not really attempt to get digital books. Some kindergartens, however, had started promoting digital books on their websites, which was believed to be helpful to HHs that could not afford printed books.
- Existing legal and policy documents on preschools do not have specific provisions or clauses regarding introducing children to books and encouraging a love of books. However, preschools at all levels do their best to ensure children's comprehensive development.
- Officials from preschools highlighted the importance of cooperation between parents, children, and education institutions to promote reading to preschoolers and encouraging

them to love books.

Early education stimulation at home and kindergarten, and common challenges (mainly based on qualitative data)

- Even though kindergartens support children’s development through books (within the limits of their budgets), the availability and quality of books are still insufficient.
- There are many good practices that parents, kindergartens, local governments, and professional organizations use together to introduce children to books and encourage them to love books.
- Kindergarten teachers initiate activities to improve parent participation and contribution to introducing books to children and encouraging a love of books.
- Many kindergartens organize activities to enhance cooperation with parents to support child development. However, because of a lack of integrated policy support, these practices are not disseminated and adopted by other kindergartens.
- Although local governors’ offices and educational institutions organize supplemental activities and projects for children, particularly those at risk of being left behind in education, access and coverage remain relatively low. The issue of temporary residence exacerbates the problem.

Table 1. Key baseline indicators in the Project Logframe

Indicators	Baseline		Endline
	Overall	Target	
% of primary school-aged children expressing an interest in reading	51.6	15.9	TDB
% of parents and kindergarten teachers aware of the benefits of early childhood reading	73	73.6	TDB
% of parents reporting that they read with their children daily	9.7	7.1	TDB
% of parents reporting that they read with their children once or twice a week	37.8	32.4	TDB
% of children aged 0-5 with more than 3 books at home	74.1	74.7	TDB

A woman with her hair in a bun and a young girl are standing in a grassy field. The woman is leaning over the girl, and they are both looking at a tablet computer held by the girl. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting sunset or sunrise. The background shows a line of trees and a bright sky. The entire image has a semi-transparent pink overlay.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

In September 2021, The Asia Foundation introduced its Let's Read' Mongolia Initiative to promote reading and improve education outcomes. The initiative is a comprehensive program that will increase the availability of high-quality Mongolian language children's books and encourage adults to establish reading routines with young children. The initiative aims to help parents and caregivers use children's books as critical tools to actively contribute to early childhood development.

Studies show that developing reading skills in children improves their communication and comprehension skills. It also builds personality, sparks curiosity, develops concentration, and enhances emotional development, social involvement, cultural awareness, and intelligence.

In Mongolia, only 58% of children aged two to four receive responsive care from adults, including learning-related activities. There is a low rate of school preparedness and inadequate access to quality early learning for young children. Mongolian children are reaching kindergarten age with physical, emotional, and learning development rates that are off-target. For example, only 8.5% of children aged three to four meet expected standards for literacy and numeracy. Furthermore, according to Mongolia's Early Childhood Development Index figures, there has been a decline in early childhood development since 2010. The numbers reveal that the culture and practice of engaging children in learning activities in the home from a very young age are inadequate².

Commissioned by [The Asia Foundation](#), the [Independent Research Institute of Mongolia \(IRIM\)](#) conducted a baseline study for the initiative between November 2021 and March 2022.

1.2. Objectives of the baseline study

The scope of the baseline study involved the reading habits³ of parents with children aged up to five years and their understanding of contributions to children's love of reading⁴. It also examined the benefits of reading books to children and measured access to books⁵, along with early educational stimulation⁶ in the home and in kindergartens. The baseline data will be used for monitoring any changes over the life of the project in relation to the project's indicators. Specific objectives of the IRIM assignment included gathering baseline data in line with the project logframe; studying reading habits and the love of reading; determining understanding of the importance of reading, access to books, and early educational stimulation (in the home and kindergartens); and providing recommendations for successful project implementation.

² NSO, UNICEF, UNFPA, *Mongolia Social Indicator Sample Survey*, 2018

³ Reading habits in this study refers to parents' reading practices and experiences with their children and their children's familiarity with literacy and numbers.

⁴ Understanding the benefits of reading to children in this study refers to parents' awareness of the benefits of reading to their children and helping them develop a love of books.

⁵ Access to books in this study refers to the accessibility and availability of age-appropriate books for children at home and in kindergarten.

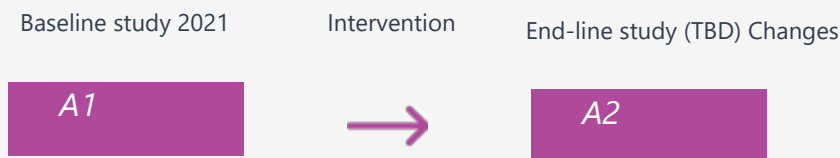
⁶ Early educational stimulation in this study refers to parents, caregivers, and preschool teachers' practices and support for their children to develop a love of books.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand writing on a document. The document is filled with handwritten text, which is mostly illegible due to the blur and the pink overlay. The person's hand is positioned in the center-right of the frame, with the pen tip touching the paper. The background is a soft, out-of-focus pink color. The overall image has a strong pink tint.

2. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Scope

Figure 1. Baseline study design



Here, A1 is the baseline study result for the target group; A2 is the follow-up or end-line study results for the target group; and X is the outcome of the project as of 2024. Therefore, the final impact of the intervention is measured by X.

To explain the general design, the baseline study needed to be measurable, comparable, and repeatable in the following aspects:

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) studies: The baseline study of the Let's Read project should facilitate comparison with further M&E studies. Therefore, the baseline study uses methods comparable with the monitoring (midterm) and end-line studies.

Location: The study results derived from different sites should be able to represent the given project beneficiaries with sufficient statistical significance.

Time: The study results for key indicators should facilitate comparison over time and be repeatable. The interrupted time series design will facilitate comparison of a large series of observations made on the same variable—consecutively, over time—and identify changes in variance around the means. Data collection will be organized in the same way—in the field—according to one methodology.

2.2. Sampling methodologies, quantitative and qualitative

The baseline study sampling frame was the number of children living in Ulaanbaatar aged up to five years. According to National Statistics Office (NSO) data, there were around 180,000 children under the age of five in Ulaanbaatar in 2020. The survey sample size was calculated by the following formula, using the proportional allocation method:

- n = size of the sample
- z = confidence level (for 95% confidence level, $Z=1.96$)
- p = probability of occurrence (50%)
- c = margin of error (confidence interval)

To calculate the sample size, the following criteria were applied:

The sample error was $\pm 3.39\%$, and the confidence level was **95%**.

As a result, the sample size was estimated as **834** parents, sufficient coverage to represent the Ulaanbaatar area. Of these, 182 respondents from each of the three target khoroo of the Let's Read project were surveyed as the "intervention group". For quantitative sampling, a two-step systematic sampling method was employed, while a purposive sampling method was used for qualitative data collection. A total of 50 in-depth interviews were conducted with education institution officials at different levels, including the Ministry of Education and Science, Ulaanbaatar Municipal Education Department, Institute for Teacher's Professional Development, district education officers, kindergarten managers, and teachers.

Table 2. Quantitative and qualitative samples

Quantitative samples			Quantitative samples	
District	Khoroo #	Sample size	Stakeholders who participated in-depth interviews	n
Songinokhairkhan	31, 43, 14	190	Ministry of Education and Science	1
Bayanzurkh	28, 5, 14	206	Municipal Education Department	1
Chingeltei	14, 4	80	Institute for Teacher's Professional Dev.	1
Bayangol	21, 17	129	District Officers in Charge of Education	9
Sukhbaatar	20, 2	74	Khoroo governors, social workers	8
Khan-Uul	2, 21	118	Kindergarten directors and principals	15
Nalaikh	1-8	37	Kindergarten teachers	6
Total		834	Primary school teachers	9
			Total	50

2.3. Data collection and analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used. They included a questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and a desk review.

The study surveyed parents with children aged up to five years in the target and non-target khoroo. Twenty percent of the data collection was conducted over the phone because of the heightened state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The list of parents with children aged up to five years was collected from the respective khoroo and district kindergartens. The following principles were applied to select the respondents:

- Should be a parent or caregiver of children aged up to five years,
- The ratio of children up to five years should be balanced in terms of age and gender, and
- Two-step systematic sampling

SPSS 26.0 (a set of statistics used in the social sciences) was used for quantitative data analysis. The analytical methods included descriptive statistics, comparative analysis, T-test, and F-test. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze reading habits, awareness of the benefits of reading, and access to and availability of children's books. A comparative analysis method was used to compare the findings and results by target and non-target khoroo. The statistical analysis was used to determine if there were any differences dependent on the characteristics of the

HHs and respondents.

The research team also summarized and indexed key indicators for reading habits, awareness of the benefits of reading, and access to and availability of children’s books. A value of “1” was given if the indicator was met, “0” if not, assuming each indicator to have equal weight. If the response meets the indicator, = 1, = 0 if not, meaning $\sum_{(i=1)}^d W_i = 1$.

The following equation shows the details of the index:

$$c_i = W_1 I_1 + W_2 I_2 + \dots + W_d I_d$$

For qualitative data analysis, MAXQDA was used.

Table 3. Analytical framework of the baseline study

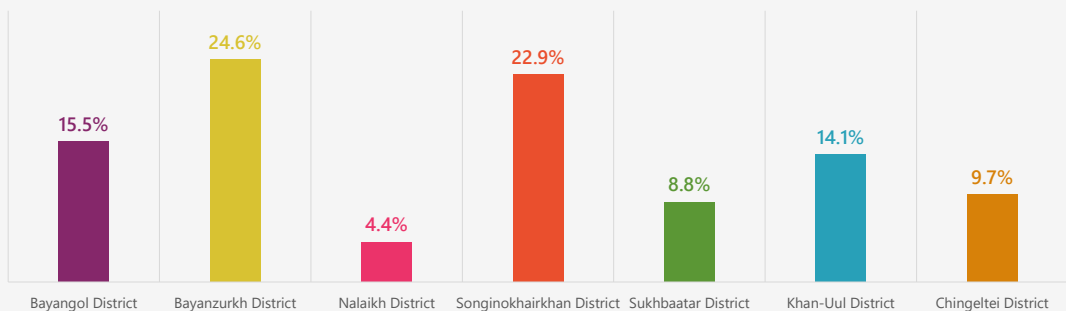
Scope of the study and objectives	Sub-components
Reading habits	1.1. Frequency of parents reading to their children 1.2. Duration of parents reading to their children 1.3. Methods and activities used when reading books to children 1.4. Whether parents and caregivers took their children to bookstores, libraries, and community centers to expose them to books 1.5. Challenges of reading books to children
	Reading habits were measured under the dimensions mentioned above. They were analyzed against age, gender, location, educational attainment, and HH income.
Love of reading and interest	2.1. Children’s interest in books and reasons why 2.2. Parents’ habits and interest in reading
Reading habits were measured under the dimensions mentioned above. They were analyzed against age, gender, location, educational attainment, and HH income.	3.1. Perceptions of the importance of introducing books to children and encouraging them to love books 3.2. What age parents thought they should start reading with their children 3.3. Awareness of the benefits of reading books to children, and conversations with children around stories/books 3.4. Identification of children’s emotional and communication development during reading times 3.5. Practices of introducing children to books, existing understanding and reflection 3.6. Parents’ opinions on the effects of introducing their children to books at an early age on their development
	The dimensions mentioned above were used to study parents’ existing knowledge of the benefits of reading books to their children and their love of reading.
Access to books	4.1. Number of children’s books in homes 4.2. Number of adult books in homes 4.3. Accessibility of books in kindergartens 4.4. Accessibility of books at home 4.5. Whether the books are readily accessible to children on their own 4.5. Budgeting for books 4.6. Main considerations and barriers to buying books 4.7. Children’s access to bookstores, libraries, and community centers 4.8. Use of digital books 4.9. Parents’ understanding of how to find reading materials, whether digital or printed
	The dimensions mentioned above were used to measure children’s access to books.

Scope of the study and objectives	Sub-components
Early education stimulation at home and in kindergarten, and common challenges	5.1. Children’s exposure to books and the frequency of exposure 5.2. Parents’ reading habits around their children 5.3. Drawing together, counting, and naming objects and colors 5.4. Parents’ encouragement and support for their children to gain confidence through reading-related games and activities
	The dimensions mentioned above were used to measure early education stimulation activities and identify challenges.

2.4. Demographics of respondents

This part of the report presents the respondents’ generic demographic information: their age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, and monthly HH income. As mentioned in the previous section, 834 respondents/HHs from seven districts of Ulaanbaatar were surveyed. Of these, 182 of HHs (21.7%) were within the target khorooos of the Let’s Read project. The distribution of the respondents by district is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Respondents, by district



In terms of gender, 23.3% of the respondents were male and 76.4% were female. Respondents over the age of 26 years accounted for 66.5% of the sample (Figure 3). The average age of the respondents was 34 years, with the youngest being 16 and the oldest 75. Most of the respondents (91.5%) were married (Figure 4), 90.4% of whom were men and 91.7% were women.

Figure 3. Respondents age; by age group, %

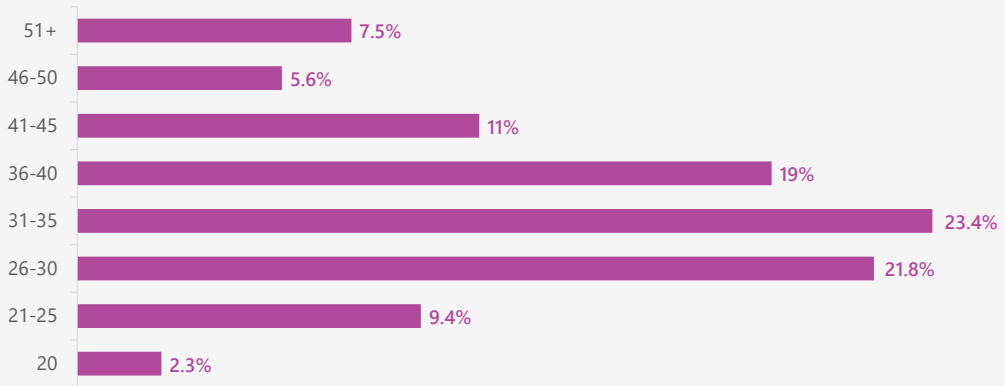
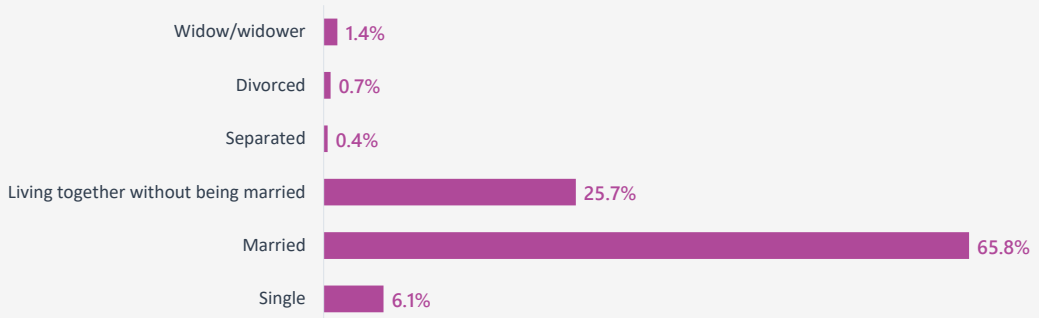


Figure 4. Respondent marital status, %



Most of the respondents (84.6%) were the parents of children, 8.9% were grandparents, and 6.4% were siblings. Two-thirds of the respondents (69%) had higher education, 22% had completed secondary education, 5% had technical and vocational education, and 2% had primary education only (Figure 5). The highest educational attainment in the HHs was a bachelor's degree, accounting for 51.2% of respondents.

Just 1.4% of the respondents were single parents and 2.3% were persons with a disability. The average monthly HH income of the respondents was MNT 1.5 million; 6.3% earned a monthly income of less than MNT 0.5 million, and 20.8% earned more than MNT 2.1 million. As reported by the NSO, as of the fourth quarter of 2021, the average monthly HH income in Ulaanbaatar was MNT 1,642,915⁷; MNT 142,915 (9%) higher than the average HH income of the respondents. More than half of the respondents (59.4%) said their income was adequate to afford basic needs but not enough to allow for savings, and only 12.4% said that they were able to save.

7 NSO. Integrated Database, Average household income, fourth quarter of 2021.

Figure 5. Educational attainment, %

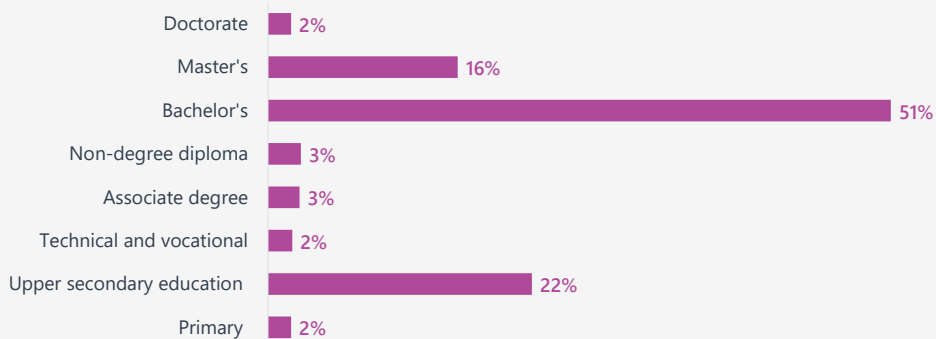
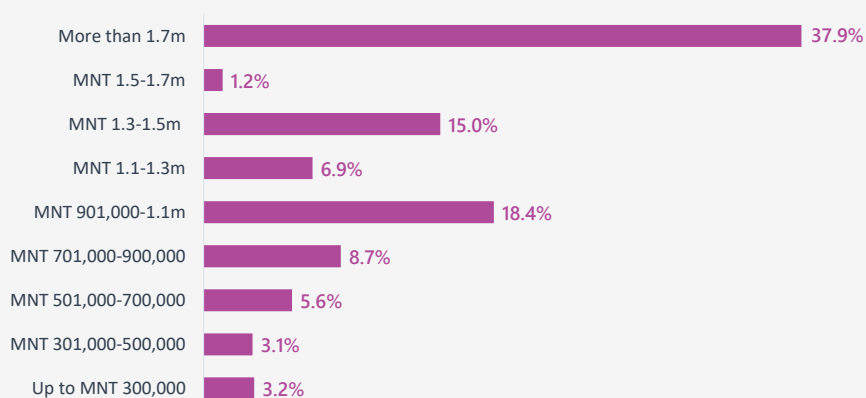


Figure 6. Household income, %



In terms of the types of dwellings HHs occupied, 87.4% of the respondents in the target khoroos lived in gers (traditional dwellings) and detached houses, while this was 40.5% in the non-target khoroos. A third of the respondents (30%) were from HHs with six or more members. 53.1% of the selected children whose parents think of while giving the responses are aged are boy and girl (46.9%). The ages of the selected children were as follows:

- Under one year, 8.5%;
- One year old, 14.6%;
- Two years old, 16.1%;
- Three years old, 16.1%;
- Four years old, 20.0%

2.5. Limitations

As the survey data was limited to Ulaanbaatar, the results only reflect the situation of parents of children aged up to five years in Ulaanbaatar. During the survey, schools and kindergartens were closed across Mongolia because of the heightened state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in some adaptations in the data collection methods, including:

- Some of the data collection (20%) was conducted over the telephone. Some of the in-depth interviews were also carried out online.
- Because of the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, the Government of Mongolia switched some schools and kindergartens from classroom to remote learning. Therefore, data collection was conducted in HHs, schools, and kindergartens according to the respondent's preferences.
- From 2020 through 2022, due to the Government of Mongolia's decision not to allow kindergarten enrollment of children under the age of three, the kindergartens selected for the project were able to provide only lists of children three and older. Lists of parents with children aged up to two years were collected from the district administration units and family health centers.

A photograph of a young child sitting on the floor, reading a book. The child is wearing a light-colored, patterned shirt. The book is open, and the child's hands are visible on the pages. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent green overlay. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

3. PARENTS READING BOOKS TO CHILDREN AND LOVE OF BOOKS

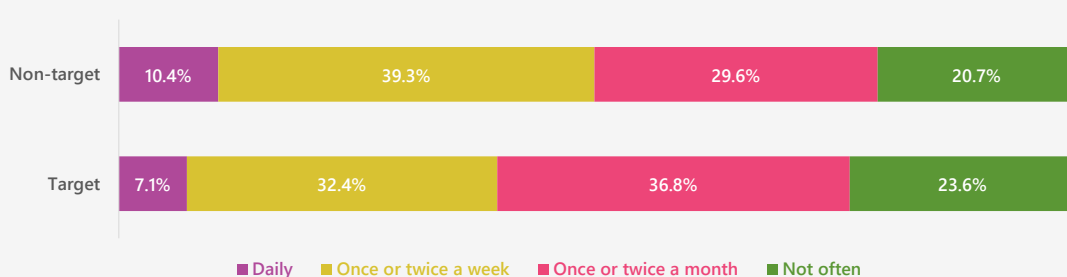
This section outlines the existing habits of parents reading books to their children and encouraging a love of books. In particular, the frequency of reading and different ways of engaging in reading activities with children to encourage them to love books, and the common challenges for the culture of reading books to children.

3.1. Frequency and duration of parents reading to children

Parents’ habits of reading books to their children are critical to a child’s development and developing an interest in books. The respondents’ reading habits were measured by 17 indicators and evaluated at 0.4 out of a total of 1. This indicates that the parents lack the habit of reading to their children and encouraging a love of books.

Looking at particular indicators, 23.6% of parents in the target khoros and 20.7% in the non-target khoros did not read books to their children daily. A majority of the parents with primary education only (36.8%) did not read books to their children.

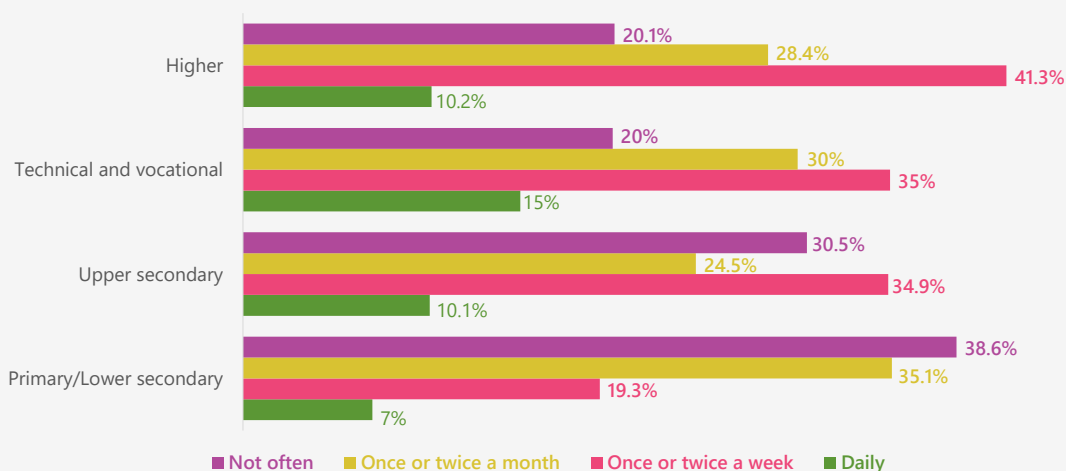
Figure 7. Parents’ habits of reading books to their children, %



Besides regular reading times, oral storytelling is an early childhood stimulation activity that parents can engage in. One-tenth of parents (10.1%) told their children stories every day, 37.2% did it once or twice a week, 27.6% once or twice a month, and 25.1% never did. Regular reading was similar in the target and non-target khoros, 9.9% and 10.2%, respectively (Figure 8).

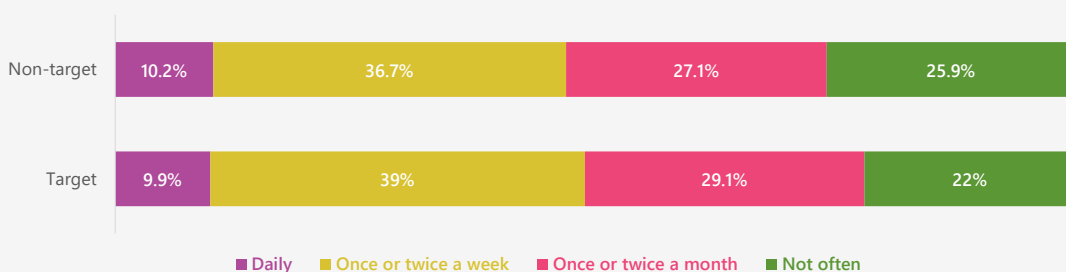
There was a significant difference in the educational attainment of parents who told stories to their children. Only 7% of parents with primary education, 25.1% of parents with upper secondary and technical and vocational education, and 10.12% with higher education told stories to their children every day. The majority of parents (69.1%) who did not tell stories to their children had only primary and/or lower secondary and upper secondary education.

Figure 8. Parents' habits of telling stories, %



The younger the parents, the less time they spent reading books to their children. For example, only 8.9% of parents aged 21-25 years told their children stories on a daily basis, compared to 17% of parents aged 46-50 years. The reading habits of parents varied significantly according to HH income. The lower the income level, the less the parents read themselves, and the more time they spent reading books to their children. The opposite was true for respondents from higher-income HHs.

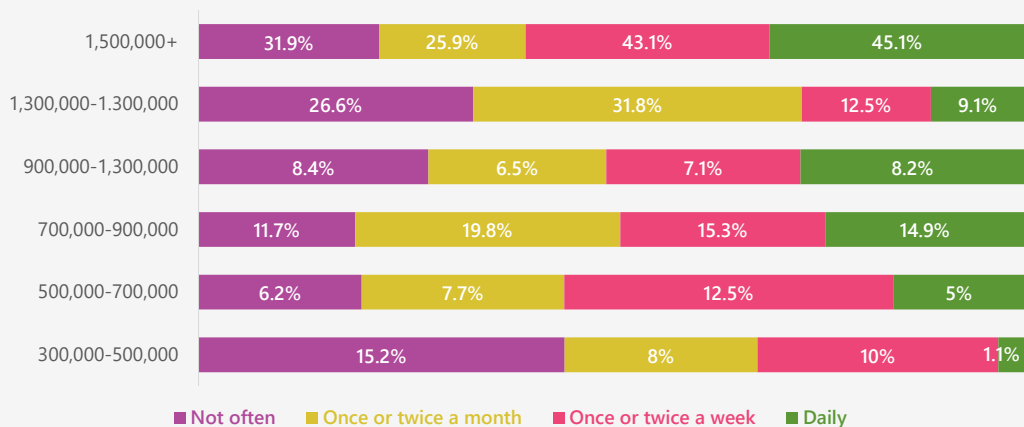
Figure 9. Parents' habits of listening to and developing effective conversations with children on different topics, %



Another early childhood stimulation activity is listening to and developing effective conversations with children on different topics. More than 70% of parents said they intentionally talk to their children every day and listen attentively to them. However, 6.1% of parents said that they did not take time to listen to and talk to their children. There were no statistical differences dependent on the educational attainment of the parents. Regarding HH income, 54.9% of parents who do not talk to and listen attentively to their children were from HHs with

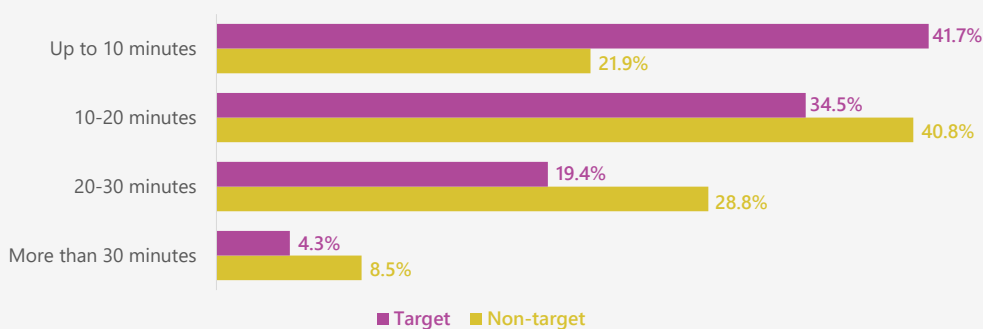
an average income of more than MNT 1.5 million, while the remaining 45.1% have an income of less than MNT 1.5 million. The higher the HH income, the less time parents spent with their children.

Figure 10. Parents' habits of telling stories, %



As shown in Figure 11, the duration of reading time varies depending on HH income and educational attainment of the parents. Most parents (39.5%) spend 10-20 minutes reading to their children, 26.9% spent 20-30 minutes, 26.1% up to 10 minutes, and 7.6% spent more than 30 minutes. Given that young children's normal attention span is 2-14 minutes, the duration of the time spent reading to children each day was optimal. In the target khorooos, the average time spent with children was up to 10 minutes and 10-20 minutes in non-target khorooos. There was no statistically significant dependence related to educational attainment for the duration of reading time.

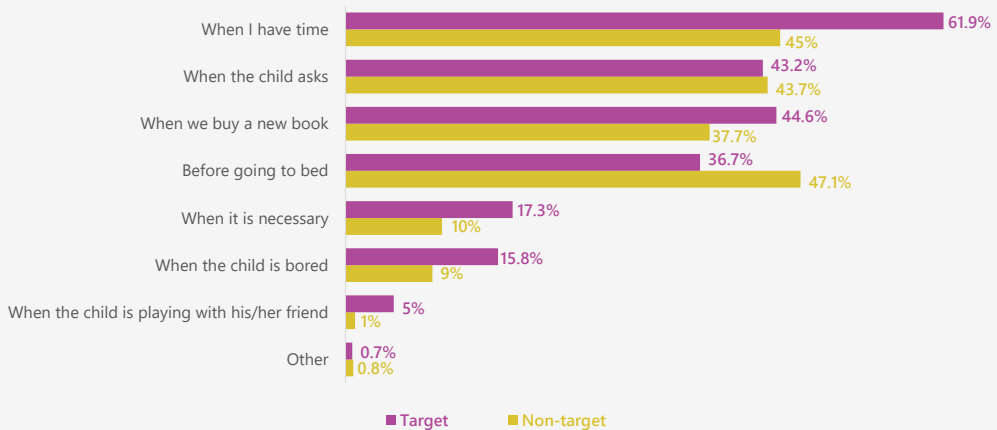
Figure 11. Duration of reading time, by target and non-target khoroo



Regarding when parents were able to read books to their children, most parents (48.6%) said they read to their children only when they had time, 44.9% before going to bed, 43.6% whenever the child wanted, 39.2% after buying new books, and 11.5% said they read when

it was necessary. In the target khoros, most parents (61.9%) read books to their children when they had free time, and in non-target khoros, most parents (47.1%) read books to their children before going to bed. Parents were most likely not to set a regular time for reading to their children.

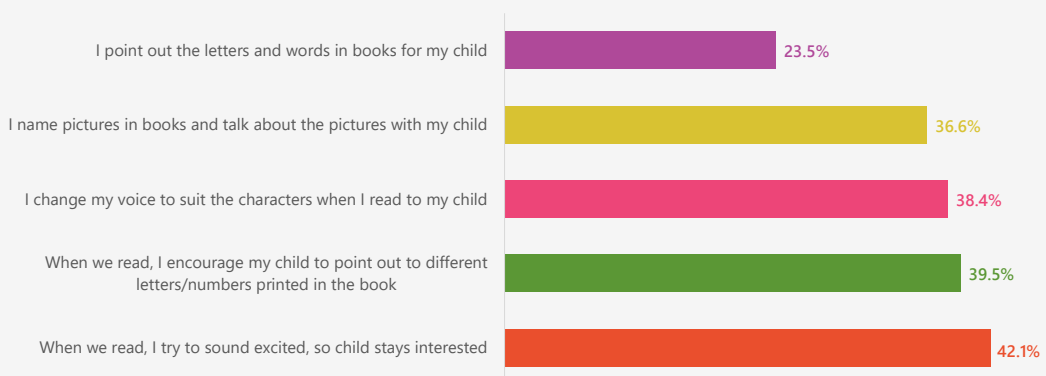
Figure 12. When parents read to their children, by target and non-target khoroo



3.2. Parents' means of exposing children to books

Parents and caregivers who read books to their children used a variety of ways to maintain their children's interest in books and the stories they told. Changes in facial expressions and tone of voice were the tactics most often used (42.1%). This was followed by 39.5% of parents asking their children to point to pictures and letters, 38.4% acting out the characters, 36.6% encouraging children to talk about their impressions of the illustrations and stories, and 23.5% using read-after-me methods.

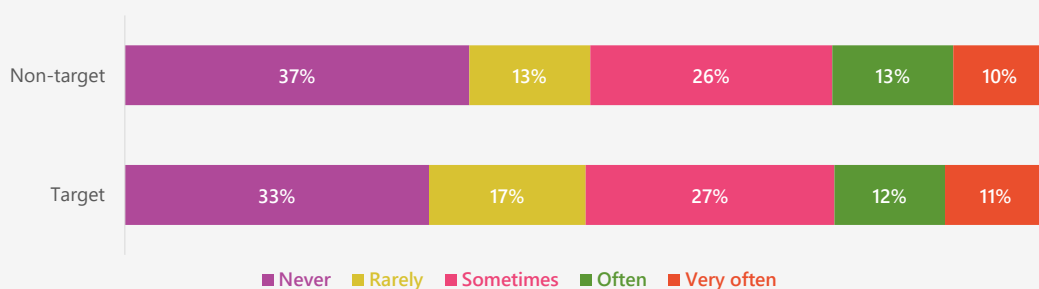
Figure 13. Methods parents used when reading to their children, by target and non-target khoroo



Depending on the developmental characteristics of their children, 33.3% of parents with children under three years old often changed facial expressions, and 33.4% acted out the characters. The parents intended to expose their children to books and develop a love of reading rather than telling stories to teach morals. Most parents with children aged three to five years (79.4%) were more likely to read with their children, having their children point to letters and numbers. In these cases, the parents were preparing their children for primary school and getting them familiar with literacy and numeracy. There was no difference depending on HH income and/or parents' educational attainment.

Research shows that children who talk to their parents about books every day, or once or twice a week, become more interested in reading.⁸ Interviewed kindergarten teachers said they asked questions and encouraged children to think and talk while reading books and telling stories in the kindergarten classroom. They also gave parents advice on how to ask questions and talk about stories and the books they read to their children. The survey results show that 16.8% of parents used this interactive method to encourage their children to develop a love of books (Figure 14).

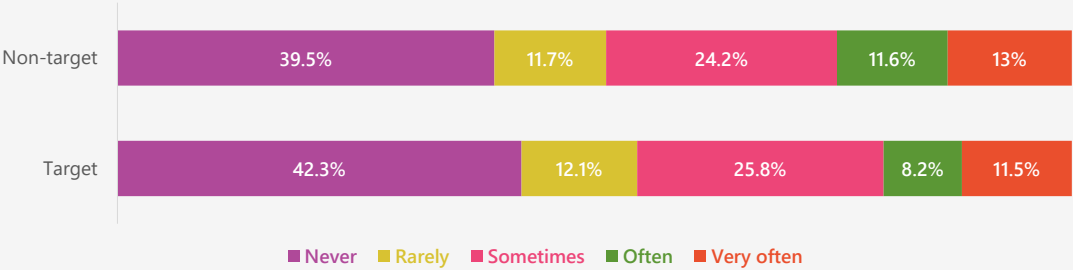
Figure 14. Parents reading in front of their children, by target and non-target khoroo



It is seen from the survey results that it was not popular among parents to engage in activities that stimulate their children's interest in books. For instance, only 19.7% of parents in the target khoroo and 24.6% in non-target khoroo said they "always" and "usually" play reading-related games with their children (Figure 15). In contrast, 39.5% of parents in the target khoroo and 42.5% from non-target khoroo said they never engaged in such activities.

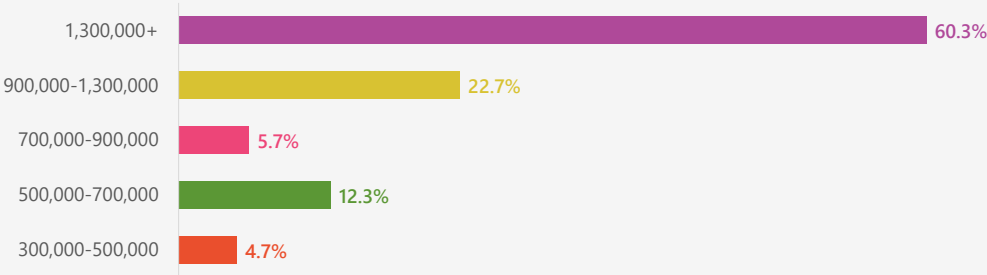
8 Christina Clark and Amelia Foster, Children's and Young People's Reading Habits and Preferences, National Literacy Trust, 2005.

Figure 15. Parents who engage in activities that stimulate their children's interest in books, by target and non-target khoroo



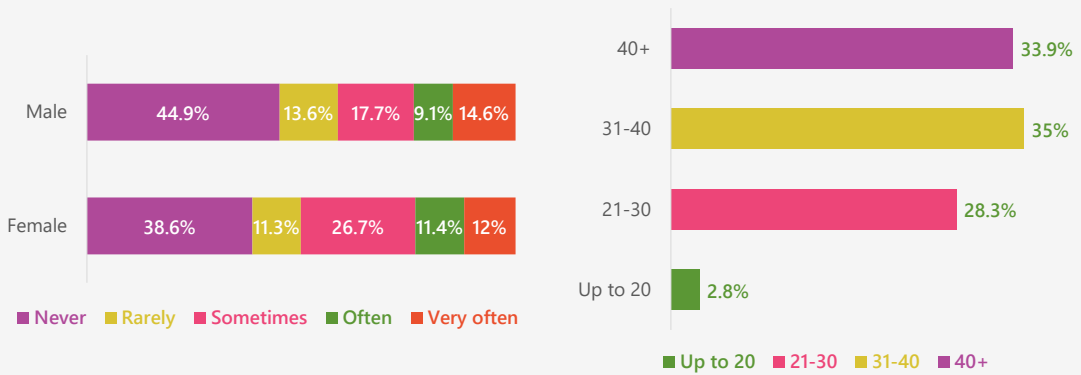
Based on HH income, 4.7% of parents with an income of MNT 0.3-0.5 million said that they did engage in stimulation activities while reading with their children. This was 5.7% among HHs with an income of MNT 0.5-0.7 million, 22.7% with an income of MNT 0.9-1.3 million, and 60.3% for HHs with an income of over MNT 1.3 million.

Figure 16. Parents who engage in activities that stimulate their children's interest in books, by household



The proportion of parents who said they “never” played reading-related games with their children was much greater than those who said “always” and “usually”. Looking at the age groups of the parents, 2.8% of the parents aged under 20 said they “always” and/or “usually” play reading-related games with their children, compared to 28.3% of those aged 21-30 years, 35% aged 31-40, and 33.9% of those over 40 years. By gender of the parents, male respondents were less likely to engage in stimulation activities with their children.

Figure 17. Parents who play reading-related games with their children, by gender and age group



Kindergarten teachers and managers highlighted parents’ increasing efforts and time spent on their children’s language development and reading skills. Parents sought more advice on how to get their children to love books.

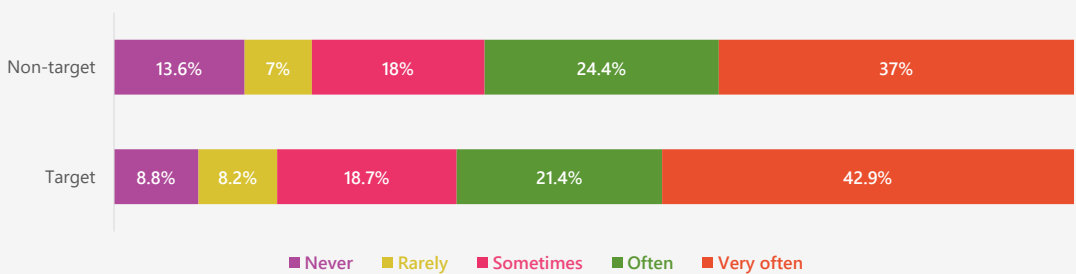


Quote 1. Kindergarten teacher

Nowadays, in general, parents place a lot of importance on their children’s language development and education. They increasingly ask teachers for advice on effectively spending time with their children and ask if their teachers notice any developmental changes in their children. I think it is partly because of various campaigns and activities we’ve organized for parents and children, which are showing their outcomes.

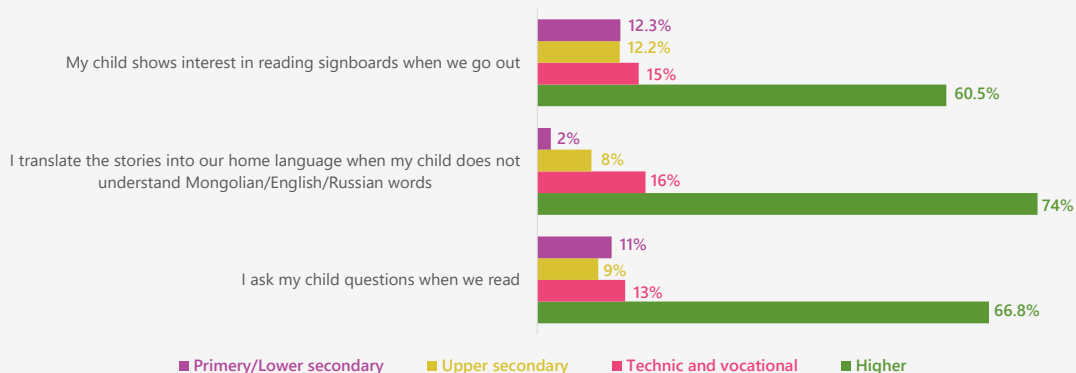
Although parents rarely asked children stimulating questions while reading books, a majority of them (64.3%) in the target khoroos said they “always” and “usually” encouraged their children to express their emotions, compared to 61.4% in the non-target khoroos. Just 8.8% of the parents in the target khoroos and 13.6% in the non-target khoroos said they “never” tried encouraging their children’s emotional expression during reading time.

Figure 18. Parents who encourage their children in expressing their emotion while reading books to them, by the target and non-target khoroos



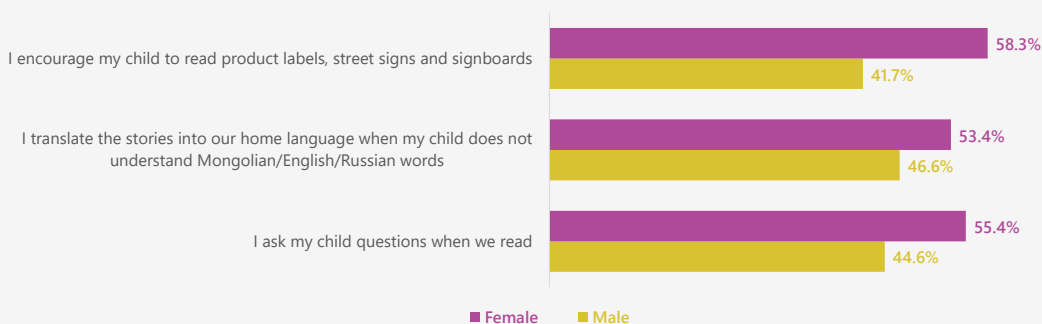
Another way of stimulating children’s reading habits is by reading road signs and product labels and explaining the meaning of unfamiliar words. The survey results showed that parents engaged in these activities more often than asking questions while reading and playing reading-related games. In particular, 60.5% said they read product labels and street signs with their children, and 74% said they explained the meaning of Mongolian words or those in foreign languages. As shown below, the higher the parents’ educational attainment, the more likely they were to do these activities.

Figure 19. Parents who read street signs and learn new words in Mongolian and other languages, by educational attainment



Looking at activities by the gender of parents, male parents were less likely to read signboards and explain unfamiliar words to their children than their female counterparts. Among male parents, 41.7% said they “always” engaged in these activities, and 46.6% said they “usually” did, compared to 58.2% and 53.4% of female parents, respectively. Female parents were also more likely to ask stimulating questions and engage in discussions with their children while reading.

Figure 20. Parents who read street signs and learn new words in Mongolian and other languages, by gender



3.3. Parents and children’s love of books

Many researchers recognize the importance of the home and school environments for child development and building bonds between parents and children.⁹ Particularly important for developing a child’s interest in books are the parents’ reading habits. The survey results showed a significant correlation between the parents’ educational attainment and their level of interest in books.

Parents and caregivers’ interest in books was relatively low. Only 14.8% of parents in the target khoros described their interest in reading books as “very high”, compared to 25.3% who described it as “high”, and 28.05% as “moderate”. Similarly, 14.8% of parents in the non-target khoros described their interest in reading books as “very high”, 30.3% as “high”, and 33.5% as “moderate”.

Figure 21. Parents' interest in books

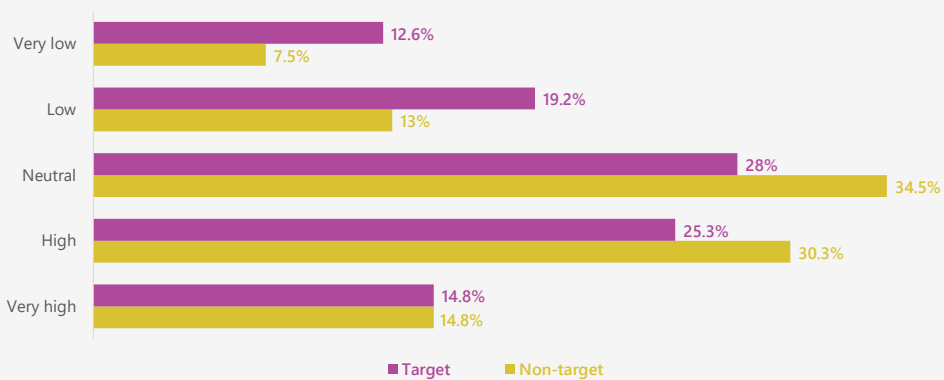
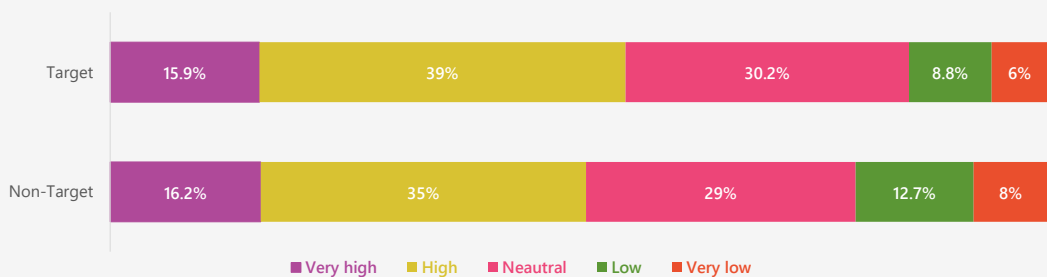


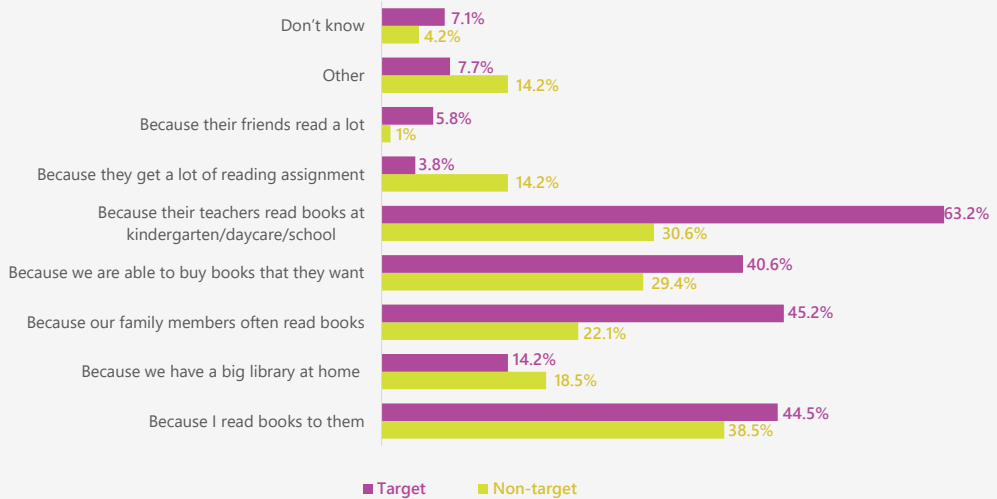
Figure 22. Children's interest in books, %, by target and non-target khoroc



As shown in Figure 23, more than half of the parents surveyed believed their children had a strong interest in books. In particular, 54.9% of parents in the target khoros and 50.7% in non-target khoros considered their children’s interest in books as “very high” and “high. Only 14.8% of parents in the target khoros and 20.8% of those in non-target khoros said their children had a “low” or “very low” interest in books.

⁹ Masa Durisic and Mila Bunijevac, *Parental Involvement as an Important Factor for Successful Education*. SEPS Journal Vol. 7, No. 3, 2017.

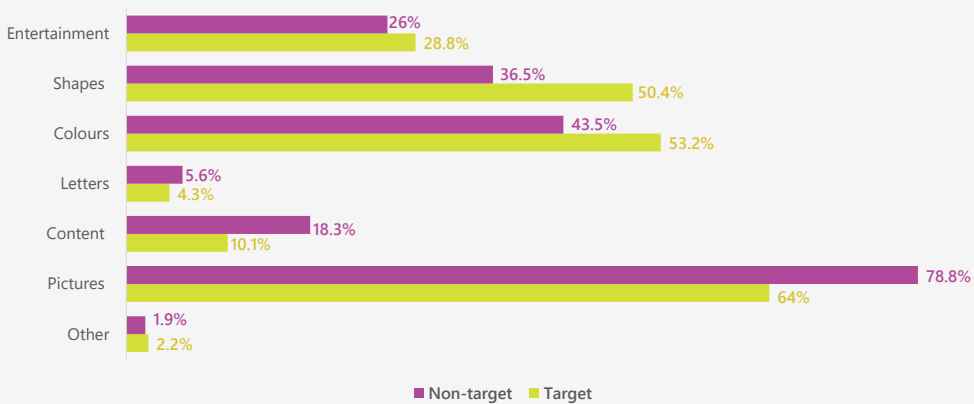
Figure 23. Parents' assumptions about why their children are interested in books



As for the reasons parents gave for their children’s interest in books, 63.2% believed their engagement was influenced by their kindergarten teachers, 45.2% by the parents’ reading habits, and taking time to read books to children (44.5%). As shown in Figure 24, peers were thought to be less likely to influence children’s love of books.

According to parents, most of the children (75.7%) were drawn to illustrations in books, but colors (45.5%) and shapes (39.5%) were also important. A majority of children (64%) in the target khoroos were more interested in illustrations and pictures in books, 53.2% were more concerned about colors, and 50.4% were drawn to shapes.

Figure 24. Children's preferences when choosing books



As observed by the parents, 35.2% of the children in the target khoros sometimes pretended to read books or told themselves stories “often” (20.3%) or “very often” (24.7%). In addition, 24.7% of the children in the target khoros showed an interest in reading signboards “often” (19.2%) and “very often” (30.8%).

Figure 25. Children who pretend to read books and tell stories

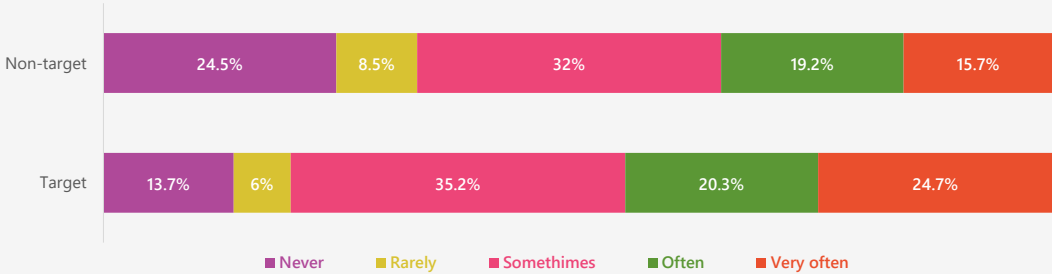
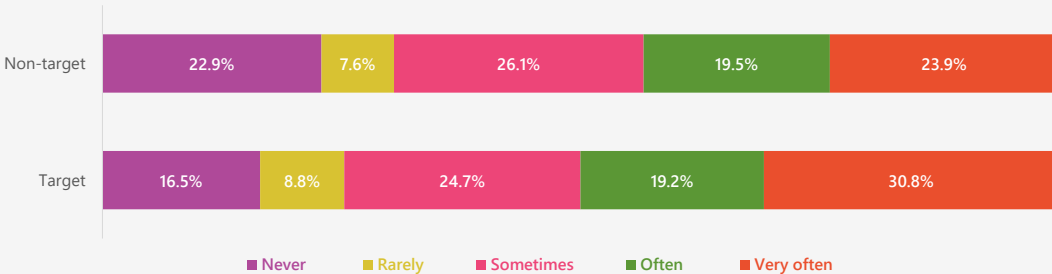
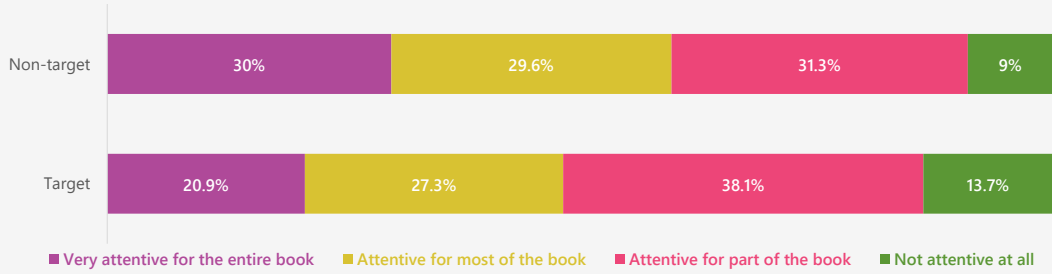


Figure 26. Children who show an interest in reading signboards when going out



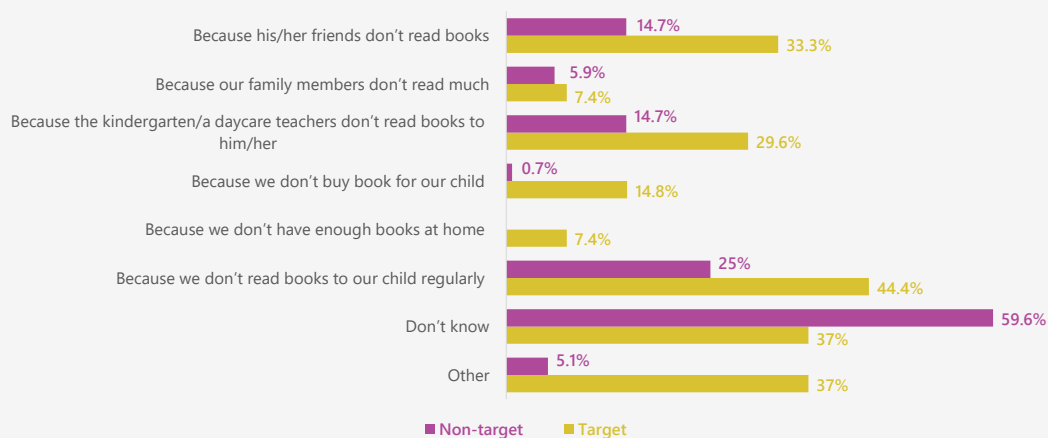
One-fifth of parents in the target khoros (20.9%) and 30% in non-target khoros said that their children were “very attentive” the entire time they were read to. Similarly, 38.1% of parents in the target khoros and 31.3% of those non-target khoros said their children were “attentive for a small part of the book”.

Figure 27. Children who pretend to read books and tell stories



It is evident from the survey results that parents tended to assume that the fewer books children had and the less time parents spent reading to their children, the less interest their children showed in reading books. Parents in the target khoroos said their children did not have a strong interest in books because of the little time spent being read to (44.4%) and not having enough books at home (7.4%). In contrast, many of the parents from the target khoroos (37%) and non-target khoroos (59.6%) were not sure why their children’s interest in books was low.

Figure 28. Parents’ assumptions about why their children are not interested in books

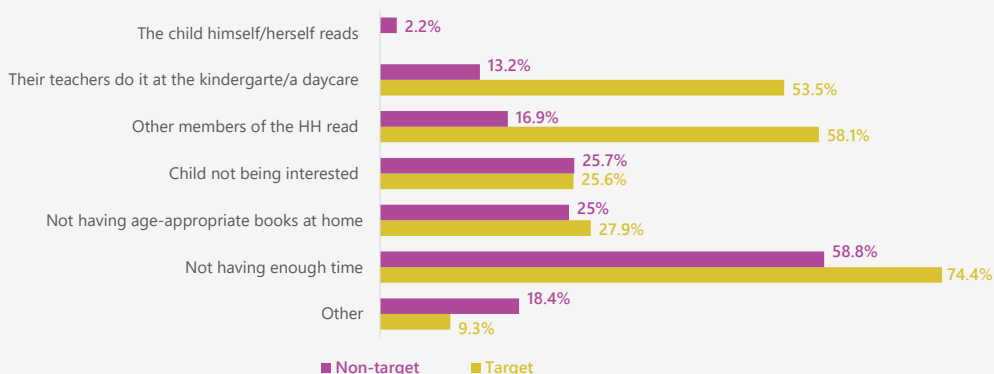


3.4. Challenges with making reading routine

Even though parents acknowledged the importance of reading books to their children and its benefits, the habit of reading books to children and encouraging them to love books was still low. There were a number of underlying hindrances to cultivating such habits, including the lack of access to books at home and in kindergarten, and poor awareness of the benefits of reading books to children.

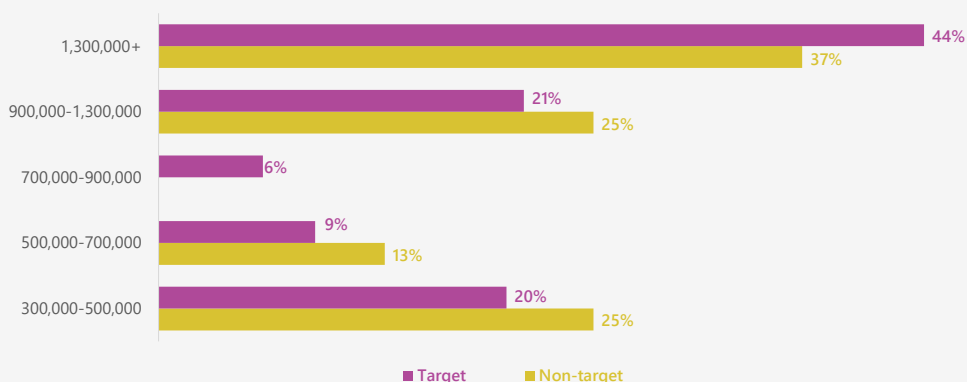
One of the most common reasons why parents did not read books to their children was that other members of the HH had this responsibility; 58.1% in the target khoroos and 16.9% in the non-target khoroos. Similarly, 52.4% of parents who said they could not read because they were busy had a higher education attainment level, and 74.5% had an income of more than MNT 2.0 million.

Figure 29. Parents' reasons why they did not read to their children, by target and non-target khoroo



Looking at HH income in the target khoroo, 20% of parents who said they had no time to read to their children had an income of MNT 0.3-0.5 million, 13% earned MNT 0.5-0.7 million, 25% MNT 0.9-1.3 million, and 37% earned more than 1.3 million. In the non-target khoroo, 44% of the respondents with a HH income of more than MNT 1.3 million said they did not have enough time to read to their children. It is evident from the results that parents found less time to read to their children as much of their time went to income-generating activities.

Figure 30. Percentage of parents that said they did not read to their children because they were busy, by household income



More than half of the respondents (57.1%) who said that they did not have enough age-appropriate books at home had no more than three books for their children.

The qualitative data also supports findings on why reading to children was not popular among the parents. Kindergarten teachers suggested that children would develop a greater interest in books if parents' participation increased, rather than the participation of other HH members.

They also observed that children whose parents picked them up from kindergarten were more active and cheerful, showing more interest in going to kindergarten, than those who were picked up by someone other than a parent.



Quote 2. Kindergarten teacher

Nowadays, in general, parents place a lot of importance on their children's language development and education. They increasingly ask teachers for advice on effectively spending time with their children and ask if their teachers notice any developmental changes in their children. I think it is partly because of various campaigns and activities we've organized for parents and children, which are showing their outcomes.

The HH's ability to buy books, and the availability of bookstores and libraries in the khoroos, hinder establishing a reading culture in HHs. For instance, as presented in Section 5 of this report, only 20.6% of the parents said they had a sufficient number of books at home; 48.5% had up to three children's books, and 51.8% said they had no library near their home. Only 21.5% of parents said that they had a bookstore near their home, and only 10% of parents said it took 15-30 minutes to get to a library.

Sub-conclusions

- Most parents preferred introducing their children to books at the age of four to five years, not during their younger years. Parents' habits of reading books and engaging in reading activities with their children correlated with their educational attainment. The lower the parents' educational level, the less likely they were to read to children or read books themselves. Conversely, the higher the HH income, the less time parents spent reading to their children.
- Many of the parents lack interaction with their children while reading to them. Particularly, they don't ask stimulating questions during reading time. However, parents were willing to embrace any emotions children expressed during reading time.
- Apart from work, the top reasons parents do not read to their children include the low ability of HHs to buy books and the accessibility and availability of books near their khoroos, making it difficult to make reading books to children routine.



**4. PARENTS, MANAGERS,
AND TEACHERS'
AWARENESS OF
READING'S BENEFITS**

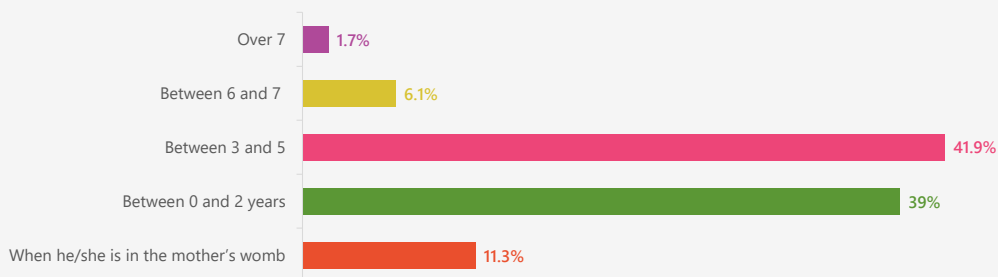
This section describes the awareness among parents and education institution managers and teachers of the benefits of reading books to children in their early years.

4.1. Importance of reading to children and developing a love of books

Reading books to a child from an early age and developing their interest in books has a profound effect on their life, especially in language development and literacy.¹⁰ Thus, it is critical for parents to understand that reading books with their children and having conversations about pictures and content can have a significant impact on their child's development.¹¹

Many of the parents (41.9%) believed the most appropriate age for exposing children to books and reading-related activities was three to five years old, and 39% said under three years. Very few parents felt it was important to start such activities when the child was in the mother's womb. Parents also believed that seven years of age was too late to introduce books and get children to love them.

Figure 31. Parents' understanding of the appropriate age to expose children to books and reading-related activities



Most of the parents (40.4%) of the parents from the non-target khoroos said that the most appropriate age of introducing a book to children is 3-5 and it is 47.3% in the target khoroos. 39% of the parents from non-target khoroos and 33% of the parents from the target khoroos regarded the most appropriate age is 0-2.

10 Ladd, M., Martin-Chang, S., Levesque, K. (2008). Parents' reading-related knowledge and children's learning acquisition, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol 102(1), Feb 2010, 32-42. doi: 10.1037/a0017288.

11 Merga, M. K. and Mat Roni, S. (2018). Empowering parents to encourage children to read beyond the early years. *The Reading Teacher*, 72(2), 213-221.

Figure 32. Parents' understanding of the appropriate age to expose children to books and reading-related activities, by target and non-target khoroo

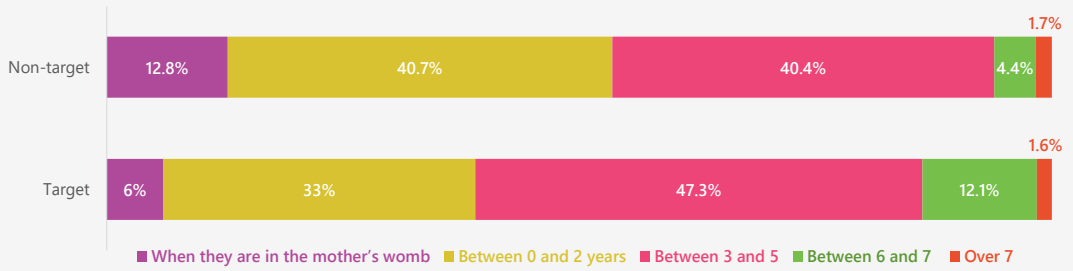
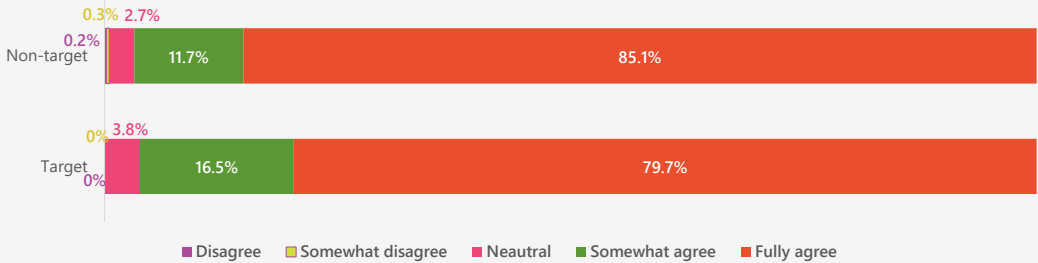


Figure 33. Parent's beliefs on the importance of developing an interest in reading in children

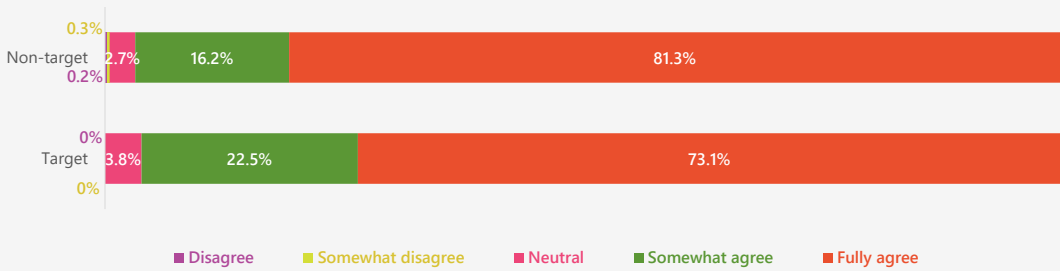


As shown in Figure 32, a majority of parents in the target and non-target khoroo acknowledged the importance of developing their children's broad interest in reading. Most of the parents in the target khoroo (96.2%) and non-target khoroo (96.8%) "fully" and/or "somewhat agreed" that it was important for their children to develop a broad interest in reading.

Similarly, as shown in Figure 33, most parents agreed that it was important for children to see reading as fun and enjoyable. For instance, 95.6% of parents in target khoroo and 97.5% in the non-target khoroo said it was important for children to develop a broad interest in books.

As shown in Figure 34, the higher the parents' educational attainment, the more likely it was that they believed reading books was important to children's development. Most of the parents with higher education (86.5%) "fully agreed", whereas 77.2% of parents with primary and lower secondary education "fully agreed".

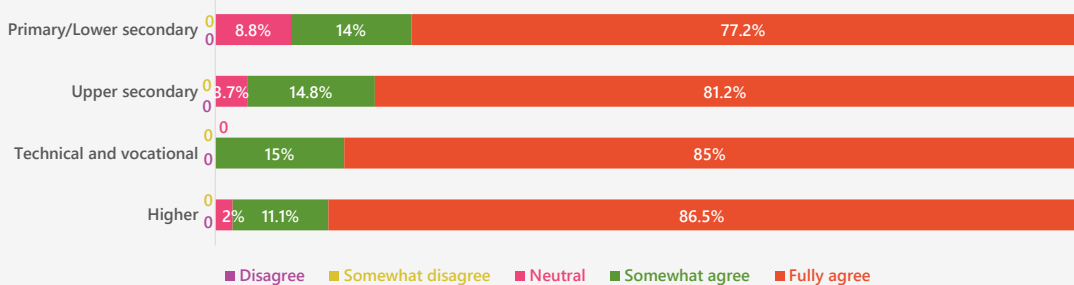
Figure 34. Parents' beliefs on the importance of children finding reading enjoyable, by target and non-target khoroo



Similarly, as shown in Figure 33, most parents agreed that it was important for children to see reading as fun and enjoyable. For instance, 95.6% of parents in target khoroo and 97.5% in the non-target khoroo said it was important for children to develop a broad interest in books.

As shown in Figure 34, the higher the parents' educational attainment, the more likely it was that they believed reading books was important to children's development. Most of the parents with higher education (86.5%) "fully agreed", whereas 77.2% of parents with primary and lower secondary education "fully agreed".

Figure 35. Parents' beliefs on the importance of children developing a broad interest in reading, by educational attainment



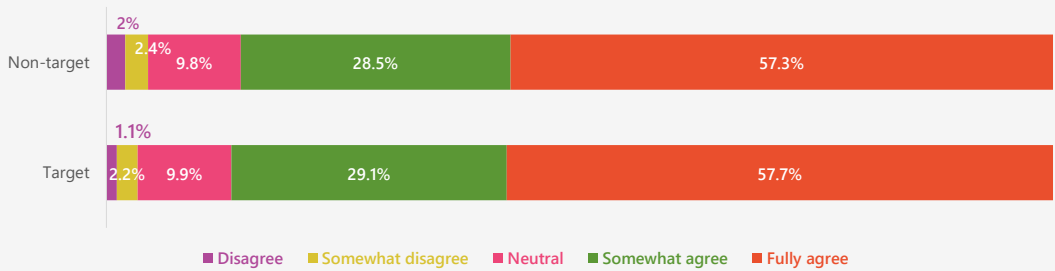
Officials from educational institutions also highlighted the importance of parents' involvement and participation in getting their children to love books. Nearly all parents (97.5%) said that it was their responsibility to help their children learn to read and write. Despite their age, gender, and HH income levels, most of the parents (96.7%) said it was very important to get their children to love books at an early age. The results summarized in Figure 34 show that the parents had a basic understanding of the benefits of reading books to their children.



Quote 3. Kindergarten manager

Our kindergarten organizes various activities to make children love books. Recently, our kindergarten implemented the Let's Make Friends with Books project. The project's main activities were reading and introducing books to make children develop a love of books. The kindergarten collected spare books from parents, and the parents made and crafted books for their children. The children and parents work together in accordance with the kindergarten's program. At the end of the project, the parents, teachers, and children celebrated the project's successful completion.

Figure 36. Parents' belief that children do well at reading in school when they are taught to read at home, by age group



As shown in Figure 35, most of the parents in the target (86.8%) and non-target khoros (85.8%) "fully" and "somewhat agreed" that children do well at reading in school because their parents teach them reading at home. Looking at the parents' age groups, those under 20 years (73.7%) were more likely to agree that parents' support for learning to read at home is critical to a child's success at school.

Figure 37. Parents' beliefs that children do well at reading in school when they are taught to read at home, by age group

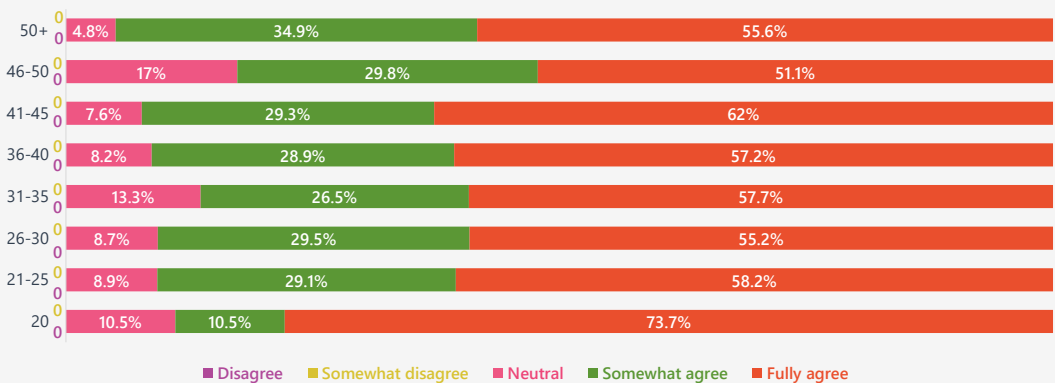
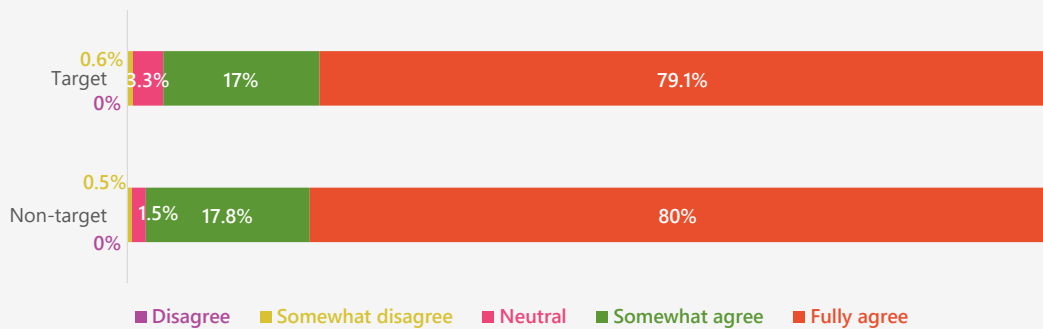


Figure 38. Parents' belief that parents have the responsibility to teach their children reading and writing skills



With regard to the extent to which parents agreed that parents have a responsibility to teach reading and writing skills to their child, a majority of the parents (79.1%) in the target khoroos and non-target khoroos (80%) “fully agreed”; 17% and 17.8%, respectively, “somewhat agreed”. The higher the parents’ educational attainment, the more responsibility they felt for teaching reading and writing skills to their children. However, they were also more likely to say they did not have time to read to their children.

Figure 39. Parents' belief that parents are responsible for teaching reading and writing skills to their children, by educational attainment

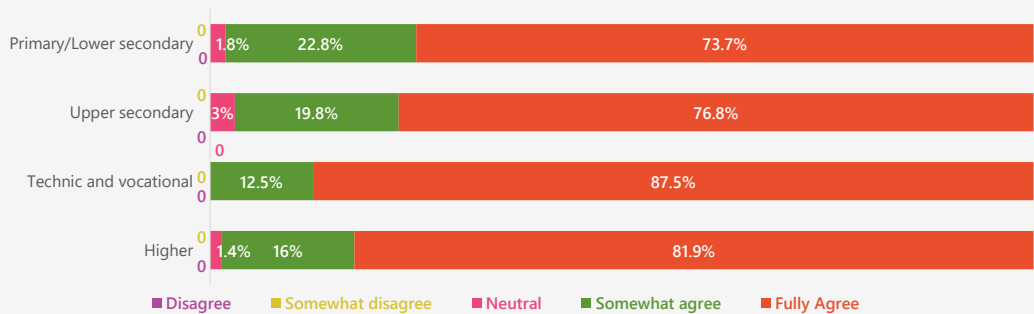
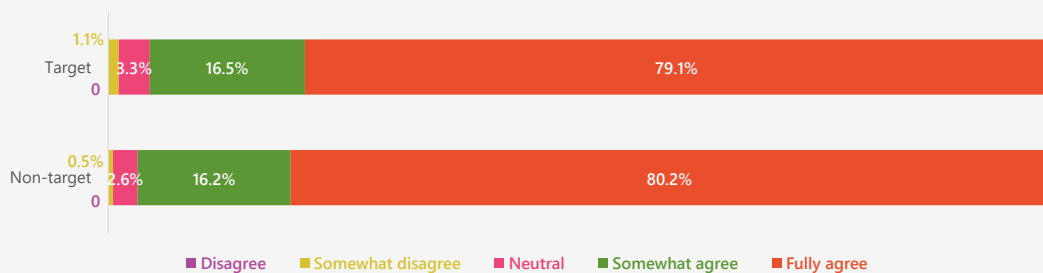
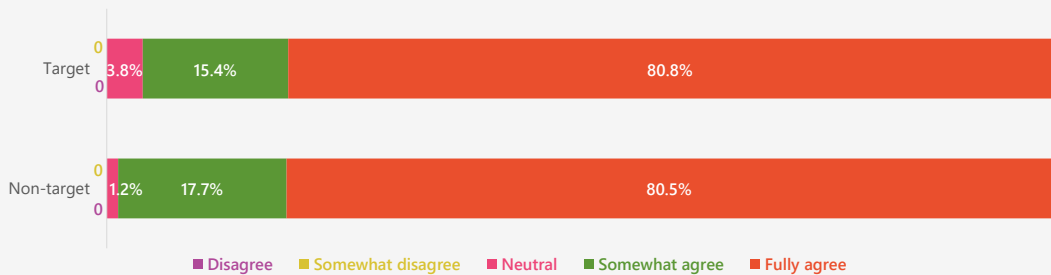


Figure 40. Parents' belief that parents should help in developing their child's ability to divide a word into syllables to read new words



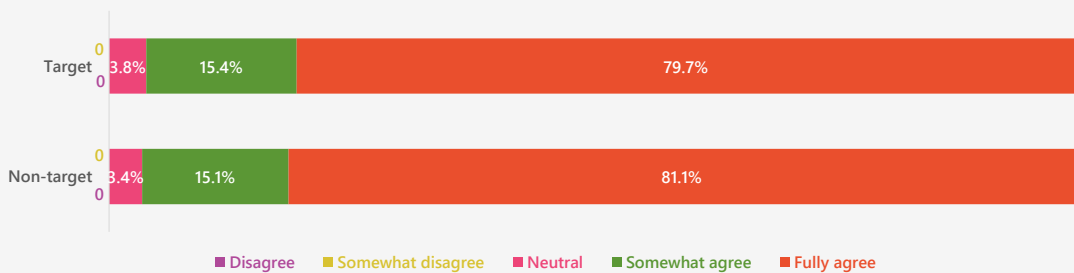
As shown in Figure 39, 95.6% of parents in the target khoroods and 96.4% of parents in the non-target khoroods “fully” and “somewhat agreed” that parents should help in developing children’s ability to divide a word into parts (syllables) to read new words. There was no statistically significant difference depending on the parents’ age, gender, and educational attainment.

Figure 41. Parents’ belief that parents should develop their child’s confidence and interest in putting ideas on paper



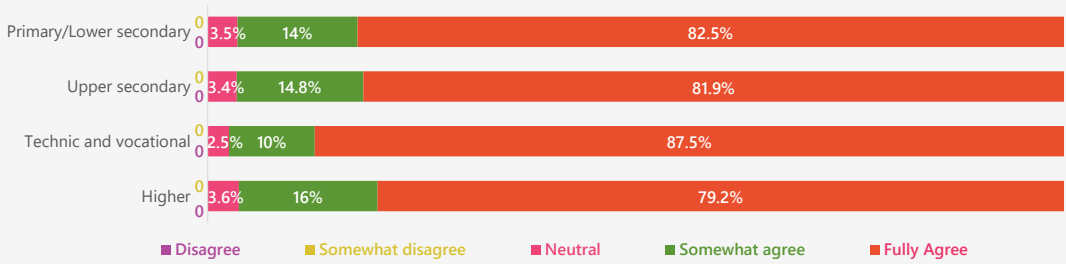
For the parents’ contributions to the development of children’s confidence and interest in putting ideas onto paper, a majority of the parents (80.8%) in the target khoroods and non-target khoroods (80.5%) “fully agreed” that they were responsible; 15.4% in the target khoroods and 17.7% in the non-target khoroods “somewhat agreed”. There was no significant difference in the parents’ ownership of the responsibility according to gender, age, and educational attainment.

Figure 42. Parents’ belief that most parents should supplement the literacy skills learned at school by teaching their child literacy skills at home



In Figure 41, it can be seen that parents felt it was their responsibility to supplement the literacy skills their children learned at school by teaching literacy skills at home. A majority of parents in the target khoroods (95.1%) and non-target khoroods (96.2%) “fully agreed” or “somewhat agreed”, while only 1.1% of the parents in the target khoroods and 0.2% from non-target khoroods “disagreed” that they were responsible for supplementing their children’s classroom work. There was no significant difference according to the respondents’ educational attainment.

Figure 43. Parents' belief that most parents should supplement the literacy skills learned at school by teaching their child literacy skills at home, by educational attainment



4.2. Introducing children to books at an early age and their development

As mentioned earlier in the report, parents reading books to children has many positive developmental impacts. In the survey, parents were asked to what extent they agreed that reading books to their children affects cognitive development, socio-emotional development, academic performance, bonds between parents and children, and language development.

As shown in the figures below, a majority of parents “fully” and “somewhat agreed” that reading books to children helped strengthen cognitive development. In the target khoros, 95.1% of parents believed that being read to was helpful for their children’s cognitive development, and 93.8% agreed in the non-target khoros. There was no statistically significant difference

Figure 44. Reading books to strengthen cognitive development, by target and non-target khoroo

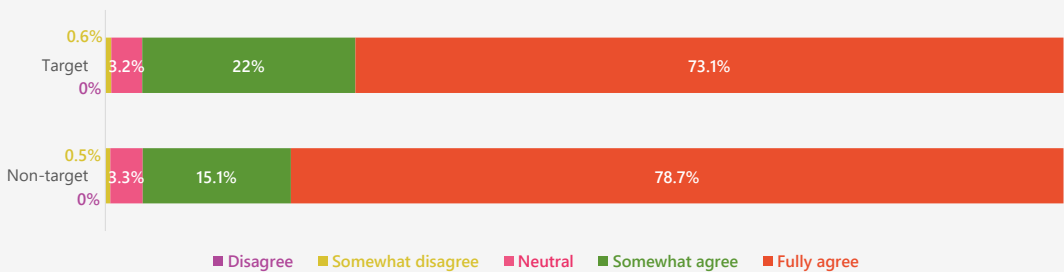
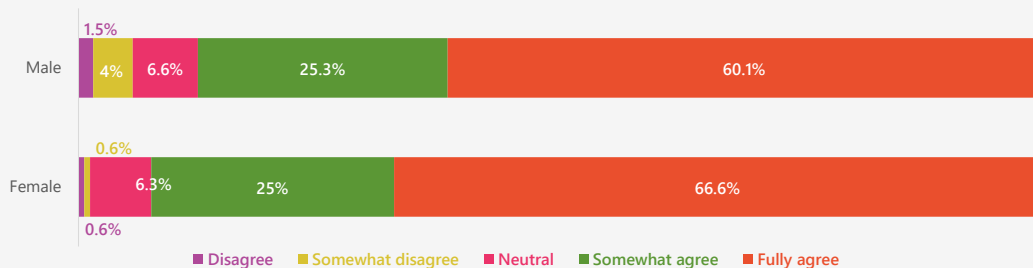
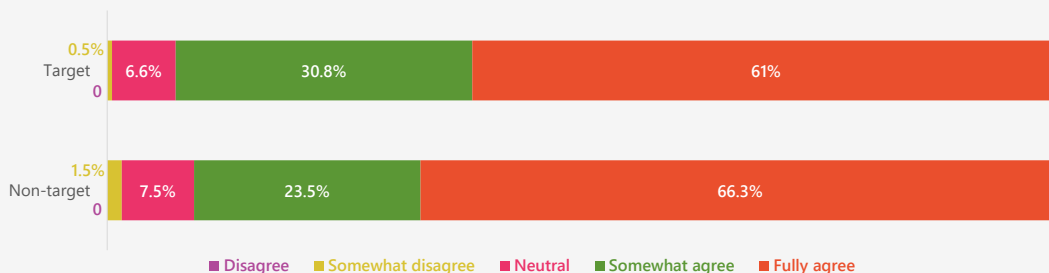


Figure 45. Benefits of reading to children to strengthen their cognitive development, by gender



Regarding parents’ belief that reading books positively affected children’s socio-emotional development, 66.3% of parents in the target khoroo and 61% in the non-target khoroo “fully agreed” that being read to helped their children learn to manage their emotions, express their feelings, and interact with other people. In the target khoroo, 23.5% of parents “somewhat agreed”, with 30.8% in the non-target khoroo. This demonstrates that parents had a considerable understanding of reading’s benefits for their children’s socio-emotional development. There was no statistically significant difference according to parents’ age or educational attainment.

Figure 46. Benefits of reading for socio-emotional development



As seen in the figure below, a majority of parents in the target and non-target khoroo believed that children’s academic performance can greatly benefit from being read to. Most parents in the target khoroo (93%) and non-target khoroo (96.1%) “fully” or “somewhat agreed” that children were more likely to succeed at school if their parents spent quality time reading books to them. There was no statistically significant difference according to the parents’ educational attainment. However, the percentage of parents with higher education (74%) who “fully” recognized the benefits was higher than those with primary education (58.6%).

Figure 47. Benefits of reading for academic performance

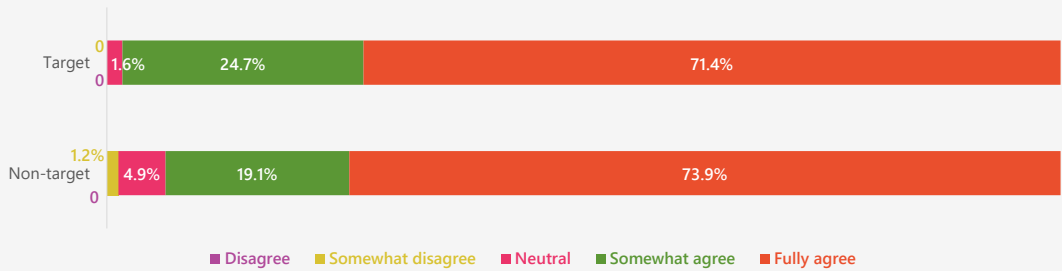
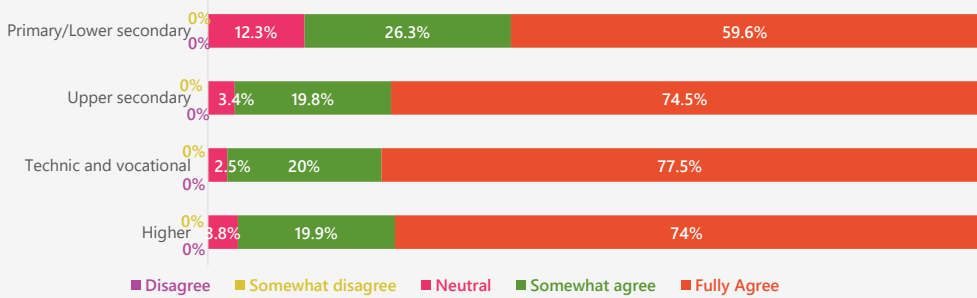


Figure 48. Benefits of reading for academic performance, by educational attainment



As we can see from Figure 48, the share of parents who “fully” and “somewhat agreed” that reading to children helped strengthen the bond between parents and children was slightly lower than other recognized benefits, such as benefits for cognitive development and academic performance. A total of 90.2% of parents in the target khoroos and 89.5% in the non-target khoroos “fully” or “somewhat agreed” that children’s bonds with their parents are enhanced by quality time spent reading. Mothers felt it was more important to read for bond-building with their children than fathers.

Figure 49. Benefits of reading for strengthening bonds with parents and caregivers

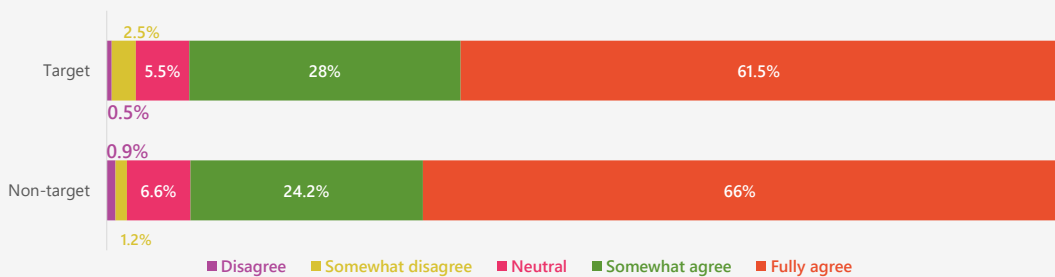
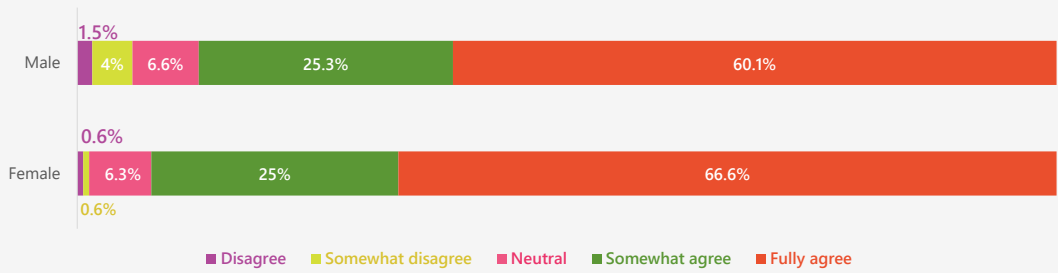


Figure 50. Benefits of reading for strengthening bonds with parents and caregivers, by gender



As shown in Figure 50, a majority of parents in the target and non-target khoros said that reading to children was beneficial to children’s language development. Most of the parents in the target khoros (96.5%) and non-target khoros (97.7%) “fully” and “somewhat agreed” that reading to children was helpful for their language development. The higher the parents’ educational attainment, the more likely they agreed that reading to children had benefits for language development. In particular, 86.9% of parents with higher education and 68.4% of parents with primary and lower secondary education “fully” recognized the benefits.

Figure 51. Benefits of reading for language development, by target and non-target khoros

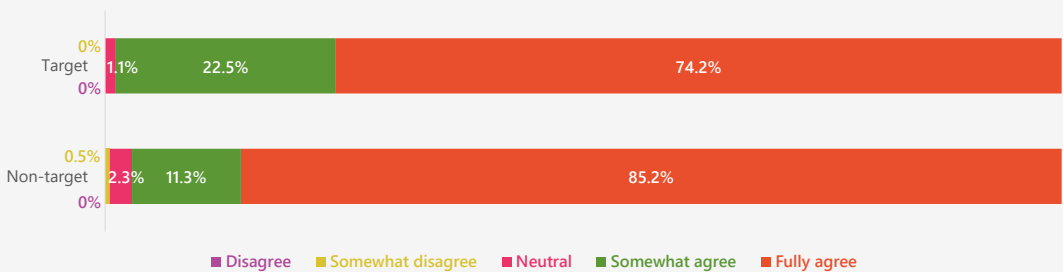
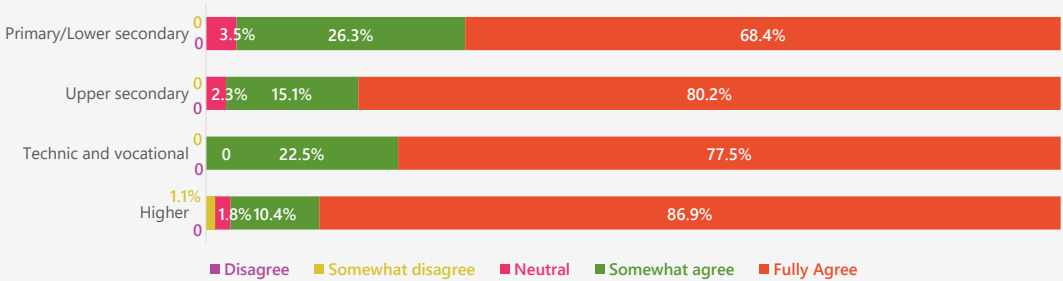


Figure 52. Benefits of reading for language development, by gender



Kindergarten teachers and managers recognized the benefits of reading books to children and implemented projects and activities to encourage parents to read to their children at home.



Quote 4. Kindergarten teacher

Our kindergarten organizes various activities to make children love books. Recently, our kindergarten implemented the Let's Make Friends with Books project. The project's main activities were reading and introducing books to make children develop a love of books. The kindergarten collected spare books from parents, and the parents made and crafted books for their children. The children and parents work together in accordance with the kindergarten's program. At the end of the project, the parents, teachers, and children celebrated the project's successful completion.

4.3. Benefits of reading books to first and second graders

As shown in the figure below, few parents with first and second graders read books to their children before sending them to school. In particular, only 10.9% of the parents in the target khoroods and 8.8% of the parents in the non-target khoroods said they "very often" read books to their children. In contrast, the vast majority of parents in the target and non-target khoroods "sometimes" read books to their children; 47.3% and 37.2%, respectively. In addition, 7.3% of parents in the target khoroods and 5.4% in the non-target khoroods "never" read books to their children. Mothers were more likely to read to their children than fathers. The percentage of mothers who "very often" read books to their children was 11.6%, whereas no fathers said they "very often" read to their children before sending them to school.

Figure 53. Whether parents read to their children before they started school, by target and non-target khoroods

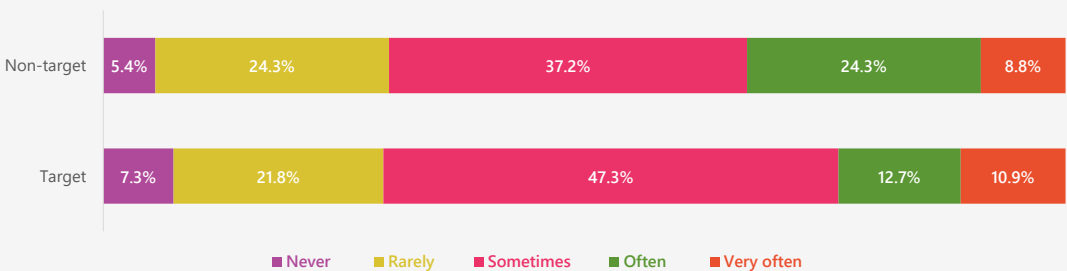
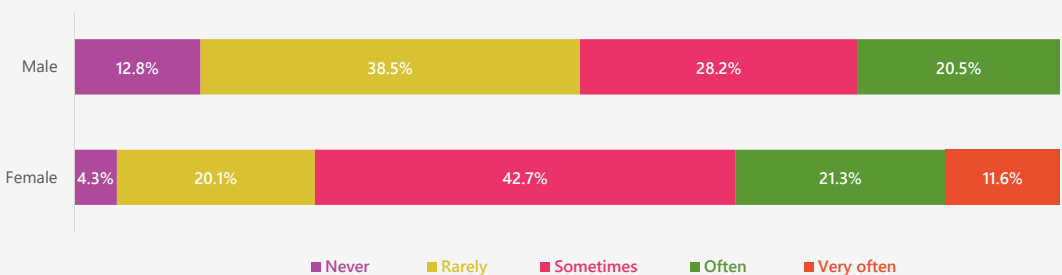


Figure 54. Whether parents read to their children before they started school, by gender



Despite their reading habits, a majority of the parents with first and second graders agreed that reading books to their children before sending them to school had a number of positive effects on their children’s development. As shown in the figure below, most parents (64%) said that reading books was “very important” to develop children’s cognition, 59% identified benefits to language development, and 56% to attention span. Conversely, the least importance (40%) was given by the parents to the socio-emotional development of children.

Figure 55. How parents with first and second graders see the importance of reading books to their children before they start school

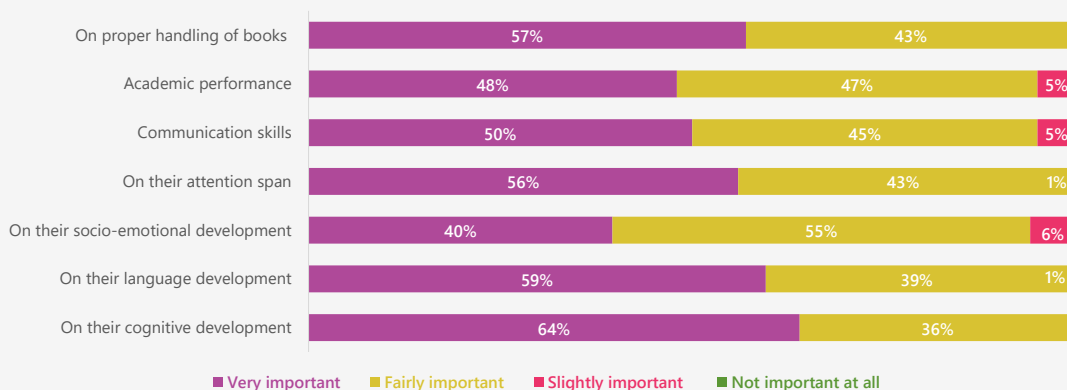


Table 4. Correlation between how parents prioritized reading to children and parents’ reading habits

Item		Frequency of parents reading to their children before they started school	Parents’ beliefs on the importance of reading to children for their development
Frequency of parents reading to their children before they start school	Pearson Correlation	1	.778**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	203	203
Parents’ beliefs on the Importance of reading to children for their development	Pearson Correlation	.778**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	203	203

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in the table above, there was a direct and strong correlation between how parents prioritized reading to their children and their own reading habits. The strong correlation represents a statistical significance of 95%. The more the parents read to children before they started school, the more important they thought the benefits of reading to children for their development were.

Sub-conclusions

- Despite parents' recognition of the importance of quality time spent with their children and reading to them, the parents tended to believe that the proper time for introducing books to their children and encouraging them to love books was the age of three to five years.
- Most parents agreed it was important to help their children develop a broad interest and confidence in reading. Conversely, they were not as certain that developing literacy and numeracy at home would be helpful to their children's reading in school. However, parents believed that supplementing skills their children learned at school would be helpful.

A photograph of a young child in a striped shirt and pants, seen from behind, sitting on a wooden floor. The child is surrounded by books, some of which are stacked in a wooden crate. One book is open on the floor. The room is filled with various potted plants, including a large one in the foreground and several smaller ones on a shelf in the background. The entire image has a warm, orange-red color overlay.

5. ACCESS TO BOOKS AND PROMOTION OF READING BOOKS

The section outlines the existing accessibility and availability of books within the surveyed HHs and kindergartens, especially that of children’s books. It also presents the results of examining the existing legal and policy documents and practices regarding the promotion of reading books.

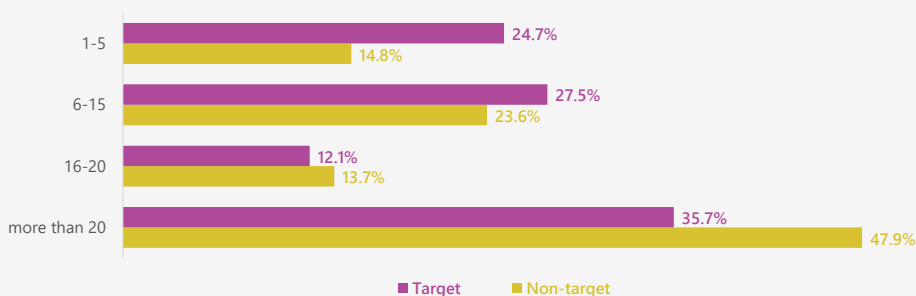
5.1. Accessibility and availability of books at home in preschool education

A young child’s home environment plays a key role in determining their chances for survival and development.¹² Optimal conditions include a safe and well-organized physical environment; opportunities for children to play, explore, and discover; and the presence of developmentally appropriate objects, toys, and books.¹³ Several studies suggest that children who grow up in HHs where books are available receive, on average, three more years of schooling than children from homes without books.¹⁴

The accessibility of children’s books was evaluated using 11 indicators, with a score of 0.7 out of a total of 1.0. This means that children had access to books at home and in their kindergarten to some extent. In the target and non-target khoros, the accessibility and availability of children’s books were very similar, at 0.71 and 0.70, respectively.

Looking at the indicators separately, 35.7% of the surveyed HHs had more than 20 books at home in the target khoros and 47.9% in the non-target khoros. Conversely, while 14.8% of HHs in target khoros had up to five books, in the non-target khoros, 24.7% did.

Figure 56. Number of books in surveyed households, by target and non-target khoroo



Parents in the target khoros had an average of nine books at home, and 12 in the non-target khoros. There was no statistically significant difference according to HH income level; however, it was evident that parents and caregivers’ educational attainment significantly affected the availability of books at home. There was an average of 13 books in HHs where the HH heads had higher education, while those with primary and secondary education had only seven. The higher the HH heads’ level of education, the more books there were at home, and the higher the percentage of children’s books.

¹² Belsky, Jay, et al., Socioeconomic Risk, Parenting During the Preschool Years and Child Health Age 6 Years, *European Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 17, No. 5, 14 December 2006, pp. 511–512.

¹³ Dobrova-Krol, Natasha A., et al., Effects of Perinatal HIV Infection and Early Institutional Rearing on Physical and Cognitive Development of Children in Ukraine, *Child Development*, Vol. 81, No. 1, January/February 2010, pp. 237–251.

¹⁴ Evans, Mariah D.R., et al., Family Scholarly Culture and Educational Success: Books and schooling in 27 nations, *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, Vol. 28, No. 2, June 2010, pp. 171–197.

Figure 57. Number of children's books in households

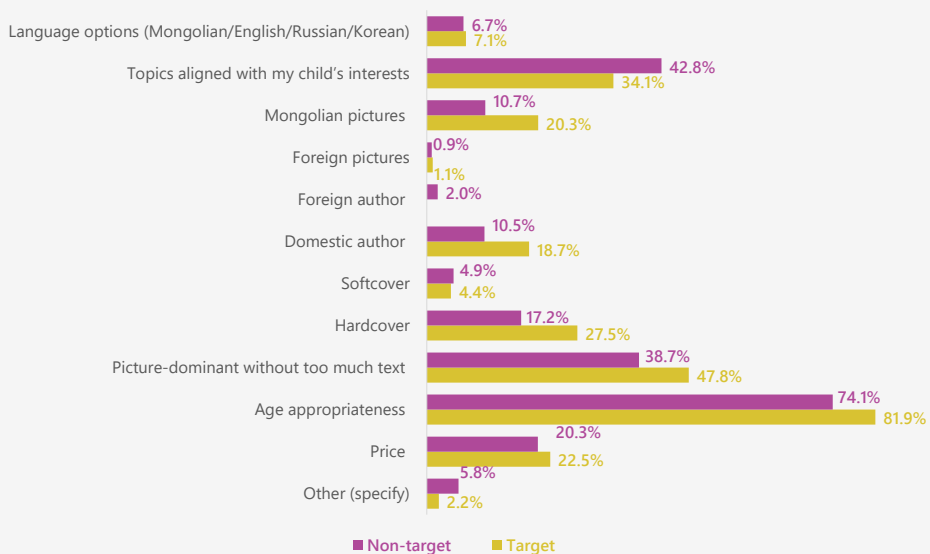


Regarding the HHs' spending on books, 12.6% of the HHs in the target khoros and 10.4% in non-target khoros allocated no money to books. Most HHs (two-thirds) "occasionally" spent money on buying books, and one-fifth "always" did; 25.8% of HHs in the target khoros and 28.6% in non-target khoros spent money on children's books.

The expenditure on educational and cultural activities tended to reflect the HH's income and the level of education of the HH head. It was also observed that the higher the income level of the respondents, the greater the number of books in the HH (and the number of books for children) compared to other income groups.

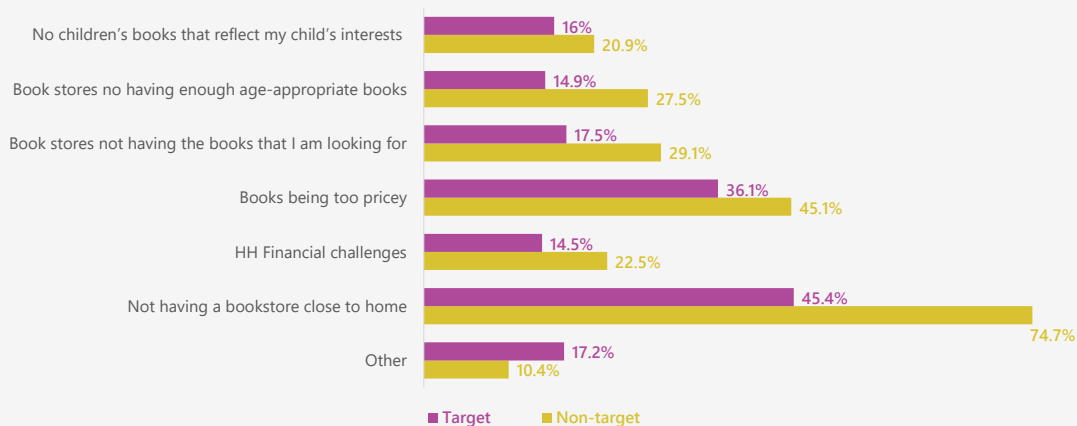
When choosing books for their children, 81.9% of parents and caregivers in the target khoros and 74.1% in the non-target khoros prioritized age-appropriateness. This was followed by a preference for their children's interests. Reasonable pricing was identified as a priority by 22.5% in the target khoros and 20.3% in the non-target khoros.

Figure 58. Parents' preferences when choosing books for their children, by target and non-target khoros



Preferences for the features of children’s books varied depending on the HH income and education level of the HH heads. One of the most common problems faced when choosing age-appropriate books was a lack of bookstores or libraries in the area. A majority of parents in the target khoros (74.7%) and 45.4% in non-target khoros reported there were no bookstores in their areas. This was followed by pricing and the unavailability of age-appropriate books. The HH’s financial challenges were mentioned as a factor by 22.5% in the target khoros and 14.5% in the non-target khoros.

Figure 59. Common challenges parents face when buying books for their children, by target and non-target khoros



Among the challenges mentioned above, the poor availability of age-appropriate books in the market was also highlighted in the in-depth interviews with preschool education policymakers.



Quote 5. Officer-in-Charge of Preschool Education, Ministry of Education and Science

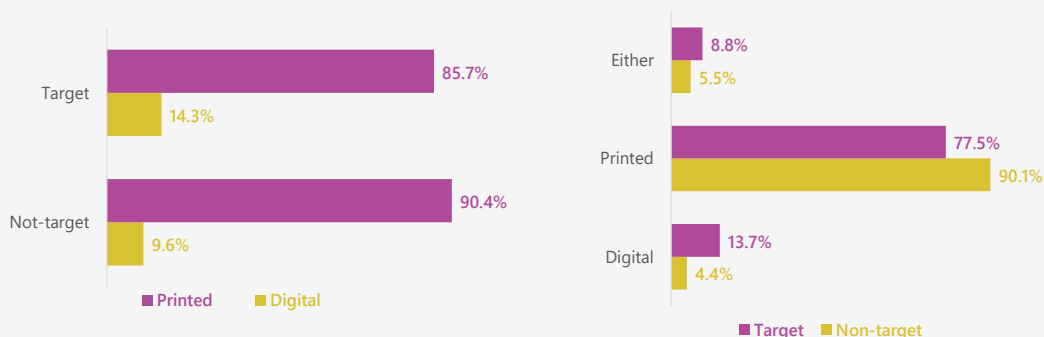
At the policy level, there is a need to develop a comprehensive standard for children's books. It's a good idea to have criteria for everything regarding children's books, including the content, materials, cover, and text. The lack of such criteria results in uncensored translated books in the market. Parents also tend to choose a book based on their child's interests and cover, the appearances of books rather than looking at the content and quality of books.

The survey results showed that children had sufficient access to reach and interact with books at home and in kindergartens without the help of an adult. Parents, caregivers, kindergarten managers, and teachers had a relatively good understanding of the advantages of placing books in fixed locations to introduce them to children and develop their interest in books.

As for the popularity of different types of books, 85.7% of HHs in the target khoros and 90.4% in non-target khoros preferred printed books. The use of digital books was less popular, accounting for only 10%. This was also reflected in preferences for forms of books. In particular, 77.6% of parents in the target khoros preferred printed books, while 13.7%

preferred digital books. This might be due to the parents' lack of familiarity and experience with digital books.

Figure 60. Preferred forms of books, paper or digital, target and non-target khoroo



Regarding the acquisition of printed books for children, parents usually bought rather than borrowed; 90.7% in the target khoroo and 91.9% in the non-target khoroo. Less than 2% of parents acquired books for their children through borrowing. The acquisition of digital books was 18.1% in the target khoroo and 10.8% in non-target khoroo. The rest did not really make an attempt to acquire digital books.

5.2. Education policies and programs promoting the reading of books

The following legal and policy documents are in place to organize and deliver preschool education services to young children in Mongolia.

Table 5. Key preschool legal and policy documents, as of March 2022

Document	Approved by	Date
The Law of Mongolia on Preschool Education	Parliament of Mongolia	2008
Comprehensive Policy to Support the Development of Young Children	Joint Resolution #116/83/45 of the Minister of Education and Science, Minister of Health, and Minister of Labor and Social Protection	2005
Procedure for Evaluating the Performance of Kindergarten Teachers	Resolution A/293 of the Minister of Education and Science	2013
About Some Measures to be Taken to Support Teacher Development	Resolution A/145 of the Minister of Education and Science	2019
Approval of Training Program	Resolution A/181 of the Minister of Education and Science	2018
Model Rules for Kindergartens	Resolution A/118 of the Minister of Education and Science	2019
Approval of Standard Job Descriptions (kindergarten principal, methodologist, teacher, and assistant teacher)	Resolution A/118 of the Minister of Education and Science	2019

Document	Approved by	Date
Early Childhood Development Program Procedures for Evaluating the Performance of Kindergartens and Schools	Resolution A/487 of the Minister of Education and Science	2018
Guidelines on Evaluating Pre-school Education Training and Activities	Resolution A/804 of the Minister of Education and Science	2019
Guidelines For Preschool Education Training and Activities	Resolution A/164 of the Minister of Education and Science	2020
Procedures for Designing Materials and Learning Environments Suitable for Students with Disabilities at All Levels of Education	Resolution A/184 of the Minister of Education and Science	2020
Approval of Standard Training Program	Resolution A/278 of the Minister of Education and Science	2020
Procedures for Assessing the Development of Preschoolers and their Readiness for Primary Schooling	Resolution A/280 of the Minister of Education and Science	2020
Policy on the Protection of Preschool Children	Resolution A/269 of the Minister of Education and Science	2020
Model Rules for Hygiene and Infection Control to be Followed in Education Institutions	Resolution A/179 of the Minister of Education and Science	2017

Despite the unavailability of provisions and clauses specifically related to introducing books to children and encouraging them to love books, preschool education institutions at all levels implement such activities to ensure children’s comprehensive development. For example, preschool education institutions in the districts and aimags (provinces) initiated projects and activities to improve accessibility to books in kindergartens by collecting books from parents, children and parents creating books with teachers, and organizing meetings with the authors of children’s books.

The Law on Preschool Education (2008) and the Home-based Early Childhood Development Program (2018) include provisions for increasing the role and participation of parents in creating a favorable learning environment for preschool children. To implement these provisions, parents are encouraged and asked to donate unused books to the kindergarten library and to borrow books for reading at home. They are also encouraged to exchange books with their classmates.

To improve evidence-based decision-making for policies on preschoolers, in 2020, the Ministry of Education and Science approved a procedure for assessing the development and readiness of preschool-aged children for primary education. The procedure includes specific criteria for assessing children’s reading and writing skills. It was used to conduct a nationwide assessment of 24,000 first graders in 2020. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science collaborates with national and international development partners such as the NSO, the World Bank, and UNICEF to conduct Social Indicator Sample Surveys, integrating questions regarding the development of preschool-aged children.

Years of research clearly show that children are more likely to succeed in learning when their

families actively support them. When parents and other family members read with children, it helps them complete homework. Parents talking to teachers and participating in school or other learning activities gives children a tremendous advantage.¹⁵

Parents and officials from preschool education institutions highlight the benefits of cooperation between parents, educational institutions, and children to make the introduction of books and their appreciation by children more effective. Within their resources and capacities, kindergartens organize activities and projects to increase parents' role and contributions to children's development and improve cooperation. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for strengthening cooperation between parents, children, and educational institutions. Some kindergartens have organized methodological training for parents on working with their children.

During in-depth interviews, education officials shared their best practices for promoting reading books with the collaboration of parents and children, including organizing competitions, activities, and events.

“

Quote 6. Kindergarten No. 126, Chingeltei District

The District Education Department launched the Let's Make Friends with Books campaign during the winter break. The campaign provided teachers with training to learn how to make digital books. Using these skills, the teachers started making e-books and shared them with parents to make them accessible to children. This has been an important form of support for parents who can't afford to buy new books and are unaccustomed to reading to their children.

... Also, in February, a "Secret History of the Mongols" reading competition was organized for teachers. We also have a tradition of exchanging books, expanding book resources, and rewarding those who read the most books. We've seen increased participation and involvement from parents this year.

“

Quote 7. Kindergarten No. 175, Chingeltei District

Some parents are hesitant to ask the kindergarten teacher for help with how to work with their children. Based on this need, our kindergarten established a Parent Counseling Center. The center provides parents with information on how to introduce books to their children and make them love books. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the center provided services by telephone. We decided to continue the services after the COVID-19 lockdowns. We don't require personal information from the parents asking for support and counseling.

“

Quote 8. Kindergarten No. 252, Sukhbaatar District

We organize Open Door and Fair Day to improve the involvement of parents. Currently, such activities are restricted because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The parents seem to lack the habit of reading books to children and spending quality time with them, especially in our khoroo.

Teachers play a major role in encouraging children to love books and introducing them to

¹⁵ *Helping Your Child Become a Reader*, U.S. Department of Education, 2005

books. The former Institute of Teacher’s Professional Development (ITPD), currently extended to the General Department of Education, is the main institution responsible for building the capacity of teachers and staff at all levels of education. The institute organizes a professional development training series for kindergarten teachers and is responsive to their needs. In 2020, the ITPD organized training for preschool education specialists in all aimags to support speech development in children under three. In addition, with the support of UNICEF, the Municipal Education Department organized capacity-building training for preschool managers in 2020.

Although policy documents do not explicitly state that the curriculum should include assignments introducing children to books and encouraging them to love books, kindergartens pursue this goal, utilizing their existing resources to ensure comprehensive development. The day-to-day activities of most kindergartens involve reading activities for preschoolers.



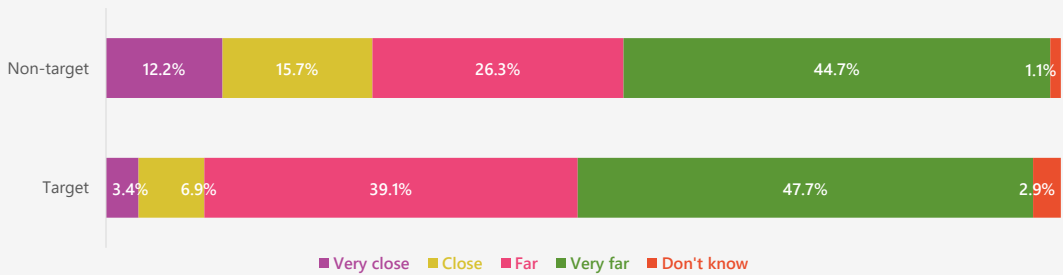
Quote 9. Institute of Teacher’s Professional Development

One of the kindergartens in Khovd aimag initiated a very important project for young children to introduce and preserve Mongolian heritage. They did this by reading Mongolian folk tales and stories to children and brought back the use of traditional toys in kindergarten.

5.3. Children’s access to bookstores, libraries, and community centers

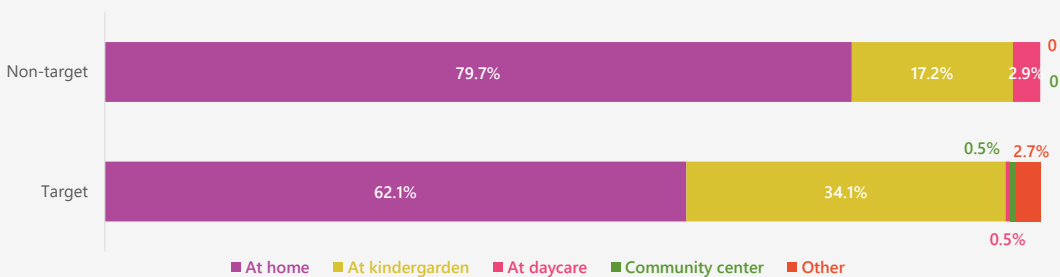
Mongolia’s Preschool Education Standards set out requirements for classrooms and learning materials. The Guidelines on Implementing Preschool Education Standards incorporate steps to meet these requirements. Kindergartens are responsible for providing an environment for children’s comprehensive development, including libraries. However, the existing accessibility of bookstores, libraries, and community centers necessary for the comprehensive development of preschool-aged children remains insufficient. The majority of parents in the target khorooos (47.7%) and 44.7% in non-target khorooos said it took more than one hour to get to the nearest library. Just 3.4% in the target khorooos and 12.2% in non-target khorooos said it took as little as 15 minutes. One-third of parents in the target khorooos (39.1%) and 26.3% in non-target khorooos said it took 31 minutes to one hour to reach the nearest library. This demonstrates poor accessibility and availability of libraries in the areas HHs occupied.

Figure 61. Time it takes to reach the nearest library, by target and non-target khoroo



The survey results showed that children had good access to books in the home. Two-thirds of parents in the target khoroo (62.1%) and 79.7% in non-target khoroo said that children were able to reach books without the help of adults. In kindergartens and daycare centers, this was 34.5% in the target khoroo and 17.4% in non-target khoroo. A few khoroo governors' offices reserved a room for public reading, but most districts had no public libraries for parents to take their children to. The governor of khoroo 43 in Songinokhairkhan District planned to refurbish one of his offices and make it a public reading hall with the community's support. The Citizens' Hall of khoroo 31 in Sukhbaatar District offered a public reading space, but the public was hesitant to use the space due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 62. Places where children have the most access to books without the help of an adult, by target and non-target khoroo



From the data collected in interviews, it was clear that the availability of books in kindergartens reflected insufficient budgeting for books and libraries. A small portion of variable costs is designated for purchasing stationery, leaving very little for purchasing books and updating kindergarten libraries. Responding to these limitations, kindergarten teachers create books themselves using the resources they have on hand. They sometimes receive contributions from senior preschoolers. Some kindergartens make digital books available on their website to encourage parents and give assignments for them to be read by children.

Policymakers and officials from the surveyed education institutions were not satisfied with the quality, content, and availability of children's books on the market. They highlighted the need to create quality and age-appropriate books suitable for Mongolian children. This will require effort and support from policymakers and the public. Given proper planning and

management, new standards could contribute to passing on Mongolian traditions and culture to young generations through fairytales and stories, all while helping them develop a love of books.

Sub-conclusions

- Preschool children had access to books at home and in their kindergartens, to some extent. The higher the educational attainment of the HH heads, the more children's books there were at home. However, HH income remains one of the most common challenges to buying books for children.
- Parents prioritized age-appropriateness when it came to choosing books for their children. This was followed by a preference for books with little text, more illustrations, and low prices.
- As highlighted by officials from preschool education institutions, the standards for children's books should be revised, especially for those written by Mongolian authors.
- Parents and teachers had a good understanding of the importance of placing books in locations where children could reach them without the help of an adult.
- Digital books were not popular among parents with children aged up to five years. However, some kindergartens have started promoting digital books through their websites, which is helpful to HHs that cannot afford printed books.
- Existing legal and policy documents on preschools do not have specific provisions and clauses related to introducing books to children and encouraging them to have a love of books. However, preschool education institutions at all levels implement activities to ensure children's comprehensive development.
- Officials from preschool education institutions highlighted the importance of cooperation between parents, children, and education institutions to promote reading among preschoolers and encourage a love of books.
- The accessibility and availability of public libraries and bookstores are poor in the surveyed districts.



6. EARLY EDUCATION STIMULATION AND COMMON CHALLENGES

This section of the report outlines the early education stimulation provided at home and kindergarten, cooperation between parents and educational institutions to promote reading habits and culture among caregivers of children up to five years old, and policy and practices regarding children left behind by education services. The data is mainly from interviews with kindergarten teachers and managers, social workers, khoroo governors, district education department staff, and officers of the Ministry of Education and Science.

6.1. Early education stimulation through reading books and playing

As reported by kindergarten teachers and managers, the following projects and activities are implemented in kindergartens to support the development of children up to five years old:

- *Book Programme*
- *Reading Time 2021*
- *Book Package*
- *Heroes and Heroines of Children's Stories Day*
- *Read a Book for Fun*
- *Make Friends with Books*
- *Teaching through Role Modelling and Reading Books*
- *Parents as Role Models*

Some of these activities are routinely organized to develop children's interest and appreciation of books. Kindergarten teachers read to their students for one hour before they leave kindergarten for the day.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, the Municipal Education Department initiated and implemented reading campaigns at the district level, namely, Let's Make Friends with Books, Book Package, and Parents as Role Models. The kindergartens expanded their libraries by collecting books from parents under the slogan "One book from each parent". Parents were asked to record a video of them reading to their children to send to their teachers. During "Let's Have Fun" hours, kindergartens organized activities such as storytelling and performing plays in different formats. The children also made a variety of books with materials their teachers prepared for them. They also drew pictures before and after reading and exhibited their work.

The teachers surveyed agreed that despite the existing projects and initiatives, there is no comprehensive methodology to assess the contributions of early education stimulation activities, such as the promotion of books for child development.

6.2. Good practices and challenges for reading to encourage child development

The practice of involving parents in child development by reading books was put in place in the kindergartens. Kindergartens, international organizations, local governor offices, and other stakeholders share their best practices with other education organizations.



Quote 10. Ministry of Education and Science

We can name many good practices to promote reading and make children love books. One of the best initiatives implemented this year was a project implemented in 30 soums in Dornod, Khentii, Sukhbaatar, and Uvurkhangai aimags with support from Save the Children and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. The project provided a set of books and toys for children who could not attend kindergarten or school and organized child development activities with the support of their parents. We asked for the collaboration of local governor's offices to extend the project's implementation.

In in-depth interviews, stakeholders highlighted the importance of cooperation between parents, children, and educational institutions to give children a greater appreciation of books. They also noted the effectiveness of experience-sharing events and activities.



Quote 11. Municipal Education Department

At Kindergarten No. 146, parents make books and donate them to the kindergarten. They also refurbished a room in the kindergarten, creating a space for reading and exchanging books. In Govi-Altai aimag, a kindergarten makes its books available to borrow and return for parents whose children cannot go to kindergarten. They also collect parents' feedback on their activities. A similar program called Mobile Teacher is organized in kindergartens, where kindergartens loan books to parents to encourage them to read to their children. In Dundgovi aimag, the mobile teachers read to children at the child's home.



Quote 12. Institute of Teacher's Professional Development

The existing cooperation between parents and educational institutions should be expanded with media campaigns and policy support. Looking at the practices of developed countries, they prefer to provide parents with technical methodologies to work with their children, especially on how to develop their children by spending quality time with them, rather than just telling parents it's important. Nongovernmental organizations' contributions are also critical. Ms. Altanzagas wrote a book and a program to teach parents how they can teach their children how to read words in whole, not syllable by syllable. It is said that the participation of fathers has recently increased. Parents were satisfied with the program's results. It demonstrated the effectiveness of the contributions of different actors in the sector to promote reading habits.

However, as noted by the education specialists interviewed, parents' participation in activities organized by kindergartens remains low. Parents should be further encouraged to expand cooperation.



Quote 13. District Education Officer

I think it's a good idea to have a regular day for kindergarten children to read with their parents, implemented at all kindergartens locally and nationally. Every year, a book festival is held at Sukhbaatar Square. It was great to see the availability of children's books at the festival. It would be nice to organize a children's book day and event like that.

Experts pointed out that it was more effective for parents and teachers to first develop their children's interest in books by encouraging them to make books to exchange with their peers. Parents and kindergarten teachers can benefit from their increased interest in books.



Quote 14. Institute of Teacher's Professional Development

It's common for children to make books and exhibit their work on kindergarten shelves. Children seem more interested in reading books created by their peers. It would also be very effective to have an 'Introduction to Books' photo exhibition in kindergartens. It would be great to see parents reading books to their children. The media could promote such activities, broadcasting the exhibition nationwide so rural kindergartens can also learn.

In some kindergartens, the kindergarten teachers make a book from the collection of their children's work. As I recall, one of the kindergartens in Khovd aimag has been doing this since 2013.

6.3. Reaching out to children left behind in preschool education services

As a part of the study, the research team collected information to identify activities organized by khoroo governors' offices for children left behind in education services. As reported by khoroo governors and social workers, children from low-income HHs and with poor supervision from caregivers were the most vulnerable to being left behind in education and not being sent to kindergarten.

At the education institution level, the Government of Mongolia created Alternative Education Services to address problems through the work of "mobile teachers". Nationwide, there are 972 kindergartens implementing this program to reach children who do not attend kindergarten. The mobile teachers are also responsible for advocating for reading habits and culture and educating parents. They distribute handouts and brochures in public places, such as banks and hospitals, making information more accessible. Some of the kindergartens designed a program for children unable to attend kindergarten, and organized four to five

hours of parent training per week. During the training, the facilitator provides methodological guidance to parents on how to read to their children and helping them love books.

At the district level, there is no integrated database of children not attending kindergarten. Each khoroo creates its own records for children who are not enrolled in their areas and involves them in projects and activities implemented by national and international organizations. However, because of discrepancies in address information, some children are unable to benefit from such projects and activities.



Quote 15. Governor of Khoroo #41, Sukhbaatar District

There are 28 state apartments in our khoroo, with about 700 residents. The quality of housing is insufficient. Assuming that 3-4 people live in 12 square meters, it's almost impossible for children to study and play freely.

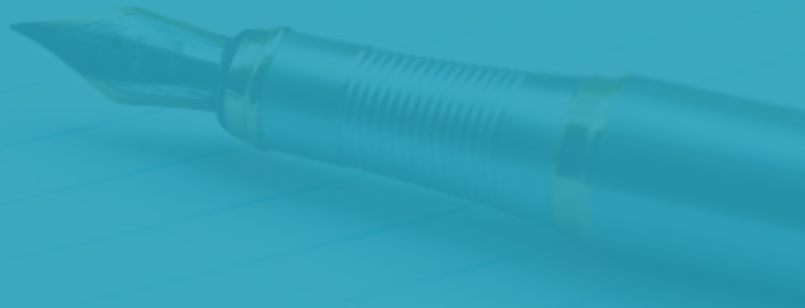
There are 28 state apartments in our khoroo, with about 700 residents. The quality of housing is insufficient. Assuming that 3-4 people live in 12 square meters, it's almost impossible for children to study and play freely.

Children from low-income HHs, HHs with temporary residential addresses, and those with poor parental supervision were most likely to be left behind by preschool education services. They also have very limited access to books and developing a love of books.

Sub-conclusions

- Even though kindergartens support children's development through books within their budgetary limits, the availability and quality of books are still insufficient.
- There are many good examples of parents, kindergartens, local governments, and professional organizations working together to introduce children to books and encouraging them to love books.
- Kindergarten teachers organize and initiate various activities to improve parents' participation and contribution to the introduction of books to children and encouraging them to love books.
- Many kindergartens regularly organize activities to enhance cooperation between parents and kindergartens to support children's development. However, because of the lack of integrated policy support, these practices cannot be disseminated and adopted by other kindergartens.
- Although local governors' offices and educational institutions organize activities and projects to provide educational services to children at risk of being left behind in education services, access and coverage remain relatively low. Temporary residence issues exacerbate the problem.

7. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSIONS



- The Ministry of Education and Science should include provisions in their policy documents on encouraging children to love books at an early age. From interviews with policymakers, teachers, and kindergarten managers, it was concluded that the policy and regulatory support for making reading to children a habit for parents and kindergarten teachers was lacking.
- The Ministry of Education and Science should develop common standards and criteria for books for young children. Children's books now available in the market are often not age-appropriate in terms of their content, illustrations, and text.
- The cost of purchasing children's books should be included in kindergarten budgets. Currently, kindergartens expand their libraries by collecting book donations from parents because they lack a budget for purchasing books.
- Cooperation between parents and kindergartens should be enhanced to encourage children to love books. Even though some kindergartens organize activities to increase parents' participation in promoting reading habits, integrated coordination and policy support are missing to reproduce these efforts nationwide.
- The government should establish a tradition or campaign for public and private kindergartens to share their experiences regarding the promotion of reading at home and in kindergartens. Based on the interviews, kindergartens lack opportunities to share their best practices with other kindergartens and learn from others' experiences.
- Kindergartens should organize training for parents and teachers to improve their understanding of the benefits of reading to children and how children can benefit from being read to and spending quality time with their parents and kindergarten teachers.
- The Ministry of Education and Science should collaborate with the media to promote a reading culture and improve public awareness of the benefits of reading to children as early as possible. This could also include how to make time to read to children and how to choose age-appropriate books. It was clear from the survey results that parents tend to believe they should start exposing their children to books at the age of four and five years, not before three years.
- Educational institutions and administrative organizations should prioritize increasing the availability and access to children's books. Currently, translated books are most commonly available in the market. There is a need to encourage Mongolian writers to produce children's books and content appropriate for different age groups and their maturity levels.
- Access to digital books and their use should be increased. Currently, it is less common for parents to choose digital books over printed books. The increased use of digital books would help improve access to books among children from low-income and remote HHs.
- Administrative organizations should prioritize improving the access and availability of public libraries and bookstores in ger districts.
- Private and nongovernmental organizations should establish micro-libraries and reading rooms for young children. Even though some organizations have already initiated such projects through their social responsibility initiatives, the scale is still small. For example, the Mongolia Australia Society raised funds to refurbish a room at the Central Hall of Culture to make it a reading room for young children.
- Private organizations and nongovernmental organizations should initiate a campaign for people to donate books to children from vulnerable households.
- Bookstores should create spaces where children can enjoy reading books or listening to audiobooks without being pushed to make a purchase. This will allow children, especially those from vulnerable households, greater exposure to books.

ANNEX

General Information on the Respondents			
Item		Frequency	Percent
		838	100.0
A3. District:	Bayangol	130	15.5
	Bayanzurkh	206	24.6
	Nalaikh	37	4.4
	Songinokhairkhan	192	22.9
	Sukhbaatar	74	8.8
	Khan-Uul	118	14.1
	Chingeltei	81	9.7
2.1. Gender	Male	198	23.6
	Female	640	76.4
2.2. Age (years)	Up to 20	19	2.3
	21-25	79	9.4
	26-30	183	21.8
	31-35	196	23.4
	36-40	159	19.0
	41-45	92	11.0
	46-50	47	5.6
	51+	63	7.5
2.3. Educational attainment	Uneducated	0	0.0
	Preschool	0	0.0
	Primary	5	0.6
	Lower secondary	52	6.2
	Upper secondary	298	35.6
	Technical and vocational	12	1.4
	Associate degree	28	3.3
	Diploma	18	2.1
	Bachelor's degree	357	42.6
	Master's degree	61	7.3
	Doctoral degree	7	0.8
2.4. Highest education attained by other HH member/s	Uneducated	0	0.0
	Preschool	0	0.0
	Primary	2	0.2
	Lower secondary	16	1.9
	Upper secondary	182	21.7
	Technical and vocational	17	2.0
	Associate degree	22	2.6
	Diploma	23	2.7
	Bachelor's degree	429	51.2
	Master's degree	131	15.6
	Doctoral degree	16	1.9

General Information on the Respondents

2.5. Relationship of the respondent to HH member with the highest educational attainment	Head of the HH	113	13.5
	Spouse	165	19.7
	Son/daughter	15	1.8
	Parent	466	55.6
	Sibling	32	3.8
	Mother/father-in-law	0	0.0
	Son/daughter-in-law	0	0.0
	Grandfather/grandmother	38	4.5
	Grandson/granddaughter	2	0.2
	Other relative	3	0.4
	None of the above	4	0.5
2.6. Marital status	Single	51	6.1
	Married (legally)	551	65.8
	Living with a partner	215	25.7
	Separated	3	0.4
	Divorced	6	0.7
	Widow/widower	12	1.4

Household Information

Item	Frequency	Percent	
	838	100.0	
2.7. Type of dwelling	Ger (traditional dwelling)	163	19.5
	House (ger district)	262	31.3
	Apartment	403	48.1
	House	9	1.1
	Other (specify)	1	0.1
2.8. Annual HH income (specify)	<MNT 3.6 million	27	3.2
	MNT 3.6-6 million	26	3.1
	MNT 6-8.4 million	47	5.6
	MNT 8.4-10.8 million	73	8.7
	MNT 10.8-13.2 million	154	18.4
	MNT 13.2-19.2 million	190	22.7
	MNT 19.2-25.2 million	147	17.5
	>MNT 25.2 million	174	20.8
2.9. What smart devices do you have at home?	Not adequate to afford basic needs (food, shelter, etc.)	126	15.0
	Adequate to afford basic needs, but not adequate enough to create savings	498	59.4
	Adequate to afford basic needs and clothes	97	11.6
	Adequate to afford to buy luxuries	13	1.6
	Adequate to create savings	104	12.4

Household Information			
2.10. What smart devices do you have at home?	Internet	673	80.3
	Smart phone	823	98.2
	Desktop computer	224	26.7
	Laptop	376	44.9
	Tablet	111	13.2
	Other (specify)	2	0.3
2.11. Current number of HH members Note: persons temporarily living in the HH should not be counted. In order to be counted as a HH member, the person should be living in the HH for no less than six months.	Up to 3	112	13.4
	4-5	475	56.7
	6+	251	30.0
2.12. Number of children aged 0-5	1	533	63.6
	2	257	30.7
	3	44	5.3
	4	4	0.5
2.13. Age of the selected child	Less than 1 year old	71	8.5
	1	122	14.6
	2	135	16.1
	3	135	16.1
	4	168	20.0
	5	207	24.7
2.14. Gender of the selected child	Male	445	53.1
	Female	393	46.9
2.15. How long did your child go to kindergarten?	Never	305	36.4
	Up to 1 year	154	18.4
	2 years	155	18.5
	3 years	171	20.4
	4 years	53	6.3
2.16. How long did your child go to daycare?	Never	782	93.3
	Up to 1 year	35	4.2
	2 years	11	1.3
	3 years	7	0.8
	4 years	3	0.4
2.17. Does your child have any developmental disabilities?	Yes	19	2.3
	No	819	97.7

Item	Frequency	Percent	
	838	100.0	
2.18. How often do the following members of the HH read to children? If the child has a single parent, put N/A where necessary.			
Mother	Daily	106	12.6
	Once or twice a week	304	36.3
	Once or twice a month	226	27.0
	Not often	187	22.3
	N/A	15	1.8
Father	Daily	33	3.9
	Once or twice a week	145	17.3
	Once or twice a month	177	21.1
	Not often	412	49.2
	N/A	71	8.5
Sibling	Daily	94	11.2
	Once or twice a week	191	22.8
	Once or twice a month	71	8.5
	Not often	229	27.3
	N/A	253	30.2
Grandparents	Daily	34	4.1
	Once or twice a week	75	8.9
	Once or twice a month	71	8.5
	Not often	151	18.0
	N/A	507	60.5
Other (specify)	Daily	2	0.3
	Once or twice a week	2	0.3
	Once or twice a month	2	0.3
	Not often	26	4.3
	N/A	575	94.7

Parents' and Caregivers' Reading Habits			
Item	Frequency	Percent	
	838	100.0	
3.1.1. I read books around my child and my child sees me reading	Never	105	12.5
	Rarely	139	16.6
	Sometimes	287	34.2
	Often	171	20.4
	Very often	136	16.2
3.1.11. I point out the letters and words in books for my child.	Rarely	115	13.7
	Sometimes	222	26.5
	Often	110	13.1
	Very often	87	10.4
3.1.12. I encourage my child to act out a story	Never	105	12.5
	Rarely	61	7.3
	Sometimes	152	18.1
	Often	199	23.7
	Very often	321	38.3

Parents' and Caregivers' Reading Habits

3.1.13. I encourage my child to read product labels, street signs, and signboards	Never	286	34.1
	Rarely	78	9.3
	Sometimes	196	23.4
	Often	98	11.7
	Very often	180	21.5
3.1.14. When we read, I try to sound excited so child stays interested	Never	225	26.8
	Rarely	71	8.5
	Sometimes	189	22.6
	Often	124	14.8
	Very often	229	27.3
3.1.15. When we read, I encourage my child to point out different letters/numbers in the book	Never	224	26.7
	Rarely	86	10.3
	Sometimes	197	23.5
	Often	156	18.6
	Very often	175	20.9
3.1.16. I play reading-related games with my child	Never	336	40.1
	Rarely	99	11.8
	Sometimes	206	24.6
	Often	91	10.9
	Very often	106	12.6
3.1.17. I change my voice to suit the characters when I read to my child	Never	234	27.9
	Rarely	79	9.4
	Sometimes	203	24.2
	Often	131	15.6
	Very often	191	22.8
3.1.18. I ask my child questions when we read	Never	286	34.1
	Rarely	80	9.5
	Sometimes	229	27.3
	Often	107	12.8
	Very often	136	16.2
3.1.19. I translate the stories when my child does not understand Mongolian/English/Russian words	Never	260	31.0
	Rarely	51	6.1
	Sometimes	178	21.2
	Often	142	16.9
	Very often	207	24.7

Three. Parents' Ways of Reading to Children and Duration

Percentage of parents who read to their children		Frequency	Percent
		838	100.0
3.2. How long and how often do you read to your child?	Up to 10 minutes	172	26.1
	10-20 minutes	260	39.5
	20-30 minutes	177	26.9
	More than 30 minutes	50	7.6
3.3. When do you read books to your child?	When the child asks	115	13.7
	When we buy a new book	287	43.6
	When it is necessary	258	39.2
	When I have time	76	11.5
	When the child is bored	320	48.6
	Before going to bed	69	10.5
	When the child is playing with their friends	296	44.9
	Other	12	1.8
3.4. What are some activities you like to do when reading to your child?	Talking about the pictures	515	78.1
	Asking questions about the story	237	36.0
	Pointing to letters and talking about them	97	14.7
	Counting things in the pictures	188	28.5
	Encouraging my child to repeat things from the story	152	23.1
	Having my child act out things in the story	105	15.9
	None of these. I like to read the story without interruption.	19	2.9
	Other (specify)	33	5.0
3.5. If there are times you cannot read to your child, what is usually the reason?	Not having enough time	112	62.6
	Not having age-appropriate books at home	46	25.7
	Child not being interested	46	25.7
	Other members of the HH read	48	26.8
	Their teachers do it at kindergarten/daycare	41	22.9
	The child reads independently	3	1.7
	Other	29	16.2

Four. Children's and Parents' Interest in Reading; Parents' Knowledge of the Importance of Reading to Children

		Frequency	Percent
		838	100.0
4.1. How would you rate your interest in books?	Very high	124	14.8
	High	245	29.2
	Neutral	277	33.1
	Low	120	14.3
	Very low	72	8.6
4.2. How would you rate your child's interest in books overall?	Very high	135	16.1
	High	297	35.4
	Neutral	243	29.0
	Low	99	11.8
	Very low	64	7.6
4.2.1. Why do you think your child loves books?	Because I read books to them	269	22.0
	Because we have a big library at home	118	9.7
	Because our family members read books a lot	185	15.2
	Because we are able to buy books that they want	216	17.7
	Because their teachers read books at kindergarten/ daycare/school	257	21.1
	Because they get a lot of reading assignments	42	3.4
	Because their friends read a lot	14	1.1
	Other	86	7.0
4.2.2. Why do you think your child does not like books?	Don't know	33	2.7
	Because we don't read books to our child regularly	46	20.2
	Because we don't have enough books at home	28	12.3
	Because our family members don't read much	29	12.7
	Because we don't buy books for our child	17	7.5
	Because kindergarten/daycare teachers don't read books to them	2	0.9
	Because their friends don't read books	5	2.2
	Other	91	39.9
4.3. My child has alphabet letters to play with	Don't know	10	4.4
	Never	192	22.9
	Rarely	139	16.6
	Sometimes	200	23.9
	Often	134	16.0
4.4. My child asks for books to be read to them	Very often	173	20.6
	Never	176	21.0
	Rarely	81	9.7
	Sometimes	270	32.2
	Often	168	20.0
	Very often	143	17.1

Four. Children's and Parents' Interest in Reading; Parents' Knowledge of the Importance of Reading to Children

4.5. My child pretends to read from books or tells their own stories	Never	186	22.2
	Rarely	67	8.0
	Sometimes	274	32.7
	Often	163	19.5
	Very often	148	17.7
4.6. My child shows interest in reading signboards when we go out	Never	180	21.5
	Rarely	66	7.9
	Sometimes	216	25.8
	Often	163	19.5
	Very often	213	25.4
4.7. My child likes to read/play with books independently	Never	133	15.9
	Rarely	73	8.7
	Sometimes	228	27.2
	Often	206	24.6
	Very often	198	23.6
4.8. What is your child most interested in when you read to them?	Pictures	499	35.6
	Content	109	7.8
	Letters	35	2.5
	Colors	300	21.4
	Shapes	272	19.4
	Entertainment	175	12.5
	Other	13	0.9
4.9. How well does your child pay attention when you read to them?	Very attentive for the entire book	185	22.1
	Attentive for most of the book	192	22.9
	Attentive for part of the book	216	25.8
	Not attentive at all	66	7.9
4.10. When do you think it is appropriate for children to be exposed to books and reading-related activities?	When they are in the mother's womb	95	11.3
	Between 0 and 2 years	327	39.0
	Between 3 and 5	351	41.9
	Between 6 and 7	51	6.1
	Over 7	14	1.7
4.4. My child asks for books to be read to them	Never	176	21.0
	Rarely	81	9.7
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4.10. When do you think it is appropriate for children to be exposed to books and reading-related activities?	When they are in the mother's womb	95	11.3
	Between 0 and 2 years	327	39.0
	Between 3 and 5	351	41.9
	Between 6 and 7	51	6.1
	Over 7	14	1.7
4.11.1. I think it is important that parents read to their children	Disagree	1	0.1
	Somewhat disagree	7	0.8
	Neutral	43	5.1
	Somewhat agree	196	23.4
	Fully agree	591	70.5
4.11.2. Most children do well at reading words in school because their parent teaches them to read words at home	Disagree	15	1.8
	Somewhat disagree	20	2.4
	Neutral	82	9.8
	Somewhat agree	240	28.6
	Fully agree	481	57.4
4.11.3. Parents have the responsibility to teach reading and writing skills to their child	Disagree	1	0.1
	Somewhat disagree	4	0.5
	Neutral	16	1.9
	Somewhat agree	148	17.7
	Fully agree	669	79.8
4.11.4. Parents should select books based on their colorful illustrations, high interest in content, and natural language	Disagree	3	0.4
	Somewhat disagree	8	1.0
	Neutral	37	4.4
	Somewhat agree	203	24.2
	Fully agree	587	70.0

4.11.5. Parents should help in developing their child's ability to divide a word into syllables to read new words	Disagree	6	0.7
	Somewhat disagree	3	0.4
	Neutral	23	2.7
	Somewhat agree	136	16.2
	Fully agree	670	80.0
4.11.6. Parents should develop the child's confidence and interest in putting ideas on paper in whatever form they can (drawing, writing, etc.)	Disagree	0	0.0
	Somewhat disagree	4	0.5
	Neutral	15	1.8
	Somewhat agree	144	17.2
	Fully agree	675	80.5
4.11.7. I think that it is important for my child to develop a broad interest in reading	Disagree	1	0.1
	Somewhat disagree	2	0.2
	Neutral	25	3.0
	Somewhat agree	107	12.8
	Fully agree	703	83.9
4.11.8. Most parents should supplement the literacy skills their child learns at school by teaching their child literacy skills at home	Disagree	15	1.8
	Somewhat disagree	20	2.4
	Neutral	82	9.8
	Somewhat agree	240	28.6
	Fully agree	481	57.4
4.11.9. Parents should help their child see that reading can be fun and enjoyable	Disagree	0	0.0
	Somewhat disagree	3	0.4
	Neutral	22	2.6
	Somewhat agree	147	17.5
	Fully agree	666	79.5
4.12.1. Strengthens their cognitive development	Disagree	5	0.6
	Somewhat disagree	6	0.7
	Neutral	27	3.2
	Somewhat agree	139	16.6
	Fully agree	649	77.4
4.12.2. Affects socio-emotional development	Disagree	1	0.1
	Somewhat disagree	11	1.3
	Neutral	61	7.3
	Somewhat agree	210	24.1
	Fully agree	546	65.2
4.12.3. Affects academic performance	Disagree	1	0.1
	Somewhat disagree	8	1.0
	Neutral	35	4.2
	Somewhat agree	170	20.3
	Fully agree	615	73.4
4.12.4. Strengthens their bonds with parents and caregivers	Disagree	7	0.8
	Somewhat disagree	12	1.4
	Neutral	53	6.3
	Somewhat agree	210	25.1
	Fully agree	545	65.0
	Don't know	11	1.3

4.12.5. Increases language development	Disagree	1	0.1
	Somewhat disagree	3	0.4
	Neutral	17	2.0
	Somewhat agree	115	13.7
	Fully agree	694	82.8
	Don't know	8	1.0
4.13. Do you have membership in any book clubs?	Yes	114	13.6
	No	724	86.4

Five. Accessibility of Books			
		Frequency	Percent
		838	100.0
5.1. My child has at least one alphabet book	True	443	52.9
	False	395	47.1
5.2. How many books do you have at home?	1-5	142	16.9
	6-15	205	24.5
	16-20	112	13.4
	More than 20	379	45.2
5.3. My child plays with toys that help teach the names of animals, vehicles, and fruit, etc.	Never	45	5.4
	Rarely	67	8.0
	Sometimes	164	19.6
	Often	370	44.2
	Very often	192	22.9
5.4. There is a designated place for books and toys at home	Yes	679	81.0
	No	159	19.0
5.5. Toys and books are accessible to the child	Yes	665	79.4
	No	173	20.6
5.6. Our HH budgets for buying books	Yes, always	194	23.2
	Yes, occasionally	553	66.0
	No	91	10.9
5.7. We have money in our HH budget to buy children's books	Yes, always	209	24.9
	Yes, occasionally	512	61.1
	No	26	3.1

Five. Accessibility of Books

5.8. What do you prioritize when you buy children's books?	Price	174	8.6
	Age appropriateness	635	31.3
	Not having too much text, being picture-dominant	341	16.8
	Hardcover	163	8.0
	Softcover	40	2.0
	Domestic author	103	5.1
	International author	13	0.6
	Foreign pictures	8	0.4
	Mongolian pictures	107	5.3
	Topics aligned with my child's interests	343	16.9
	Language options (Mongolian/English/Russian/Korean)	57	2.8
5.9. What challenges do you face when you buy books for your child?	Other (specify)	42	2.1
	Not having a bookstore close to home	434	29.3
	HH financial challenges	136	9.2
	Books being too pricey	319	21.6
	Bookstores not having the books I am looking for	168	11.4
	Bookstores not having enough age-appropriate books	148	10.0
	No children's books that reflect my child's interests	143	9.7
	Other (specify)	132	8.9
5.10. How would you rate how accessible books are in the home for the child without the help of an adult?	Very high	367	43.8
	High	247	29.5
	Satisfactory	60	7.2
	Low	81	9.7
	Very low	83	9.9
5.11. How would you rate the accessibility of children's books at your child's kindergarten/daycare?	Very high	13	1.6
	High	114	13.6
	Satisfactory	150	17.9
	Low	112	13.4
	Very low	39	4.7
5.11.1. Are children able to access and use the books in the classroom without an adult?	Yes	292	34.8
	No	97	11.6
	Don't know	151	18.0
5.12. How close is the library to your home?	Very close (under 15 minutes away)	85	10.1
	Close (16-30 minutes away)	114	13.6
	Far (31-1 hour away)	239	28.5
	Very far (more than 1 hour away)	373	44.5

Five. Accessibility of Books

5.13. Where is your child able to have the most access to books without the help of an adult?	At home	636	75.9
	At kindergarten	175	20.9
	At daycare	2	0.2
	Community center, such as khoroo governor's office	1	0.1
	Other (specify)	24	2.9
5.14. In what language are the books your child has the most access to?	Mongolian	628	74.9
	English	173	20.6
	Russian	12	1.4
	Other (specify)	25	3.0
5.15. What forms of children's books do you have the most access to?	Printed	749	89.4
	Digital	89	10.6
5.16. What forms of books would you prefer to use with your children?	Printed	732	87.4
	Digital	54	6.4
	Either	52	6.2
5.17. How do you usually get printed books to your child?	Buy	768	91.6
	Borrow (specify)	17	2.0
	Other (specify)	53	6.3
5.18. How do you usually get digital books?	Buy	104	12.4
	Borrow (specify)	5	0.6
	Don't get them	702	83.8
	Other (specify)	27	3.2

Six. Additional Questions for Parents with First and Second Graders

		Frequency	Percent
		838	100.0
6.1. Is there a first or second grader in your HH?	Yes	203	24.2
	No	635	75.8
6.2. How often did you read books to your child before they started school?	Never	12	140.0
	Rarely	48	570.0
	Sometimes	81	970.0
	Often	43	510.0
	Very often	19	230.0
5.3. My child plays with toys that help teach the names of animals, vehicles, and fruit, etc.	Very important	45	5.4
	Fairly important	67	8.0
6.3.1. On their cognitive development	Yes	679	81.0
	No	159	19.0
6.3.2. On their language development	Very important	85	10.1
	Fairly important	56	6.7
	Slightly important	2	0.2
6.3.4. On their attention span	Very important	80	9.5
	Fairly important	61	7.3
	Slightly important	1	0.1
	Don't know	1	0.1
6.3.5. Communication skills	Very important	72	8.6
	Fairly important	64	7.6
	Slightly important	7	0.8
6.3.6. Academic performance	Very important	69	8.2
	Fairly important	67	8.0
	Slightly important	7	0.8
6.3.7. On proper handling of books	Very important	82	9.8
	Fairly important	61	7.3