

**THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN FOSTERING CHILDREN'S EMERGENT  
LITERACY SKILLS IN SELECTED RURAL HOUSEHOLDS  
OF MONGU DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

**BY  
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fulfilment of the requirements for the award of degree of  
Master of Education in Language and Literacy**

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## DECLARATION

I, INONGEMALUMO, hereby sorely declare that this dissertation represents my own work which is as a result of my own individual effort. I further sincerely declare that this research had not been previously submitted for any academic award and that all the work from other researchers has been acknowledged.

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## APPROVAL

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## ABSTRACT

Parents have a role to play in the learning of their children. Just like teachers, they have a potent force in shaping their children's literacy, even though only a few live up to this expectation and this contributes to learners' poor performance in literacy. In light of the above, this study was inspired by the 2017 District Resource Centre Reading Levels Assessment Analysis (DRCRLAA), which highlighted that there were many early grade learners in the rural communities of Mongu district whose reading abilities were low. Following the notion that literacy in children begins at a very early age in life long before official lessons in school, the study was conducted to establish the role parents in selected rural households of Mongu district play in fostering their children's emergent literacy skills prior to school entry. The study sought to establish parents' understanding of emergent literacy; early literacy practices that parents exposed children to prior to school entry; and to identify types of literacy environments children were exposed to in their homes and surrounding areas which support early literacy development. The study was guided by socio-constructivist theory by Vygotsky which posits that learning is constructed in the matrix between social interaction and interconnectivity between an individual and the social environment. It utilised a qualitative approach to collect data from a study sample of 35 which comprised three community leaders, 16 parents and their 16 non-school-going children. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to reach the pinpointed individuals with specific data that was required. Data was obtained by using interview guides, focus group discussion guides and an observation checklist, and analysed qualitatively according to themes emerging from the research objectives. Participants' verbatim responses have been included to show authenticity of the words. The study revealed that although most parents had limited understanding of emergent literacy, they did play a role in supporting the concept in that children were exposed to a number of early literacy structures such as writing, reading, games, stories, riddles, songs, letter sounds, reading/writing materials, household and environmental print which were helping in fostering their emergent literacy skills, an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in school. To help parents develop a sound knowledge of emergent literacy, the study recommends that teachers, during PTA meetings, should educate parents on the importance of taking keen interest in their children's early literacy activities which in turn, would help children develop interest in literacy-building activities, long before official lessons in school so that those without pre-school experience benefit from their home environments.

**Key words:** *Parents, foster, children, emergent literacy skills*

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Mr. C. Malumo, for his enduring love and care during my schooldays. *Tate, mupumule ka kozo kufitela lukopana hape mwa sibaka sa mwa buse.* (Father, rest in eternal peace till we meet again on the other side)

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## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

The definitions of key terms below are intended to help readers understand the report.

**Children** - Boys and girls aged 2 to 6 years who are not yet in school.

**Emergent literacy** - A term used to explain a child's knowledge of reading and writing skills before they learn how to read and write words.

**Emergent literacy skills/early literacy skills** -The observable behaviour children exhibit which relate to adults' conventional reading and writing.

**Foster** - To encourage development of literacy.

**Literacy practices** - Any activities (social or cultural) that parents engage their children in, which lead to or support learning of reading and writing.

**Parent** - An adult who takes care of a child between the ages of 2 and 6 years, prior to school entry.

**Participant** - Respondents in the research.

**Role** - An activity that one does in a specific field or area.

**Rural community** - A place located outside town or city but has access to basic facilities such as education, health, concrete roads, small shops, post office, and nowadays even internet services.

**Rural households** - These are families outside town or urban areas.

**Scaffolding** - The process which enables a child to solve a task or achieve a goal that would be beyond his or her unassisted efforts.

**Village** - A group of households in a rural set-up headed by a village head.

**Zone of Proximal Development** - The gap between a child's ability to carry out a task while guided by a knowledgeable adult and the child's ability to solve problems without assistance

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>BKLLNT</b>	Bemba, Kaonde, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, Nyanja and Tonga
<b>BRE</b>	Barotse Royal Establishment
<b>CAP</b>	Concept About Print
<b>CSO</b>	Central Statistical Office
<b>DEBS</b>	District Education Board Secretary
<b>DRC</b>	District Resource Centre
<b>DRCRLAA</b>	District Resource Centre Reading Level Assessment Analysis
<b>ELs</b>	Early Literacy Skills
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>HER</b>	Home Educational Resource
<b>ILI</b>	Inventory of Literacy Indicator
<b>L1</b>	First Language
<b>L2</b>	Second Language
<b>LLE</b>	Literacy and Language Education
<b>MOCE</b>	Mongu College of Education
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoGE</b>	Ministry of General Education
<b>MoI</b>	Medium of Instruction
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>PCLPs</b>	Parent-Child Literacy Practices
<b>PDC</b>	Parent Demographic Characteristics
<b>PEO</b>	Provincial Education Office
<b>PLP</b>	Primary Literacy Programme
<b>PTA</b>	Parent-Teacher Association
<b>RTS</b>	Read To Succeed
<b>RESUZ</b>	Reading Support for Zambian Child
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNZA</b>	University of Zambia
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>ZPD</b>	Zone of Proximal Development

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Overview**

This chapter gives the background to the study. It also states the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives and research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitation, study site and, finally, organisation of the dissertation.

### **1.2 Background to the study**

Prior to Clay (1966) and Teale et al. (1986)'s studies, many people believed in the notion that literacy began when children entered school, meaning that early literacy experiences were not considered as part of learning to read and write. Clay (1966) was one of the early discoverers of this phenomenon and made her recognition known on the importance of these early experiences as emergent literacy skills that were the prerequisites for learning to read and write. She used the term 'emergent literacy' to describe the earliest behaviour normally seen in children, and one of such activities is their ability to use books and writing materials to imitate reading and writing activities even when they are not able to read and write. The concept of 'emergent literacy' developed further in the 1980s to challenge the notion of 'reading readiness', which focused on what skills children needed to have mastered before they could benefit from the formal reading instruction (Ontario, 2003). While the concept of 'reading readiness' suggested that children were not ready to become literate until reaching a specific point in time, determined by a child's age and maturity, Clay's (1966) notion of 'emergent literacy' signals a belief that in a literate society, learning to read and write begins early in life and is an ongoing process until the child can read and write in conventional sense. Emergent literacy therefore is based on the assumption that a child acquires some knowledge about language, reading and writing even before attending any formal education. This assumption is supported by Teale (1987), who pointed out that all children who come to school already have certain experiences and interests in learning. Since Clay's (1966) recognition of the concept of emergent literacy, substantial studies have been conducted to try and expand its understanding. In line with Clay's description,

Teale (1986) describes emergent literacy as a variety of children's behaviours and skills associated with successful reading and writing. He considers emergent literacy as the early signs of reading and writing demonstrated by children, even before they begin to take formal instruction regarding reading and writing. A study by Zimba (2011) described emergent literacy as the early literacy experiences of children whereby they imitate adults' literacy behaviours. These fundamental skills, which develop at a very early age, contribute to a child's foundation for initial literacy once in formal school.

Within this context, there seems to be a broader consensus among researchers that the road to formal reading and writing begins at a very early age in life with a variety of emergent literacy experiences (Erickson, 2000). If the steps which are part of the process of acquiring literacy begin long before a child starts formal schooling, undoubtedly, parents are essential for the development of their children's emergent literacy skills. Dodici and Draper (2003) emphasise the fact that more and more literacy promotion reports provide some substantial evidence that the process of assisting children in acquiring school readiness literacy skills begins early in life and includes the parents and other primary caregivers. This assertion is in line with Zambia's 1996 Education Policy (Educating Our Future), which states that parental involvement in children's education which begins early in life is significant because the first responsibility for education lies with the parents and the wider community (MoE, 1996). This being the case, parents have a very big role to play in influencing development of their children's emergent literacy skills because they are the first and most influential teachers who spend countless hours with their children and the home environment is the first setting where language and literacy are first encountered and the most enduring school. Marvin and Mirenda (1993) and Weinberger (1996) take the stance that researchers have repeatedly found out that the home literacy environments of toddlers and preschoolers have measurable effects on later literacy skills. It has been argued therefore that children from home environments which provide rich literacy experiences such as shared storybook reading, storytelling, singing, and reading aloud, among others, have strong foundations for learning to read and write once they enter conventional school. This is in agreement with Mullis et al. (2004), who clearly indicated that the earlier parents became involved in their children's

literacy practices, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects became. The question of what parents in selected rural households of Mongu District do to ensure that their children get off to a good start on the road to speaking, reading and writing has been the focus of the great deal of this study.

However, millions of children in the world are said to grow up in homes where early literacy support is not well provided. It is believed that non-involvement of parents in their children's early literacy learning is one of the key reasons for poor literacy attainment of school-going children (MoE, 2013). Since increasing attention has been paid to the early childhood years as the foundation for children's academic success, it is therefore important that parents and other primary caregivers are aware of the significant contribution they can make to their children's learning by providing a stimulating environment around language, reading and writing.

In as much as it has been widely acknowledged by many researchers that parents and other primary caregivers provide a powerful influence on their children's literacy development in early childhood, it leaves no doubt as Beth (1982) mentions that emergent literacy is the development of skills that occurs in children through the interaction they share with parents and other knowledgeable adults in meaningful activities that involve print and talking. He contends that children continue on their path of literacy development as they become aware of the associations between print and its use as a means to communicate. He further argues that spoken forms are as important as reading and writing to the child's literacy development in early childhood. Oral language significantly contributes to the development of vocabulary and literacy. The argument is further supported by MoE (2013) when it states that early vocabulary achievement or rather the number of words a child has in his/her working vocabulary, greatly influences reading success or difficulties and further impacts success in school. The other argument in favour of this view is that children's active exploration of print within their environment and their social interactions with adults provide important opportunities for adults to model literacy behaviour for them to learn (MOCE, 2013). Vygotsky (1978), in his socio-cultural theory, posits that knowledge acquisition is rooted in social interactions. He further informs parents that they need to interact with their children,

supporting, explaining and challenging them to move on from what they know about literacy to do more, thereby enabling them to do today with an adult what they will be able to do independently tomorrow. Clay's (1966) view on the same issue is that with support of parents and exposure to literacy-rich environments, children can exhibit behaviour such as attempts to interpret meaning from pictures in books, pretend to read and write through scribbling, singing songs, and playing different types of games. The above-mentioned behaviour matters and it should be strongly supported by parents and other primary caregivers because it forms the foundation for future learning, which is important to achieving success in school and in social settings since learning to read and write begins with emergent literacy skills. Hodgskiss's (2007) argument is that a weak foundation contributes to low literacy achievements among children when they are in school.

Hodgskiss (2007) lends support to the idea that studies conducted worldwide have expanded the understanding of emergent literacy. Among the studies done in Zambia, Musonda's (2011) study on literacy behaviours which pre-schoolers exhibited in Lusaka urban revealed that, despite the fact that teaching was not prioritised in the areas of research, children generally exhibited enough literacy behaviours ranging from correct handling of books to pretending to read and write. The study also revealed that children in the sample were able to orally count and write figures, sing the alphabet song and Zambian songs, and engage in literacy/numeracy-related games. The findings further showed that scaffolding of these literacy behaviours in children by parents was limited.

Another notable study was conducted by Kaunda (2013) aimed at establishing the presence or absence of literacy skills and practices among children who have not yet begun formal schooling in Mwense district. The study established that children generally exhibited a number of literacy skills before starting formal schooling such as drawing, holding a pencil, scribbling, narrative and listening comprehension skills, reading memory verses and pretending to read. They were also able to engage in literacy-related games which helped them develop certain skills required for literacy development.

These studies mainly focused on the literacy-related behaviours and practices children exhibited before they entered school and their importance in the development of early literacy. Analysing Musonda (2011) and Kaunda (2013)'s study findings, emergent literacy is considered to be that type of literacy seen in young ones as they exhibit literacy-related behaviours and practices. While appreciating the importance of these literacy experiences in children's literacy development, the researcher wondered what role parents in an area with poor reading levels among pupils could play in influencing the development of literacy-related behaviours and practices children exhibit prior to school entry. However, an issue this study has focused on in question form is: What do parents in selected rural households of Mongu District do to encourage development of their children's emergent literacy skills which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once a child is in school?

As already stated, there is sufficient evidence that children from home environments with poor literacy experiences start school with little knowledge of literacy. This contributes to poor literacy performance normally recorded among pupils in Zambia (MoE, 2013). To this effect, the issue of low literacy levels among Zambian learners, particularly those in public primary schools, triggered by many factors such as: inappropriate language of classroom instruction, inadequate learning and teaching materials, improper teaching strategies, over-enrolment, and lack of parental and community support, has for some time been a subject of concern to the Government and other stakeholders, including parents in the country (MOCE, 2013). In its efforts to seek solutions to address this concern, the Government of the Republic of Zambia, through the Ministry of Education (MoE), made some changes regarding the teaching of initial literacy and medium of instruction (MoI) in primary schools. As such, in 2013, the curriculum was revised and the new language policy was implemented to govern the teaching and learning experiences in schools. One of the major aspects of the revised curriculum was the use of local languages in the teaching of initial literacy and as MoI from grades 1 to 4 (MoE, 2013). Today, initial literacy in Zambia is taught in the recognised local language of the region where a particular school is located.

Based on the 1965 language zoning when the country was divided into zones, there are seven major local languages, namely Bemba, Kaonde, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, Nyanja and Tonga (BKLLLNT), which have been approved as languages to be used in teaching initial literacy and as MoI from grades 1 to 4 (MoE, 2002). These languages are only used in prescribed areas or regions called zones. This is the reason why they are sometimes called zonal languages (MoE, 2002). However, the home language (Silozi) that children in selected rural households of Mongu District use as a means by which they socialise in their families and community as a whole is the same language used in conventional school (grades 1 to 4). This has some implications. The fact that the Zambian revised curriculum demands that early grade teachers use the approved local/zonal languages in teaching initial literacy and as MoI from grades 1 to 4, this simply means the new language policy has some direct relevance in that the same home language (oral language) which Hill (2009) in her study revealed as a foundation for emergent literacy, which would have been established in children prior to school entry, would in turn help them pick out familiar concepts used in formal school, thereby making the learning of literacy simple and enjoyable. The other implication is that the new language policy of using local/zonal languages to teach initial literacy and as MoI, follows the firm educational principle of making learners work from the known to the unknown, that is, learning first in a known language (L1), in this case *Silozi*, and later moving into the unknown language (L2), English (MoE, 2002). This may further imply that children who begin to learn in their own language have confidence in themselves and learn to read and write easily. The other implication is that as children interact with parents and other knowledgeable people in their homes using the same language, *Silozi*, which is used at school, they broaden their working vocabulary, or rather they acquire a good number of words which would make it easier for them to connect the known spoken words to their written form of words when time for learning to read and write comes since the same language used in the home is the one used at grades 1 to 4. This also means that as children arrive on the first day at school, they go with thousands of oral words of their home/first language (L1). It is the work of the teacher to build upon what the pupils come along with from home as they start learning to read and write in school and this simplifies the task.

Regardless of Government's numerous efforts to create an environment necessary to improve learner achievement in literacy, there are a lot of early grade learners in Mongu District whose literacy performance has continued to be poor as highlighted in the District Resource Centre Reading Levels Assessment Analysis (DRCRLAA, 2017). Generally, many contributory factors have been identified, but parents' role in encouraging development of their children's emergent literacy skills prior to school entry still remains unclear in some places such as Mongu rural. It was from this background that this study was conducted to fill the information gap.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Despite drastic measures put in place by Government to increase learner achievement in literacy, very little success has been achieved with regard to improving literacy levels among Zambian learners, particularly those in public primary schools (Mubanga, 2012; World Bank, 2006). Within this context, there are a lot of early grade learners in Mongu District whose literacy performance leaves much to be desired as evidenced by the DRCRLAA (2017). Following a broad consensus among researchers that the road to formal reading and writing begins at a very early age in life in the home environment and includes parents and other primary caregivers, it is not precisely known as to how parents in selected rural households of Mongu District foster their children's emergent literacy skills prior to school entry which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in school. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate parental involvement in their children's early literacy development prior to school entry. Stated as a question, the problem under investigation was: What do parents in selected rural households of Mongu District do to encourage the development of their children's emergent literacy skills which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once a child is in school?

### **1.4 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to establish the role parents play in fostering their children's emergent literacy skills in their homes which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in school.

### **1.5 Main objective of the study**

The main objective of the study was to establish the role parents play in fostering their children's emergent literacy skills in their homes which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in school.

### **1.6 Specific objectives**

1. To establish parents' understanding of emergent literacy.
2. To establish early literacy practices that parents expose their children to prior to school entry.
3. To identify the types of literacy environments children are exposed to in their homes and surrounding areas which support early literacy development.

### **1.7 Main research question**

What role do parents play in fostering their children's emergent literacy skills in their homes which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in school?

### **1.8 Specific questions**

1. What is parents' understanding of emergent literacy?
2. What early literacy practices do parents expose their children to prior to school entry?
3. What type of literacy environments are children exposed to in their homes and surrounding areas which support early literacy development?

### **1.9 Significance of the study**

The rationale of this study is based on the assertion that early education is the backbone of a child's later education. With this in mind, it is hoped that the findings of this study may provide necessary information to parents/guardians with regard to how they should support their children's early literacy development. It may serve as an eye-opener to all

parents and the society at large in modifying their mode of parental involvement towards achieving a bright future for their children despite their busy schedules. The same information generated from this study may help curriculum designers to make informed decisions as they develop curricula for Early Childhood Education (ECE). The study may also give early grade teachers an insight on how emergent literacy acquired by children from their homes may be used as a starting point in their progression to conventional literacy when they start grade one. It is also anticipated that the results of this research may add new information to the already existing body of knowledge on the area under study.

### **1.10 Delimitation of the study**

The study was confined to one rural community in Mongu District and did not go beyond this district. The community has remained anonymous on ethical grounds.

### **1.11 Limitation of the study**

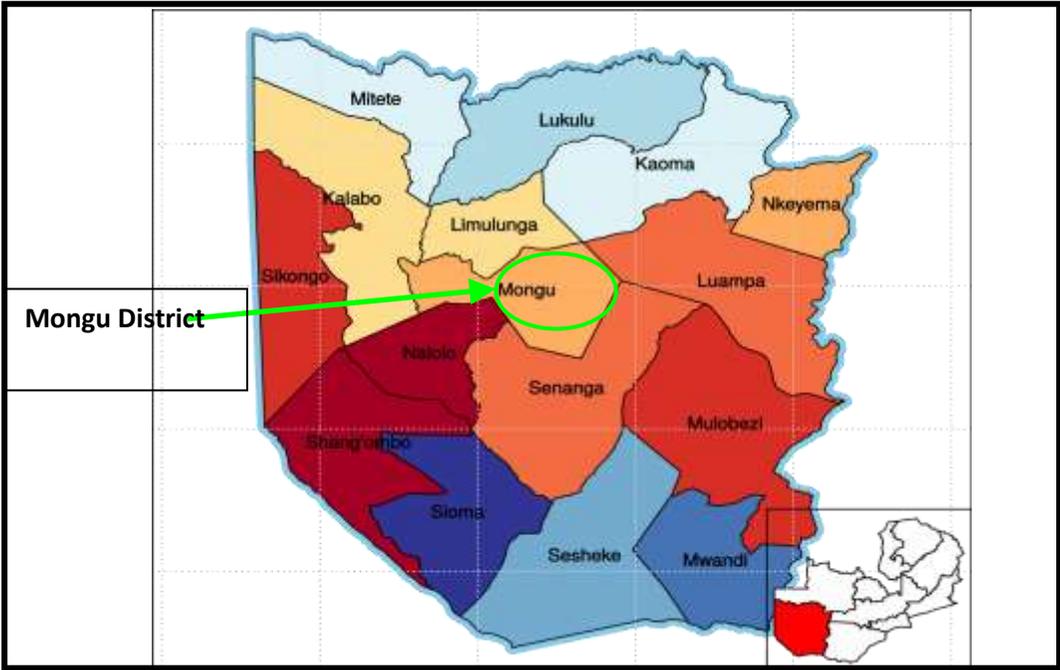
The findings may not be generalised to all other districts of Zambia because the sample was small as the study was limited to Mongu District only. However, the findings may give a general picture of what parents may do to support the development of reading and writing skills by promoting emergent literacy skills before their children start formal school.

### **1.12 Study site**

The research was conducted in one of the rural communities of Mongu District, Zambia, situated 24 kilometres south of Mongu town. The community has remained anonymous on ethical grounds. The reason why Mongu was selected as a study area was because of poor literacy performance that was identified among grades 1 to 4 learners. There were a lot of early grade learners in Mongu rural schools who were not able to read and write as highlighted in the DRCRLAA (2017), and parents normally put the blame on teachers for not doing a good job. Following the notion that literacy has its roots in a home, it was from this background that the study was conducted in Mongu District to investigate the

key role parents play in encouraging development of their children’s early literacy skills prior to school entry which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in school.

Figure 1 gives a clear location of Mongu District in the Western Province of Zambia.



**Figure 1: Map showing location of Mongu District in Western Province of Zambia.**  
**Source: (Online)**

### **1.13 Organisation of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of six chapters. The introduction makes the first chapter which provides the background information, specific problem under investigation, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, delimitation and limitation of the study, the study site and, finally, organisation of the dissertation.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework and reviews literature considered to be relevant to the present study. It reviews various studies related to the research objectives with a view to identifying the gaps that this study intended to fill. The focus on a number

of case studies on the same subject 'emergent literacy' was intentionally done to show how vital and relevant this subject is in the learning of initial literacy worldwide.

Chapter Three mainly describes the methodology and methods used in the study. The chapter comprises research design, targeted population, sampling technique, sample size, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, ethical considerations, as well as validity and reliability of instruments.

Chapter Four presents the research findings organised in terms of themes. The themes are in accordance with the research objectives as set out in chapter one of this report.

Chapter Five discusses the findings in response to the objectives that guided the study.

Finally, Chapter Six presents the conclusion based on the research objectives. Further, the chapter makes recommendations for policy development and further research on emergent literacy.

### **1.14 Summary**

Chapter one has presented the introduction to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives and research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitation, site where the study was conducted and finally organisation of the dissertation. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework and reviews literature that is related to this study.

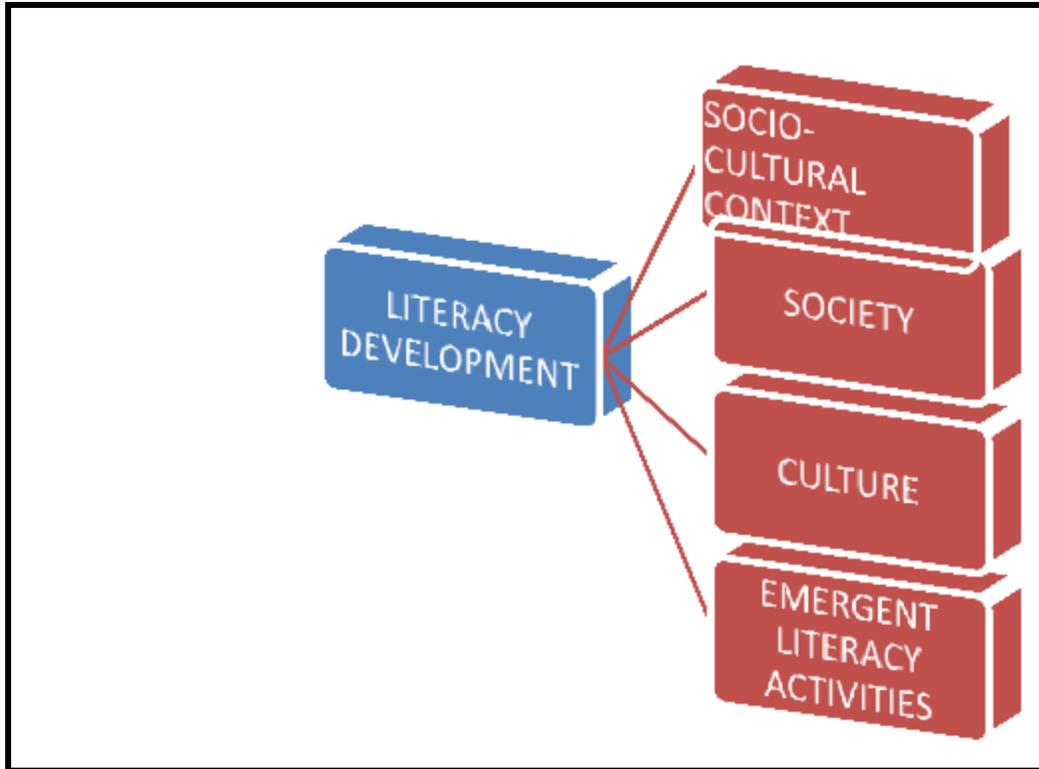
## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Overview**

The current chapter presents the theoretical framework of this study. It also reviews literature that informs the present study. The literature is reviewed, by firstly, looking at the definition of emergent literacy and discuss its origin as well as outlining its components. Various studies related to the research objectives will be reviewed with view to identifying the gaps that this study intended to fill. The focus on a number of case studies on the same subject, ‘emergent literacy’, was intentionally done to show how vital and relevant this subject is in the learning of initial literacy worldwide. Despite many studies cited, this research is still unique as it focuses on one aspect not covered in the cited materials- to establish the role parents in selected rural households of Mongu District play in fostering children’s emergent literacy skills prior to school entry which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once a child is in school.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by social-constructivist theory mainly associated with Lev Vygotsky (1978). The theory is based on the idea that an individual’s development is influenced by the socio-cultural context within which he or she lives (Stofflett, 1988). It views society and culture as major factors influencing literacy development. Figure 2 that follows has more information.



**Figure 2: Socio-Constructivist Theory** Source: Adapted from Stofflett (1988)

The experiences and context in which the child learns to read and write are very important to one's literacy development. In the socio-constructivist view, learning is constructed in the matrix between social interaction and the interconnectivity between an individual and the social environment as Vygotsky (1978) states that parents, caregivers and culture as a whole share in the responsibility for a child's cognitive development. In other words, Vygotsky's (1978) theory stipulates that knowledge acquisition is rooted in social interactions. He emphasises social interactions with skilled others as key to learning.

The theory helps to inform this study that parents can play a role in the socialisation aspect of their children, encouraging them to interact with people within their households and surrounding areas as a way of learning and broadening their thinking and what they can actually do in the case of parents in the selected rural households of Mongu District, this is what the study aimed to establish. MOCE (2013) contends that children's active exploration within the environment and their interaction with adults

provide important opportunities for adults to model literacy for them to learn. Promoting strong values of literacy should be a common practice in all children's households in order to provide the initial building blocks for children's literacy acquisition since all children's early literacy experiences start from home. Promoting oral language in the home through interactions enables children to develop language and early reading skills (Katims, 1994). From this view comes an idea that early literacy skills that children acquire prior to school entry are nourished by social interactions with caring adults, particularly parents, who are considered to be their first teachers before they get into formal school system (Clay, 1966).

The socio-cultural perspective further postulates that children in their social world engage in interrelations that shape their cognitive, social and physical development. According to Vygotsky (1978), children's growth occurs in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the theory that what the child is able to do in collaboration today, he or she will be able to do it independently tomorrow. In simpler terms, when adults or more advanced peers support the child to understand and develop oral language through the acquisition of more complex vocabulary, the child will be more likely to be able to use this new vocabulary independently on subsequent trials. As to whether or not that is what parents in Mongu District do to support the learning of initial literacy of their children once in school is what this study aimed at establishing.

This concept is seen as a scaffolding structure "support point" for performing action. Wood et al. (1976: 90) describe scaffolding as "a process which enables a child or a novice to solve a task or achieve a goal that would be beyond his or her unassisted efforts". The notion drawn from this concept is that suitable guidance from parents and other primary caregivers can foster children's emergent literacy skills that are actually above their understanding, but as to whether or not parents/guardians in the rural communities of Mongu District manage to do that is what this study aimed to establish. Slavin (2009) contends that if parents scaffold children positively, for instance, in a home environment where a parent works with his or her child to complete a task such as engaging him or her in a joint conversation that is beyond what he or she can do without

help, this could help the child become a competent oral language communicator. The roots of learning to read and write are in learning to speak during the child's early development. Oral language greatly contributes to the development of early reading and writing skills which serve as an important foundation for subsequent literacy development (Neumann and Dickson, 2001). Whether or not parents in selected rural households of Mongu District do what has been alluded to, which some parents elsewhere do, is what this study intended to find out.

## **2.3 Review of Related Literature**

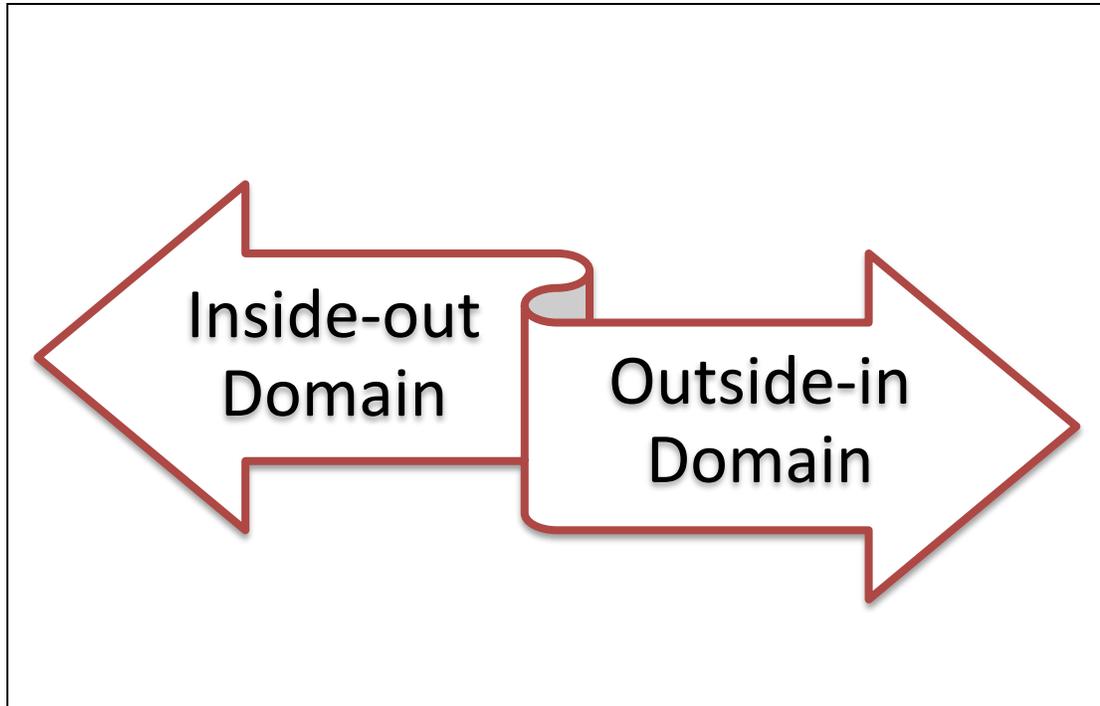
### **2.3.1 Definition of Emergent Literacy and its Origin**

Although Clay (1966) was among the first scholars to introduce the concept of emergent literacy, a more formal introduction of the term was heralded by Teale and Sulzby's (1986) book entitled *Emergent Literacy*. Since then, the term designated new conceptions about the relationship between a growing child and literacy information from the environment and home literacy practices. After Clay's (1966) introduction of emergent literacy, an extensive body of research has expanded the concept, illuminating that a child's literacy development begins well before formal instruction in school and can be influenced by social interactions with adults, exposure to literacy materials, and the use of engaged learning activities. While the concept of 'reading readiness', which Ontario (2003) defines as the point at which a person is ready to learn to read and the time during which a person transitions from being a non-reader to a reader, suggested that there was a point in time when children were ready to learn to read and write, Clay's (1966) notion of emergent literacy suggested that there were continuities in children's literacy development between early literacy behaviours and those displayed once children could read independently. Many other scholars and institutions have added their voice to what emergent literacy is all about. According to the socio-constructivist theory, which guided this study, emergent literacy is described as a socio-cultural process whereby its development is highly influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which children are reared. The theory looks at society and culture as major factors influencing children's early literacy development. In Zambia, the study conducted by

Musonda (2011) described emergent literacy as the type of literacy noted in young children as they learn and exhibit behaviour that is literacy-related. In a common explanation, it could be said that emergent literacy is the behaviour of children which reflects their understanding of reading and writing activities even when they are not readers and writers themselves.

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2003), emergent literacy goes beyond children's interaction with books and writing material in that it includes all the literacy practices found in the surrounding environment where the child resides. UNESCO further considers emergent literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials with varying contexts. Gibson's (1989) understanding of the term 'emergent literacy' also points to the fact that it goes beyond children's interaction with books, and as such, it encompasses all literacy practices that are within the environment where the child is born and nurtured. No wonder Hodgskiss (2007) looks at it as behaviours that children exhibit such as pretending to read and write, riddling, interpreting pictures, telling stories, flipping pages of books, singing songs, as well as playing various types of games. Parents and other primary caregivers should understand and encourage these attempts because children learn new vocabulary in different ways which play a significant role in their early literacy development. Worth noting is the fact that the knowledge that children acquire through oral language becomes important for learning printed words at a later stage. Grazer (1989) states that without oral language, it is not possible for a child to develop the ability to read and write because oral language acquisition lays the foundation for learning to speak, read and write, a good indicator of how well and how quickly literacy will develop in a child.

A study conducted by Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) on child development and emergent literacy revealed that emergent literacy consists mainly of two interdependent sets of skills and processes called inside-out and outside-in domains. Figure 3 sheds more light on the two important domains.



**Figure 3: Showing inside-out and outside-in domains** Source: Adapted from Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998)

Following Whitehurst and Lonigan's (1998) report, the inside-out domain refers to children's understanding of the rules for translating print into sounds or sounds into print, for instance understanding that letters make words or that letters represent sound. In other words, they are skills or processes which involve phonological awareness, syntactic awareness, phoneme-grapheme correspondence and emergent writing. On the other hand, the outside-in domain refers to children's knowledge of the context - the meaning of words; concepts about the world, and how narratives are structured in which reading and writing develop. In simpler terms, they are skills or processes which include language, conceptual knowledge, conventions of print and emergent reading. The question arising from this is: What do parents in Mongu District do to enhance these two domains as a way of fostering their children's emergent literacy skills that could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once they are in school.

### **2.3.2 Parents' Understanding of Emergent Literacy**

There are a number of studies that have been conducted worldwide in relation to parental involvement in children's early literacy development. The review of these studies seems to point to a general agreement that the understanding or rather, the extent of knowledge that parents have with regard to their children's early literacy journey determines the type of literacy environment and literacy activities that they expose their children to in their homes, and this in turn has a strong impact on children's language and literacy development and their educational achievement (Cheung and Pomerantz, 2012; Gonzalez-Dehass et al., 2005; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1999; Wade and Moore, 1998; Young et al., 2013). As already indicated, the focus on quite a number of case studies was intentionally done to show how significant the concept of emergent literacy is in learning how to read and write worldwide and how parents influence its development. The other reason why this study used a number of case studies is that the subject is a living one and much of the literature circles around what Clay (1966) wrote, but various studies conducted have looked at this issue from various points of view, exposing areas not explored. This study has focused on 'the role of parents in fostering children's emergent literacy skills' in an area with poor reading levels of pupils, according to the statistics for Zambia. Below are some of the studies, beginning with those in accordance with objective number one.

Meehan (1998) conducted a study in New Jersey. The study investigated parents' knowledge of their children's emergent literacy development by administering questionnaires that examined their beliefs of literacy learning and the early reading and writing experiences of pre-school children in their homes. The study utilised a quantitative approach with a sample of 24 parents with their 24 children who were enrolled in a pre-school of Red Bank area. Responses from questionnaires were tallied and converted to percentages for analysis.

The results indicated that parents had considerable knowledge regarding their children's emergent literacy development. The amount and type of literacy activities that took place in each of the homes gave a clear picture that parents had a sound knowledge of

emergent literacy. For example, the set of questions, which centred on literacy interactions, revealed that parents and children were interacting in some form of literacy activities on a daily basis. It was revealed that 22 out of 24 parents read to their children daily. Reading to a child and modelling positive reading behaviour have been documented as important aspects of emergent literacy. It was evident that in Meehan's (1998) study, emergent literacy development was supported by experiences provided by parents of pre-school children. In light of the significant role those parents played in their children's emergent literacy development, the present study is different because it has been designed to investigate parents of non-school-going children's understanding of emergent literacy, not parents of those who are already in pre-school, and how that knowledge can be used to encourage the development of children's emergent literacy skills which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in school.

Anderson (1994) conducted a study in Washington, D.C. on parents' perceptions of emergent literacy. Parents in Anderson's (1994) study recognised the importance of adult role modelling of literacy. Most of their perceptions were revealed to be consistent with an emergent literacy perspective, but with further analysis, it seemed that certain features of emergent literacy were not as readily accepted. Despite some parents' view that learning to read and write is a holistic process, they were still less inclined to reject some traditional views, such as their view that learning to read and write is a hierarchy of skills. Therefore, with the problem of low literacy performance which was identified among most early grade learners in the rural communities of Mongu District, the question of how parents understand the concept of emergent literacy, a prerequisite for learning to read and write, required some investigations.

The study by Tabbada et al. (2014) explored activities parents undertake to teach their children how to read, and activities teachers design to promote literacy. These activities were correlated with the students' performance in letter-recognition tasks. Results revealed that parents were aware of their role in their children's literacy development and they were implementing activities at home that were enhancing children's interest in reading. The types of literacy activities that parents exposed their children to in their

homes had significant impact on children's learning to read. For example, each child was read to at home. The enjoyment of reading provided models for the early readers to emulate adults who read to them. Likewise, the study further revealed that teachers provided a myriad of activities that catered for students' reading needs. There was a relationship between the reading materials found at home and the reading abilities of the day care pupils.

The study was important to this research as it brought out the issue of how literacy activities implemented by parents in homes or rather how parents' knowledge of emergent literacy can help their children learn to read once in school. While the literature reviewed has discussed how parents' knowledge of emergent literacy can support literacy development of children who are already in day care centres, the present study is different because it sought to establish parents' understanding of emergent literacy, and how that knowledge can help in fostering emergent literacy skills among non-school-going children (prior to any school experience).

In Zambia, Musonda (2011) carried out a study entitled 'Literacy behaviours which pre-schoolers exhibited in selected households of Lusaka urban'. The purpose of the study was to establish the literacy behaviour(s) that pre-schoolers already exhibited from their homes before receiving formal instruction in school, but one of the study's objectives was to establish the role of parents in facilitating literacy development in their children. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and used a case study design. It chose a purposive sample of 21 children, 11 girls and 10 boys who had not yet enrolled in any school. In addition, the researcher interviewed 15 caregivers comprising parents and guardians. To collect the needed information for the study, the researcher used interview schedules, a practical test score sheet, home literacy environment checklist and a document study checklist.

The findings in this study indicated that despite the fact that teaching of reading and writing were not prioritised in the areas of research, children generally exhibited enough literacy behaviours ranging from correct handling of books, and pretending to read and write. They were also able to engage in literacy/numeracy-related games and played

games such as *ciyato* and *nsolo*, though it was revealed that most of the time children were observers in *nsolo* as it required higher thinking skills. All the children had language knowledge because they had well-developed language skills. These were very useful in the development of emergent literacy and numeracy skills, though it was further established that scaffolding of these literacy behaviours in these children by parents was limited. Most parents could not encourage the development of their children's emergent literacy skills because they lacked knowledge of emergent literacy. They discouraged their children from getting involved in literacy activities that could promote emergent literacy in readiness for formal school. For example, they had a tendency of disregarding any efforts that their children made in terms of reading and writing because they believed that reading and writing were associated exclusively with school, not home, and that teaching children to read and write was the job of a teacher. The study also established that some parents had English alphabet books in their homes but failed to use them because of the new policy that was implemented of using the recognised local language of the region where the school is located in teaching initial literacy.

In view of the above, the current study is different in that Musonda did her research in the capital city of Zambia, Lusaka, while the current study was carried out in Mongu District. Musonda (2011) concentrated on literacy behaviours which pre-schoolers exhibited before formal schooling. Among others, the study revealed that all children exhibited behaviours such as correct handling of books, pretending to read and write, engaging in literacy/numeracy games, and were able to orally count and write numbers, and sing the English alphabet song and Zambian songs, while the current study, in line with objective number one, focused on parents' understanding of emergent literacy and how that knowledge is used to encourage the development of their children's early literacy behaviours prior to school entry.

Another study, by Imange and Simwinga (2014), was carried out in Mansa. The purpose of the study was to establish whether primary school teachers utilised emergent literacy skills in order to teach learners the conventional reading and writing skills. One of its

objectives was to establish what primary school teachers knew about emergent literacy. The study was qualitative in nature with a sample of 62 grade one teachers and their pupils.

Results showed that teachers lacked knowledge of emergent literacy. The concept was new to them and its relevance was not appreciated, and this rendered them incapable of creating the necessary classroom conditions that should bring continuity in the learning of conventional literacy. While this study looked at primary school teachers' knowledge of emergent literacy, the current one focused on parents' knowledge of emergent literacy and how they utilised it to foster their children's emergent literacy skills prior to school experience, an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in school.

### **2.3.3 Early Literacy Practices that Parents expose their Children to prior to School Entry**

Teale (1987) argues that parents and guardians are their children's typical first teachers, and that the first school is home. He further indicates that literacy development does not occur naturally in children but occurs because of what parents do. He adds that how a parent rears a child, rather than their occupation, income or education makes the main difference in the development of emergent literacy. Below are some of the studies in line with objective number two: Early literacy practices that parents expose their children to prior to school entry.

In 2012, Kenney conducted a study in south-eastern Michigan, United States of America, on parental influence on early language and literacy learning in the home environment. The purpose of the study was to observe and examine parent-child literacy interactions in the home environment that influence early language and literacy development. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The sample for the study comprised 72 families consisting of 5 to 6-years-old children with their primary caregivers. Parents and their children were asked to participate in the three semi-structured literacy activities: storybook reading, play session and writing task.

According to the study results, parents varied their behaviours with their children across the three tasks. Parent-child interactions during the storybook reading activity varied. Each parent tended to read the story to his or her child while the little one listened. Some parents engaged their children in conversations related to the story, while other parents simply read a book word for word. Many children commented and/or asked questions during the story. Parents' responses to their children's questions and comments varied.

During play session, the common trends were to create 'pretend scenario' with the toys, sort the toys into categories, and discuss the toys in reference to the storybook. At times the child directed the play and for others, the parent made the suggestions. On the writing activity, children, with the help of their parents, were asked to draw pictures that coincided with the pictures in the storybook or their toys. However, because the directions were open-ended, some children scribbled and drew pictures that were not related to the theme and which could only be interpreted by them.

The findings revealed that play activity was a context where parents were very interactive with their children. The results point to the importance of adult-child play as being beneficial to early language and literacy learning in the home. Although findings point to the importance of adult-child play as being beneficial to early language and literacy learning, the overall findings show that variables present in the home may be more influential in child learning and development than variables in other environments.

It is clear from the reviewed study that in order to investigate how parent-child literacy interactions in the home environment influenced early language and literacy development, parents in south-eastern Michigan, United States of America, were asked to participate in the three semi-structured literacy activities, namely storybook reading, play session and writing tasks, of which play was found to be the context where parents were very interactive with their children. Although there are some similarities, the current research is somehow different from the previous one in the sense that it was generally finding out the role parents in Mongu District of Zambia play in their home environments in encouraging development of their children's early literacy skills. No

parent-child literacy activities had been provided for the researcher on which to base her study, as it was the case in the previous study.

The study by Michelle et al. (2009) entitled: “The Scaffolding of Emergent Literacy Skills in the Home Environment” was conducted in Australia. The study focused on describing strategies used by one parent (a mother) to scaffold her child’s emergent literacy writing and letter knowledge prior to school entry in her home. Environmental print provided many rich and meaningful examples for the parent to show that print conveys meaning and is constructed with letters that have names and make sounds.

When the child was two years old, the mother initiated interactions that focused on scaffolding his ability to differentiate print from pictures. The child began to point out to environmental print spontaneously and learned to distinguish print from non-print. This differentiation of print from pictures extended to the exploration of storybooks. After the child was able to differentiate environmental print from pictures and understood that print had meaning, the mother increasingly focused on individual letters within the print. The interaction between mother and child that began with environmental print also transferred to other contexts.

The results revealed that environmental print has proved to be an extremely useful tool to utilise. The child’s guided exposure to environmental print from two years of age helped him to develop visual skills needed to orient towards print. This being the case, Michelle et al. (2009) advise parents to make environmental print useful to their children because it is not-costly, and is accessible and always available. However, it was not known as to what types of environmental print exists in the targeted rural households of Mongu District. It was also not known whether or not parents used it to encourage development of their children’s emergent literacy skills, which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in conventional school. This was one of the reasons why the study was conducted.

Stephen et al. (2006) of Texas A and M University System, College Station, conducted a study which aimed at assessing the extent to which early childhood educators engage children in early literacy promotion activities. The study utilised a qualitative approach

where 108 surveys were completed by early childhood educators. The findings demonstrated that efforts were made in a number of areas to engage children in a variety of important language and literacy activities in their centres. However, a sizeable minority of those surveys indicated that they did not frequently engage children in recommended activities.

Although the study was on early literacy promotion activities, its focus was on how early childhood educators encouraged the development of emergent literacy in their centres by using these activities. The current research focused on whether or not parents in selected rural households of Mongu District encouraged the development of their children's early literacy activities in their homes and long before children started formal lessons in any school, since home is the first school that enhances children's knowledge, and parents are typically the first teachers.

Marangu (2015) conducted a research in Nairobi, Kenya, where she looked at the relationship between parental involvement and the literacy development of pre-schoolers in Langata division, specifically those between 5 and 6 years of age. The study used a quantitative correlation research study design to describe the degree to which parental involvement and literacy development were related. Stratified random sampling was used to obtain a stratified random sample from both public and private schools in Langata Division. The study established that there was a positive correlation between parental involvement and the literacy development of pre-school children in Langata Division. The correlation was enhanced when the school facilitated parental involvement through open parent-teacher communication and by organising school functions that promoted parental involvement.

This may not be the case with the current study, which sought to find out what role parents play in their homes in influencing development of early literacy skills among children who are not yet in school. The previous study utilised a quantitative methodology where stratified random sampling was used. Stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique which, according to Selvan (2017), occurs when a whole population is divided into a number of mutually exclusive sub-populations (or strata). A

random sample is then taken within each stratum. In addition, quantitative method uses calculations in statistics to establish what is called statistical significance, which requires a large sample size population. The current study used a qualitative approach where non-probability sampling techniques were employed to purposely target a group of people believed to be reliable for the study. Qualitative method requires a small sample and relies on strategies that are flexible and interactive, including interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Interviews as a qualitative research technique involved conducting intensive individual face-to-face interactions with selected parents to explore their perspectives on what they knew about emergent literacy and what they did to foster children's emergent literacy skills. Focus group discussions which involved children enabled the researcher to gather different views on what type of early literacy practices and home literacy environments they were exposed to and, in short, to validate data that was provided by parents. Observations were done to identify the types of home literacy environments that parents exposed their children to in the targeted homes and surrounding areas and, above all, to validate data that was collected through interviews and discussions.

Mathangwana and Arua (2006) conducted a study on Family literacy: Attitudes of parents towards reading in rural communities. The main purpose was to survey attitudes of parents towards reading in two rural communities of Thamaga and Lelhakeng in Botswana. It was a quantitative study and data was collected from 107 semi-literate and illiterate participants, mainly women. A questionnaire was administered to only one member of each family, mostly women who were immediately available to fill it in.

The study revealed that many parents/guardians did not promote reading to their children neither did they provide necessary literacy materials that would encourage development of children's literacy skills. It was also found that some parents/guardians did not manage to read to their children because of their low levels of education, which made them fail to answer questions when their children needed clarifications on any work to do with education. Some parents had busy daily schedules while others were not just interested in issues to do with emergent literacy for they thought it was wasting their

time. The study further indicated that some parents/guardians failed to read to their children because they had no reading materials. It was also indicated that some children who were willing to be read to got frustrated because of the negative attitudes portrayed by their parents.

The relevance of the previous study by Mathangwane and Arua (2006) to the current one is that it brings out the fact that reading to children is one of the most important roles that parents, as first and most important teachers of their children before they get into formal school, should play. Besides the above-stated relevance, the previous study mainly concentrated on reading while the current research encompasses all parent-child literacy activities/practices that could influence development of their children's early literacy skills prior to school entry.

In South Africa, Sarlina (2016) conducted a study on the role of family literacy programmes to support emergent literacy in children. The purpose of the study was to establish the quality of interactions which parents promote among children in South Africa. It was a qualitative study which used qualitative techniques of data collection.

The key findings indicated that programmes like 'Modified wordworks school-family partnerships helped in improving parents' knowledge of emergent literacy as well as improving their confidence in supporting their children, and this greatly contributed to improved parent-child interactions. The study, therefore, demonstrated that consistent interaction of children with parents in homes is a serious predictor of early language development and early literacy skills. Supporting the above finding, Vygotsky (1978) adds his voice by saying children's acquisition of language and literacy is rooted in social interactions.

The study was very important because it provided a clear picture on how school-family partnership in improving parents' knowledge of emergent literacy can promote quality interaction among parents and children, which in turn helps in fostering children's emergent literacy skills, an important foundation for learning to read and write. However, this study sought to establish the role parents in selected rural households of

Mongu District, whether or not involved in any school-family partnership, play in fostering their children's emergent literacy skills in their homes before they are enrolled in school. Therefore, it was important to investigate how parent-child interaction influences early literacy development.

In Zambia, Kipepe (2016) conducted a study on "Emergent literacy support children are exposed to in rural areas of Kasempa District in North-Western Province". It was purely a qualitative study which employed a case study design with a sample of 52 participants. In order to achieve the study objectives, interviews, observations and focus group discussions were employed.

The study revealed that storytelling, games, reading to children, pretending to read and write, and household and community print supported the development of emergent literacy in the rural communities of Kasempa District. On the part of 'pretend reading', the study revealed that only a small number of children pretended to read because a lot of parents were not building upon such a literacy practice. The study further established that singing was one of the emergent literacy activities in which most children participated. It was further revealed that the songs were accompanied by actions such as clapping and lifting of legs and all these unconsciously helped in supporting children's emergent literacy development.

Kipepe's (2016) study looked at emergent literacy support that children were exposed to in Kasempa without specifying who the key player was in that exposure. The study under discussion is different because it sought to establish what parents in the targeted rural community of Mongu District as key players do to encourage development of their children's emergent literacy skills prior to school entry which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in school. In addition, the current study was conducted in the Western Province of Zambia, not in North-Western Province.

Kaunda (2013) researched on emergent literacy skills and practices among 2 to 6-year-old children in Mwense District of Zambia. The purpose of the study was to establish the presence or absence of literacy skills and practices among children who had not begun

formal schooling in selected villages of Mwense District. The study employed qualitative approach which collected information through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation. A case study was used with a sample size of 20 children drawn from two villages.

The study revealed that children generally exhibited a number of literacy skills before starting formal schooling, such as drawing, holding a pencil, scribbling, narratives and listening comprehension skills, singing, reciting memory verses and pretending to read. They were also able to engage in literacy-related games and other practices which develop certain skills required for literacy development.

The study further established that most households organised literacy practices and activities which helped their children to develop full emergent literacy skills and the children's elder siblings were instrumental in supporting the literacy development of their young siblings. It was also found that households helped children to name letters of the alphabet. Moreover, the study also established that at community level, there were quite a number of activities and practices which were not intended for literacy but in the long run contributed to children's literacy development. It was also found that children had language knowledge because most of them participated in rich oral contexts like folktales and riddles which contributed to the development of oral language skills.

The results further showed that most parents did not provide emergent literacy support to their children because they were illiterate. Some parents discouraged their children from scribbling as they thought they were just wasting paper and ink for the older siblings. Others stopped their children from scribbling on the ground. The only role parents seemed to play well was to let their children engage themselves in riddling sessions, folktales, songs and playing various games which helped in developing children's vocabulary which could be used in their day-to-day lives. The results also showed that two children were fond of asking a lot of questions about people they did not know. Asking questions is one way of learning more words and this in turn develops children's vocabulary, which is a key to the development of emergent literacy skills, the foundation for learning to read and write.

Kaunda's (2013) study was done in the rural communities of Mwense District in Luapula Province while the current research was done in the rural communities of Mongu District in Western Province. The previous study assumes that emergent literacy activities are already there on the ground, in some cases with support from parents, knowingly or otherwise, but this study was specifically designed to establish the role parents play in fostering children's emergent literacy skills prior to school experience.

A study conducted by Kasakula (2016) in Mungwi District of Zambia sought to establish how primary schools ensured that there was parental involvement in children's initial literacy learning. The study utilised a qualitative approach. Data was collected by conducting interviews, focus group discussions and through the use of document analysis with 104 respondents.

The study established that in teacher training college syllabi there were no deliberate methodological strategies aimed at equipping teachers with skills that would help them involve parents in the initial literacy teaching and learning of their children. The study further established that although primary school teachers had homework tasks that enhanced parental involvement in children's initial literacy learning, critical stakeholders such as PEO and DEBS officials and some school administrators were not aware of its existence. The study further revealed that in many primary schools parental involvement in children's initial literacy learning was only achieved through the strategies put in place by some cooperating partners working with schools such as Read to Succeed (RTS), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) supported by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). These strategies enabled teachers and parents to work together, and that way parents were able to actively get involved in their children's initial literacy learning.

The study was imperative as it mentioned how parental involvement in children's initial literacy learning was achieved in primary schools of Mungwi District. While this study looked at the issue of early literacy from the schools' point of view - how primary school teachers ensured that there was parental involvement in children's initial literacy learning in Mungwi District, the current study was different because it focused on what

parents could do to support children's emergent literacy skills in their homes long before children start formal schooling.

#### **2.3.4 Types of Literacy Environments Children are exposed to in their Homes and Surrounding Areas which Support Early Literacy Development**

As already pointed out, this is one area that has been researched on extensively, but issues are typically concerned with particular areas, hence the need to do more studies to find out how things are done elsewhere.

In New York, Joann (2011), a teacher, conducted a study on home literacy environment. The purpose of the study was to explore the home literacy environment in order to see what effect it had on the classroom. It was a qualitative study which gathered data through individual conversations with each case study participant and observations. Research had shown that a home environment which provides a variety of print, reading and writing material plays an important role in the development of a child's literacy skills and overall performance in school. Vygotsky (1978) cements the above finding by indicating that a literacy-rich home environment facilitates situations in children which prepare them for learning to read and write.

The study is of great help because it highlighted the significance of a literacy-rich home environment in a child's early literacy development. As already pointed out, this is one area that has been researched on extensively, but issues typically focus on particular areas, hence the need to use objective number three to investigate the types of home literacy environments that parents in the targeted rural community of Mongu District expose their children to which could support early literacy development.

McMahon et al. (1996) did their research in Mississippi, United States of America, on 'Effects of a Literacy-rich Environment on Children's Concepts about Print'. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of children's pre-kindergarten literacy environment away from home on their knowledge of print-related concepts. Specifically, the research question addressed in the study was: Does the quantity and quality of literacy materials present in a child's pre-kindergarten environment away from home predict his or her score on the Concepts About Print (CAP) assessment? The study was

purely quantitative. The subjects in this study consisted of 78 five-year-old children from eight early childhood sites located in three states. Data collection involved the use of two separate instruments. The CAP assessment instrument developed by Clay (1977) was used to determine children's knowledge of print-related concepts. The Inventory of Literacy Indicator (ILI) was employed to assess both quality and quantity of literacy materials available at each site.

The CAP was designed using a storybook format of (Clay, 1989) and as the story was read to a child, he or she was requested to assist the reader by performing various tasks. Some of the concepts examined by the CAP included the child's ability to: identify the front of the book, recognise the print, not pictures, distinguish between a letter and a word, and match pairs of upper and lower case letters, to mention but a few.

On the Inventory of Literacy Indicators (ILI) part, a careful review of literature resulted in a good number of areas being identified as essential for promoting literacy in early childhood classrooms.

Each child having parental consent was individually assessed using the CAP assessment instrument. The assessments at each site were completed by one of the three researchers who made several visits over a two weeks period. During each visit, the literacy environment was closely observed. At the conclusion of the assessment period, the quantity and quality of literacy materials at each site were evaluated using ILI. Total ILI scores were used to classify each site into groups according to the degree to which the environment was literacy-rich, low and high literacy environment groups.

A Pearson product moment correlation calculation determined that no significant relationship existed between site total ILI score and the CAP scores of the children at the eight sites. Significant differences suggested that children's knowledge of print-related concept differed as a result of a variable other than the quality and quantity of literacy materials in the site environment. It appeared that the variables related to this difference were the quality and quantity of literacy materials available in the home and the child's interaction with those materials. The researcher clearly indicated that those children

whose backgrounds did not identify them as being at risk of academic failure had the highest mean CAP scores in this study.

This study is important in this review of literature in the sense that it examines effects of children's pre-kindergarten literacy environment away from home on their knowledge of concepts about print. According to Morrow (1990); Strickland and Morrow (1986), children's literacy development should be a factor in designing pre-kindergarten environments in that children lacking opportunities to interact with print in their homes rely on pre-kindergarten environments away from home for early literacy experiences. The current study is different because its central idea is on parents' role in fostering emergent literacy skills among their 2 to 6-year-old children prior to pre-school experience, but one of its objectives is to identify the types of literacy environments parents expose their children to in their homes and surrounding areas which support the development of children's emergent literacy skills prior to any school experience.

Day (2013) did a study on 'Play Based Emergent Literacy Development in the Home Environment'. The study examined the connection between play and literacy of two emergent literacy learners in their home environment in a suburb of western New York. It looked at how play-based learning in the home environment helps children in their emergent literacy development. The study was primarily qualitative. The methodology was appropriate for the research because it involved intensive data collection over an extended period of time in a natural setting (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). To collect data, the researcher used interview guides, observation checklist and also conducted an attitude survey and took anecdotal notes.

The study revealed that play-based learning in the home environment definitely helped children with their emergent literacy development. Through play, children were constantly exposed to language, sounds and behaviours that influenced development of their emergent literacy skills. The children were involved in many different types of play such as colouring, dolls and action figures, music, as well as reading, writing, speaking and viewing, which were all aspects of literacy and were naturally embedded in the children's play. The study further revealed that there was a definite connection between

play and literacy which manifested itself between the two emergent literacy learners that the researcher studied. This was so because as they enjoyed various activities, no matter what play-based activity they engaged in, there were always some aspects of reading, writing, listening, speaking, or viewing taking place which led them back to the aspect of literacy.

Day's (2013) study was conducted in the United States of America while the current study was done in one of the rural communities in Mongu District of Zambia in Africa. The previous study was more of a case study which investigated the connection between play and literacy between two children only in their home environments in the suburb of western New York, which was not the case with the current study. The current research had a sample of 35, not only two children, and sought to determine types of home literacy environments that parents in the rural community of Mongu District expose their children to which support early literacy development. Besides, the previous study was restricted to play only while the current study encompasses all types of home literacy environments that support children's literacy development.

Opiyo (2017) conducted a study on 'Home Literacy Environment and Development of Early Literacy Abilities' of 3 to 4-year-old children in Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kenya. According to the study, home is the first primary resource that affords the child the best opportunities for literacy practice. She further argues that a parent is the first primary educator and a potent force in shaping his or her child's literacy. Specifically, her study sought to establish the relationship between parents' Demographic Characteristics (PDC), Parental Literacy Beliefs (PLB), Parent-child Literacy Practices (PCLPs) and Home Educational Resource (HER) on development of early literacy abilities of 3 to 4-year-old children. The study applied Mixed Research by combining cross-sectional survey and correlation study designs. It targeted pre-kindergarteners, 3 to 4 years old with first pre-school experience, and their parents/guardians. Based on stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques, 72 children, 72 parents/guardians and 24 pre-school teachers from 12 public attached and 12 privately owned pre-schools within the urban, sub-urban and rural locations of Kakamega Central Sub-County were selected as participants in the study. Qualitative data was obtained by

means of questionnaires and focus group discussion guides. Quantitative data was generated from indices, scales and checklists of Parent Literacy Beliefs, Parent-Child Literacy Practices and Home Educational Resource. An adapted assessment tool, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, estimated early literacy abilities of 3 to 4-year-old children.

Results revealed that age, gender, family size, parental education level and income are not only key facilitative factors for parental involvement, but also significant predictors of early literacy outcome. Parental belief system, literacy practices and availability of home literacy resources were more powerful predictors of early literacy skills (ELSs) of young children. Developmentally appropriate settings, language-enriched communication environment that comprised printed materials and social support from caregivers were identified as special ingredients that encouraged early forms of reading and writing to flourish and develop into conventional literacy. These were provided at varying levels within the three stratified areas of Kakamega Central Sub-County. High SES provided a more stimulating home literacy environment than low SES households. Pre-kindergarteners from high SES households had superior early literacy skills.

The results revealed that parents' age, gender, educational level, income, home literacy resources, as well as social support, influenced development of children's early literacy. This current study is different in that it attempts to identify the types of home literacy environments that parents, regardless of age, gender, educational level, income and so on, expose children to which support early literacy development.

In Zambia, Kasonde (2015) conducted her research on 'Emergent Literacy in Children's Play' in Kitwe. The purpose of the study was to find out what type of skills, knowledge and attitudes found in children's play or games can be characterised as a foundation of reading, writing (literacy) and numeracy or those that aid their development. The sample included 30 children (16 girls and 14 boys). The study employed qualitative data collection and analysis procedures.

The findings indicated that the use of language skills was found in almost all the games. Oral language and narrative skills were considered under this component while the other

components were scantily distributed in many of the games that were observed. Findings were that almost all the games required oral language regardless of whether one was a language game or not. The study further revealed that the role oral language plays in acquisition of literacy cannot be overemphasised in the sense that a child whose oral language is well developed at an early age would excel in literacy, language and in academic achievement in general.

Kasonde's (2015) study is of great value to the current research as it clearly states the importance of play and games in children's early language and literacy acquisition. This is the reason why Vygotsky (1978) contends that play is important not only because it is a predominant feature of childhood, but because it is a leading factor in a child's development. It is one way through which children learn new skills. The purpose of Kasonde's (2015) study was to find out what types of skills, knowledge and attitudes found in children's play/games can be characterised as a foundation for reading, writing and numeracy. Though oral language was found to be one of the important types, there was need to find out how parents in Mongu District help their children develop the same type of skill. Furthermore, the previous study was done on the Copperbelt Province while the current research was conducted in one of the rural communities of Mongu District in Western Province of Zambia

Reading is essential for children's educational success and communication in a technologically advancing society. This situation had provoked Chansa-Kabali (2014) to conduct a study entitled "Acquisition of early reading skills: The influence of the home environment in Lusaka, Zambia". The study was part of a larger project called Reading Support for Zambian Children (RESUZ). The aim of the RESUZ project was to explore different factors that would possibly influence acquisition of first graders' reading skills. The design of the RESUZ project was experimental and recruited 576 children from 42 schools in Lusaka urban. For Chansa-Kabali's study, a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) was utilised to investigate the contribution of home environment factors to reading skill acquisition. Seventy-two first grade learners from 9 schools were purposively selected from the 42 RESUZ schools. The home environments for 72 learners were assessed using a structured home literacy questionnaire. Additionally, a

semi-structured interview guide was used for qualitative inquiry with few parents (n=12). Reading skills were assessed through orthographic awareness and decoding competence tests that were developed locally by the RESUZ team. Children were assessed at two different time points in their first year of schooling.

Hierarchical regression analyses showed that home environment experiences impacted children's reading skills. These home environment factors included family possessions. Another factor that significantly explained variation in children's reading skills was parental reading attitudes. Parents who favourably ascribed to reading as an important activity in the home had children performing better on reading skills. With family literacy activities, children who experienced more literacy interactions in the home produced significantly higher scores than their peers. Although results based on parents' and teachers' views revealed weak home-school relations, it was found that affirmative parental views on the school positively impacted children's scores on the reading outcomes. Further, qualitative inquiry confirmed that high-achieving learners experienced a more literate home environment than low achieving learners. The findings clearly indicated the importance of home literacy-rich environments. This research investigated the types of literacy environments parents in the targeted homes and their surrounding areas expose their children to and how they support development of children's emergent literacy skills, which are an important foundation for learning to read and write once they are in conventional school.

## **2.4 Summary**

In this chapter, the theoretical framework has been presented, the term 'emergent literacy' and its origin has been discussed. Various studies related to the research objectives have been reviewed and gaps have been drawn from the studies reviewed to ground the current study. The next chapter discusses the methodology employed in the current study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Overview**

This chapter presents the methodology used to collect data. Kothari (2004) considers research methodology as various steps and techniques that are generally adopted by a researcher in carrying out a study. As stated by Orodho (2003), methodology is the scheme, outline or plan used to generate answers to research questions. This chapter includes the research design, population, study sample, sampling technique, research instruments, procedure of collecting data and data analysis. Further, the chapter highlights some of the ethical issues that were taken into account during the research and finally explains validity and reliability of the research instruments.

### **3.2 Research design**

Taylor (2000) defines research design as constructed plans and strategies developed to seek and discover answers to research questions. In order to achieve the stated objectives in this study, a qualitative approach with a case study research design was employed. Merriam (2001), quoted in Hodgskiss (2007), contends that qualitative research is a term used to describe studies or investigations that assist the inquirer to understand and interpret the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption to the natural setting as possible. The researcher adopted this methodology because the research topic called for interaction with participants in their natural environment and document real events, record what they say, and observe their behaviours as they are immersed in their natural setting of everyday life in which the problem under study was framed (Tichapondwa, 2013). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) consider a case study to be where a particular individual, programme or event is studied in depth for a defined period of time. With this understanding in mind, as highlighted in the DRCRLAA (2017), that there were a lot of early grade learners in the rural areas of Mongu District, whose literacy performance was poor, this study looked at the case of one rural area with low literacy levels of pupils. Therefore, this was a case study of one rural area out of many rural areas in Mongu District with poor literacy performance among early grade learners.

### **3.3 Population**

Best and Kaln (2006) define population as any target group of individuals that have common characteristics that are of interest to a researcher. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurements. For this research, the population comprised all community leaders, all parents/guardians and all children aged 2 to 6 years old (non-school-going) in Mongu District. These groups were targeted because of some defining characteristics that made them the holders of specific data that was needed for the study (Tichapondwa, 2013). For example, parents of 2 to 6-year-old (non-school-going) children were targeted so that they could help in giving out information concerning how they were involved in their children's early literacy development. Community leaders mainly acted as contact persons between parents and the researcher. Above all, children were targeted to qualify data that was collected from parents.

### **3.4 Sample size**

Leedy and Ormud (2005) consider a sample as a subset of population. According to Morse (1994), qualitative analyses typically require a small sample size but large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. Following the problem of poor literacy performance which was identified among most early grade learners in the rural communities of Mongu District, one rural community in which one of the affected schools is located was purposively sampled. From this community, two villages were as well purposively sampled. These villages were far apart to avoid participants in the study influencing one another. For the purpose of this study, the two villages will be referred to as villages A and B. Being a qualitative study, the total sample for this study was 35, broken down as follows: three community leaders (one PTA chairman and two village headmen), 16 parents/guardians and their 16 below school-going age children. The fact that the study involved parental involvement in their children's early literacy development prior to school entry, parents' educational levels were very important.

Among the three community leaders, the PTA chairman and one village headman were retired government workers who went as far as Form Five while one village headman dropped out of school in Grade Four due to some problems beyond his control. Out of the 16 parents who were part of the study sample, two parents (part-time adult literacy teachers) completed their Grade 12 though they did not do well. Three parents (one pastor and two retired teachers) went as far as Form Five. One parent dropped out of school in Grade 11. The rest did not do well in Grade Seven and their school journey ended just there with an exception of one parent who did not go to school and was still learning how to read and write in one of the adult literacy classes in the area where the study was undertaken.

### **3.5 Sampling technique**

Kasonde (2013) defines sampling technique as that part of a research plan that indicates how cases are to be selected for the study. In order to capture the intended and rightful sample, non-probability sampling techniques were employed. According to Selvam (2017), non-probability is a set of sampling technique whereby all elements in the population do not have equal opportunity of entry into the sample. The subsequent subsections present in detail purposive and snowballing non-probability procedures, or rather techniques that were adopted in selecting the study site and participants.

#### **3.5.1 Purposive sampling**

Creswell (2009) states that the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that would best help a researcher understand the problem and the research questions. White (2003) defines purposive sampling as a sampling technique which is based on a researcher's knowledge of the population and a judgement is made about which subjects should be selected to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research. Msabila and Nalaila (2013) state that purposive sampling involves the notion of purposely handpicking individuals from the population based on the authority or the researcher's knowledge and judgement. To begin with, during this study, the researcher sought permission from Princess Mutumbaetwa, in charge of the

area where the study was conducted, through her area *induna (nduna wa silalo)*. After permission was sought, through consultations with the area *Induna* and one well-known female deputy head teacher at one of the schools in the area, purposive sampling was employed to come up with three community leaders comprising two village heads and one Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chairman who knew the villages very well where the holders of specific information required for the study could be found. These acted as contact persons between parents and the researcher. With their help, two villages of the two village heads already sampled were selected. The villages were far apart to avoid participants in the study influencing one another. Other than acting as contact persons, the community leaders also helped in giving out more information on what was prevailing in the targeted rural community of Mongu District concerning parent-child literacy practices (PCLP) that could encourage development of early literacy skills among 2 to 6-year-old children, prior to formal school entry. With the help of the three mentioned leaders, purposive sampling was done to ensure that only households with non-school-going children aged 2 to 6 years old were targeted in the selected villages.

### **3.5.2 Snowball sampling**

This technique was employed in such a way that those parents who were first sampled purposively in the two selected villages provided information needed to locate other parents with non-school-going children aged 2 to 6 years old whom they knew and this worked out well. It gave rise to 10 households in the first village and six in the second village. According to Tichapondwa (2013), a snowball sample is one in which a researcher collects data on the few members of the target population he or she can locate, then asks those individuals to provide information needed to locate other members of that population whom they know. As already indicated, parents and their children aged 2 to 6 years old were targeted because they were the holders of the specific data that was required to fulfil the research objectives.

### **3.6 Research instruments**

Taking into account that this study was purely qualitative, data was collected by using qualitative instruments: in-depth semi-structured interview guides, focus group discussion guides and observation checklist. The instruments have been presented in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

#### **3.6.1 Interview guides**

For this research, in-depth semi-structured interview guides were used by the researcher on 16 parents and three community leaders to establish their understanding of emergent literacy as well as to collect data on parental involvement in literacy activities that could influence development of early literacy skills among 2 to 6-year-old children, prior to school entry in the targeted rural community in Mongu District. Interviews also aided in determining what types of literacy environments children were exposed to in the targeted homes and surrounding areas. The reason for using semi-structured interviews is that they comprise both open-ended and closed-ended questions (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Open-ended questions helped the researcher to ask follow-up questions while closed-ended questions enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth information. In other words, semi-structured interviews were used because they were flexible, adaptable and provided direct human interaction that enabled the researcher to probe and clarify answers with the respondents, elaborate on the original responses and obtain more data with greater detail and clarity (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, face-to-face interaction promoted verbatim recording of responses that provided immediate feedback and gave room for probing and clarification of issues, hence it helped the researcher to immediately cross-check data for authenticity (Borg and Gall, 1996). The research was conducted in two months, and during this period the researcher visited homes of participants and interviewed them from there. Most of the interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. The answers were followed by follow-up questions where the researcher was not clear and the information was recorded in the spaces provided for that purpose on the interview guide. In addition, where the participants requested to invite their colleagues to

the interview, the researcher gladly granted them permission to do so and this helped them to become more comfortable as well as confident, leading to fruitful interviews.

### **3.6.2 Focus group discussion guide**

The study used a homogeneous type of focus group discussion (FGD). Selvan (2017) considers homogeneous as a type of group where members resemble each other in certain categories. In the case of this study, the members resembled each other in that all children who were involved in the FGDs were non-school-going children in the age range of 2 to 6 years old. The FGDs were employed on children to gather different views on what types of home literacy environment they were exposed to and what form of literacy support they were receiving from parents in their homes and surrounding areas. Above all, FGDs were employed to validate data that was collected from parents. Three FGDs were conducted comprising five, five and six participants. Two discussion sessions were held in village A and one in village B. The information was recorded using a recorder to enable the interviewer to concentrate on listening, probing and responding to focus group participants. Later, the researcher transcribed the recorded data into writing. Since FGDs involved children, they were conducted in such a way that the female deputy head teacher, who had worked in the area for quite some time and socialised well with both adults and children, helped the researcher to adopt the strategy of befriending both parents and their children during the familiarisation tour. When it was time to administer the research instrument, with the help of parents, children agreed to meet at village play grounds, referred to as *patelo* in Silozi, which were specifically prepared for FGDs. The sessions ran for 45 minutes to one hour. This afforded the researcher to get first-hand information from the children and entry into most of their out-door activities was achieved.

Kartiz and Williams (2008) define a focus group as a small gathering of individuals who have a common interest or characteristics, assembled by a researcher who uses the group and its interactions as a way to gain in-depth information about a particular topic. The FGD was used because it produced a lot of information quickly as it involved a number of children with divergent views, as supported by (Gass and Mackey, 2005). According

to Maree (2007), the focus group strategy is based on the assumption that group interaction will be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experiences and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information. During the current study, it was also adopted because the researcher was of the view that most children in the range of 2 to 6 years old could not adequately answer one-to-one interview questions. To find out whether the researcher's anticipation was right or not, after socialising with the children for some time, two of them were interviewed using one-to-one interaction. The two interviews did not yield any result. Those who were interviewed were shy and most of the time just kept quiet. Putting them into groups of five, five and six worked out well. Most of them, especially those who were in the range of 4, 5 and 6 years old were able to answer questions because of group influence. The 2-3-year-olds mainly helped their older siblings in singing, dancing and playing various games. In the end, the discussions were fruitful.

### **3.6.3 Observation checklist**

According to Selvan (2017), observation is a form of long unstructured interview, where a researcher interviews people informally, if need be, as events unfold before his/her eyes. But he/she learns not by asking questions but by what is being observed. For this study, the observation checklist was used to identify the types of literacy environments that children in the targeted homes and surrounding areas were exposed to that could support development of their early literacy skills. Some of the emergent literacy practices looked out for included: any visible efforts of parents/guardians or caregivers promoting literacy in their homes, emergent literacy activities that were done by children, any sign of literacy activities inside homes, the state of the surrounding area, and any sign of literacy activities, among others. Observations were done during interviews and FGDs in the two villages. The researcher used simple observations during interviews and discussions to ascertain whether or not it was true that some literacy practices that were claimed to have been happening were in existence. Besides observations which took place during interviews and FGDs, four separate observation visits were done; two in each village and its surrounding area, without the knowledge of

participants, as the researcher pretended she was just socialising with them. These took place in a natural setting and represented first-hand encounter with the phenomenon under review. Data from observations was collected through taking down notes, video-recording and photographing. As Creswell (2009) explains, qualitative observations are those in which a researcher takes field notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site. The principal investigator (PI) took down descriptions of what was actually observed. On the part of video-recording and photographing, Merriam (2009) contends that videos and photographs provide a means of remembering and studying material that might be overlooked if a video or photographic image was not available for reflection. The documents really played an important role in assisting the researcher to learn more about the situations, events and persons that were being investigated.

### **3.7 Data collection procedure**

Creswell (2009) defines data collection procedure as the process which a researcher adopts in order to collect the intended data for the study at hand. In simpler terms, data collection refers to the gathering of information to answer research questions. In order for research questions to be answered in Mongu District, the researcher followed the following procedure: Before visiting the research site for data collection, the researcher applied to the Ethics Committee of the University of Zambia (UNZA) for ethical approval, which was granted. Thereafter, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the UNZA Assistant Dean Postgraduate Studies - School of Education. She then took it to the Provincial Education Officer (PEO) for Western Province and Mongu District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) to seek permission to carry out a research in their area of jurisdiction. The regional statistical office was as well visited to confirm whether the study area was rural or peri-urban and the records indicated that it was rural. The researcher proceeded to the area where the study was to be conducted. Permission was sought from relevant authorities to carry out the research in that rural community of Mongu District. Thereafter, through the help of the area *induna* and a well-known female deputy head and three community leaders, participants were briefed about the

nature of the study. After the familiarisation period, the researcher then started collecting data using in-depth semi-structured interview guides on the three leaders and on parents/guardians who were interviewed in their homes to establish their understanding of emergent literacy and gather information on how parents were involved in literacy practices that could influence the development of children's early literacy skills. Focus group discussions were also used on children to determine the types of home literacy environments they were exposed to and mainly to qualify data that was collected from parents. The observation checklist was mainly used to identify the types of home literacy environments that children were exposed to in the targeted rural households and surrounding areas that could support development of their early literacy skills. The researcher also employed simple observations during interviews and discussions to confirm whether the literacy practices that were claimed to have been happening were done or not. In all activities, which included FGDs and interviews, the language used was Silozi, which was later translated into English by the researcher.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

Data was analysed qualitatively according to themes generated from the research objectives as well as use of participants' verbatim responses. Themes from research objectives were used to find out if the findings had answered the objectives and the research questions set for the study. Some verbatim responses from participants were used in order to attain authentic data on how parents were involved in encouraging development of their children's emergent literacy skills. Like other qualitative studies, data analysis for this study commenced immediately the research began. During data collection, the researcher asked follow-up questions to make sure that the data was consistent. Verbal information that was collected from interviews and focus group discussions as well as data collected from observations was organised and summarised according to identified themes and then categorised under those themes, after which interpretations and discussions were done. In line with the above statement, Kothari (2004) points out that analysing data according to themes involves putting it into identifiable themes according to the objectives of the research, after which the same

themes have to be employed in the data presentation and discussion of the findings. But for this study, objectives were used in the discussion of findings.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

To ensure that research ethics were observed, the following were taken into consideration: The researcher first applied to the Ethics Committee of the University of Zambia (UNZA) for ethical approval, which was granted. Permission was again sought through a letter from UNZA which passed through the Provincial Education Office and the District Education Board Secretary for Mongu to carry out a study in the selected rural households in Mongu District. After permission was granted, the researcher went to the study site and permission was sought from Princess Mutumbaetwa through her area *induna*. Thereafter, the researcher was allowed to interact with community leaders who knew the area very well and connected the researcher to the parents/guardians. Parents/guardians who were identified to be part of the study were briefed about the purpose of the research and they were asked to read the consent form. For those who were not able to read, the researcher read for them, and only when they agreed to participate were they allowed to sign the forms.

Taking into account that the subject included minors, permission to investigate them was sought from their parents before administering research instruments. Parents/guardians who allowed their children to be part of the study signed consent forms on their behalf. Participants were assured that the information they would provide would be purely for academic purpose and would be treated with the highest order of confidentiality. Therefore, disclosing their identity was not necessary and no one else except the researcher would have access to that information. They were also assured that they would be protected from either emotional or physical harm, and indeed no harm was inflicted. Those who wished to withdraw from the research at any time, if not comfortable, had the right to do so without being forced to change their mind. Permission was also sought for taking photographs as well as for audio/video recordings as back-ups to some emergent literacy activities.

### **3.10 Validity and reliability of research instruments**

Selvam (2017) defines validity as the confidence that a given finding shows what it purports to show, and reliability as the confidence that a given empirical finding can be reproduced. He asserts that an instrument of measure is reliable if it produces the same results when repeated either with the same population or under similar conditions. He further states that an instrument of measure is valid if it really measures what it is supposed to measure. To ensure validity and reliability of research instruments in a qualitative study like this one, the interview guides for community leaders and parents/guardians, focus group discussion guide for children, as well as observation checklist, were first discussed with the supervisor to ensure their appropriateness. Secondly, the interviews, discussions, observations, audio/video recordings, together with photographs that were used, provided room for triangulation. A relationship was created among these sources of data and a comparative analysis was carried out in such a way that the common features between the sources were reported to be the findings or conclusion. Saunders et al. (1997) contend that triangulation is a situation where various types of data or procedures are used within one study in order to obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and for cross-checking information. In short, triangulation adds credibility, objectivity and validity to the interpretation of data. By using multiple methods, the researcher took steps to strengthen the research study.

### **3.11 Summary**

The chapter has presented the methodology used in the study. Research design, target population, sampling technique, sample size, research instruments, data collection procedure and analysis have been highlighted. Further, the chapter presented ethical considerations as well as validity and reliability of instruments. The next chapter provides the research findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### 4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the study entitled: *The role of parents in fostering children's emergent literacy skills in selected rural households of Mongu District, Zambia*. The findings have been presented using themes generated from the objectives.

The research objectives were:

1. To establish parents' understanding of emergent literacy.
2. To establish early literacy practices that parents expose their children to prior to school entry.
3. To identify the types of literacy environments children are exposed to in their homes and surrounding areas which support early literacy development.

### 4.2 Parents' Understanding of Emergent Literacy

The first objective was to establish parents' understanding of emergent literacy. In line with the above objective, all community leaders and parents were asked to give their understanding of the concept or say what they knew about it. Two community leaders (a PTA chairman and one village headman), two parents (retired teachers) and two parents (adult literacy teachers), who went as far as Form Five and Grade 12 in their education, and one parent who dropped out of school in Grade 11, had a common answer: "The ability to read and write." For those parents who dropped out of school in Grade Seven, one community leader (a village headman) who went as far as Grade Four and one parent who did not go to school but was learning in adult literacy classes, their common response was:

*Hakuna seluziba kuamana ni ze mulubuza. Ku luna taba ye ki yenca ye lukaituta onafa a luambola cwana* (We have no idea about what you are asking. Emergent literacy is something new that we will learn from you as we discuss).

Finding out whether or not parents engaged their children in practices like storytelling, riddling, singing, writing, games and reading, most of them said yes. On the follow-up question about whether or not they sometimes see or hear their children tell stories,

play riddles, sing, pretend to write or read and play games, a positive response was as well given. In line with the responses, one parent from village A had this say:

*Mayumbo alubaluta ni matangu alubatangutelanga bana baluna ukautwa banyumba ni kukandekela balikani babona hababapala* (The riddles we teach our children and the stories we tell them, you would hear them narrate same stories and riddles to their friends).

On the question about how parents valued the mentioned practices/activities in children's early literacy development, most of them admitted that they were not aware that such activities had some educational values until when we were discussing them. One parent in village B reported that on several occasions she had seen her children imitating drawings and writings they saw on walls, drawing and writing them on the ground, but she was not aware that what those kids were doing was very important in learning to read and write. She even revealed that she was always in the forefront discouraging her children from engaging in such activities as she thought they would just make themselves dirty.

Contrary to the above information, one male parent from village A said:

*Za banana za kuituta kubala ni kuñola haliyo mwa mazoho a bashemi mi hakizona zekona kulusinyeza nako kuliambola, Zeluziba luna sina ka bashemi ki kuitukiseza feela pene ya kuyolifela banana habaka kena sikolo ni kubalekela mayunifomu ni libuka kipeto. Kaufela zeama kubala ni kuñola liinzi mwa mazoho a baluti ba baile kwa kosi ya kuluta banana kubala ni kuñola a bakala sikolo* (The issue of children's learning to read and write is not something that we can waste our time arguing. What we know as parents is just to source funds for our children's school fees and for buying them uniforms as well as books when they are enrolled in school. Anything to do with children's reading and writing has nothing to do with parents. It is the job of the teacher who has been trained to teach children how to read and write once they are enrolled in school).

One of the parents (a pastor) from the same village said the church looks at literacy as a doorway to evangelism because, as a matter of fact, it is very difficult to deal with illiterate people in any given situation. He added:

*Kutusa bana baluna kuba ni mutomo sakata woka batusa kuituta kubala ni kuñola nako haifita yakukena sikolo ki mbuyoti. Butata feela bo buliteni ki kuli haluzibi seo luswanela kueza lumwa lififi* (Laying a strong foundation for learning to read and write for our children at an early age indeed is a blessing. The only problem we have is that we do not really know how to do it, we are in darkness).

From the answers provided, it can be concluded that most parents had limited understanding of their role in their children's early literacy development, a situation that could delay acquisition and development of children's early literacy skills.

### **4.3 Early Literacy Practices that Parents expose their Children to Prior to School Entry**

The second objective was to establish early literacy practices that parents expose their children to prior to school entry. Despite many parents/guardians having limited understanding of their role in their children's literacy development, the early literacy support structures that were noted included writing, reading, games, storytelling, riddling, singing and, helping children learn letter sounds.

The details on how most parents knowingly or unknowingly helped their children to benefit from the above mentioned early literacy practices have been presented below:

#### **4.3.1 Writing**

Involving children in everyday writing tasks was one of the literacy practices that parents in selected rural households of Mongu District exposed their children to prior to school experience. The study established that parents who were adult literacy teachers in the two villages ( A and B) had the habit of writing their lesson notes in the presence of their children, hence the young ones were made to understand that thoughts could be put into written form and that they were writing from left going to the right direction. Commenting on the same issue, one of the two parent teachers in village A, during interviews, explained that the fact that she was an adult literacy teacher, each time she had a class she would first prepare lesson notes in front of her little ones and those children knew what she was doing. She had this to say:

*Ka nako ni nako yeniitukisezanga kaza kuyoluta bana ba sikolo ba busile, mbuyela yaka yatalimisisanga zeezahala miukabona niyona yakala kufalaula fa pampili yeikupanga. Niifanga ma pepa luli kuli ifalaula fateñi mi kamita ukaibona ilikanyisa kuswala potoloto sina moniswalelanga mi hakunibilaezi ni haikafalaula zesina tuso* (Each time I write my lesson notes, my youngest child sees me doing the writing and he also tries to scribble his own writings on paper given on demand. I always give him paper to do some scribbling and often see him holding the pencil as I do and start scribbling and I always give him enough paper to scribble on and I do not mind even if what he scribbles is nonsense).

Another parent interviewed in village B whose house was decorated with paintings of various kinds said that she could see her young daughter copying those drawings which was purely put as decorations for the house. However, she admitted that at first, she did not know that those drawings had any educational value on her children until when we were discussing it. That was when she knew that there were some educational values as she said:

*Mamota a mandu aluna apentilwe likabisa zecwale ka lifolofolo, mandu, likota fokuñwi mane ni batu ba bashimbile lika zeswana sina mihuma ba baya kwa masimu. mandu amañwi mwahae yaluna ana ni maswaniso ashutana-shutana alika zeezahala* (We have decorations painted on the walls of our houses in form of animals, houses, trees, and sometimes even human beings carrying things such as hoes going to the fields. Some houses within our village have more drawings of things which happen in the village).

The same parent further testified that sometimes children would even imitate drawing the same items on the soil. So it meant they were providing some practice on writing skills which would be handy later at school although sometimes parents discouraged them that they would just make themselves dirty.

In an attempt to further find out whether or not parents did write in front or rather in the presence of their children, one mother in village B, whose husband was a bricklayer revealed that each time after getting salaries, before they went shopping, she prepared her shopping list in the presence of her three-year-old boy. She also testified that she was not aware that engaging her child in such tasks was important in children's literacy development.

One of the parents in village A reported that most of the time when her older siblings were writing their homework, her youngest child would demand for a piece of paper and a pencil and start scribbling. However, another parent in the same village (a pastor) said:

*Ni sikazamaisa kale sebelezo ni fumani butokwa kuitukiseza yona ka kuñola pili za butokwa. Ze liezahalanga muikulyange wa lilimo zepeli inge atalimezi. Ka mukwa wa kulikanyisa ufalaulanga mwa buka kapa pepa yafumana kaufela. Kwani komokisanga kakuli neni mulutile feela hañwi mwa kuswalela buka, potoloto, kuapaula mapepa, kuitusisa mipende kono namubonanga nako kaufela haeza lika ze ka kuluka* (Before conducting any service, I have found it very helpful to first prepare for it by writing down the main points and this always happens in front of my two-year-old grandchild whom I am taking care of whose mother [my daughter] had gone back to school following the introduction of the re-entry Policy. As a way of imitating what I always do, the young girl scribbles and draws in any book or piece of paper she comes across. To my surprise, I only showed her how to handle a book, hold a pencil, flip pages, use crayons once, but I have always seen her consistently performing these tasks correctly).

The clergyman testified that his grandchild had done a lot in as far as imitating the exercise of writing was concerned. Figure 4 serves as an example of some of the papers on which she scribbled as she was trying to imitate his grandparent.



**Figure 4: A child's writings (age 2)**

Among those who agreed that they involved their children in writing, one parent in village B reported that she was a church secretary and whatever the church requested her

to write was always done in the presence of her little daughter. She said each time her child saw her writing would ask a lot of questions concerning what she was writing, after which she would demand for a piece of paper and a pencil and start scribbling whatever came to her mind. When asked to interpret what she had scribbled, sometimes the interpretation would not even make sense.

Out of 16 parents who were asked to find out if they sometimes did write while their 2 to 6-year-olds were watching, or rather in their presence, two said that they did not do such activities in front of their little ones. One parent in village A reported that he was not aware that it was necessary to involve their children in their writing activities. He went on to say whenever he had something to write, he made sure that he did the writing when his child was not around to avoid disturbances. Contrary to the above information one parent from village B had this to say:

*Hanizibi hande kuñola kakuli nisa ituta kwa sikolo sabusile sesi mwa silalanda saluna. Mukwa feela wonitusa mwanaaka kuamana ni kuituta kuñola ki kuyanga ni yena nako kaufela haluna ni lituto. Lituto ze litusize hahulu mwanaaka kuli mane sakona kulikanyisa kuswala potoloto hande, kuswanisa ni kutoloka maswaniso ahae (I do not know how to write properly because I am still an adult literacy learner. The only way I involve my child in writing is to always go with her each time we have a lesson. My child has benefited a lot from our gatherings such that she can now imitate writing by holding a pencil correctly, drawing and interpreting her pictures).*

The findings established that although parents had limited knowledge about emergent writing, they exposed their children to various writing tasks which encouraged most of the children in the targeted rural community to come up with different styles of writing ranging from scribbling to drawing, emergent writing skills which are the first steps in learning to write.

#### **4.3.2 Reading**

Reading to children was another nearly literacy practice that parents in selected rural community of Mongu District exposed their children to prior to school entry. In response

to whether parents engaged their children in reading or not, one of the parents in village A, reported that:

*Hañata ni balelanga muikulwange makandenyana a mwa bibebe. Hanibala ni mutolokelanga zasautwisisi kakutala. Hasamulaho wakubala, kamita ni mukupanga kuli anitaluseze zautwile kuikolwisisa kuli nateleza kapa nee (I always read short Bible verses for my grandchild. When reading, I clarify/explain difficult words, describe new concepts provide exposure to the structure of the story. After reading I normally request her to say what she has heard to find out whether she was following or not).*

A related response from another parent in village B was that:

*Hanili falapa ni sikipateha ni balelanga mwanaake tukande totutabisa totuzwa mwa buka ya Sesepulumisa Tau. Hañata hasamulaho wakubala walikanyisanga zenenibala kulikana kamwautwiselize likande kona akabuza lipuzo zeñata fokuñwi zesazamaeleli ni zanalikanyisa kubala (When I am home and have nothing to do, I read aloud short interesting stories to my child from the Silozi book entitled 'Sesipulumisa tau' (What makes the lion roar). In most cases, after reading, my child would imitate what I was doing following how he understood the story and, thereafter, would ask a lot of questions, sometimes not even connected to what he was pretending to read).*

The study established that most of those who agreed that they read to their children or rather shared book reading with their children did it without realising the importance that was attached to the exercise. They were not aware that by so doing they were planting an important seed in their children that would help them display greater interest in reading at a later stage.

When other parents were asked whether they read to their children or not, they gave various responses, among them that reading to people who do not understand what you are reading was just sheer waste of time. Some said they did not know that reading to children was their responsibility because what they knew was that when children begin school, teachers who are trained to teach them how to read and write would handle everything. Others reported that they did not read to their children due to lack of reading materials, and because of financial problems, they could not afford to buy such things. One parent from village B said she did not read to her children because she was also

learning how to read and write in one of the adult literacy classes that were in their community.

The study revealed that out of 16 parents interviewed from the two villages, only eight shared book reading with their children. The conclusion is that such a situation could delay acquisition and development of children's emergent literacy skills, which have proved to be an important foundation for learning to read once they are in school.

### 4.3.3 Games

Engaging children in various games was yet another way parents employed in scaffolding their children's emergent literacy skills in the targeted rural households of Mongu District. 10 out of 16 parents interviewed from the two villages mentioned that they showed their children how to play a good number of traditional games such as *muyato*, *mulabalaba*, *nakutambekela*, and *peba ni ka kaze*. One of the parents in village A reported that even if those games were still played, the biggest obstacle they had was that of television, which was slowly taking away time for those traditional games especially in homes which had solar-powered TV. However, another parent from village B mentioned that she showed her children how to play *muyato* and after they had known they started playing with their friends. The parent narrated how *muyato* was played:

*Muyato ki papali ye bapalwa ki babapali bababeli kapa kufitelela ni haike alimuñwi wakona kuubapala kono hakihañata. Kuyepwanga musimanyana mokubeiwa tucwe ili bona bana. Siyatiso sa lukiswa. Ba bapali baina ka kupotoloha musima be nze bayata alimuñwi ka a limuñwi. Kuwiseza siyatiso fafasi kapa kusiya bana ba bafitelela ali muñwi fa likamba hakuyatwa mutu umbunjize mi yomuñwi wafiwa kolo yakuyata. Mafelelezo wa bana ba bañata kiyena ya winile* (*Muyato* is played at least by two players although one person can play the game but in rare cases. The game involves digging a shallow sizeable hole in the ground in which a number of small stones or seeds referred to as 'bana' are put. The players then get another stone slightly bigger than 'bana' that each player would use when his/her turn comes. The bigger stone is called 'siyatiso'. Players then sit around the hole and take turns to play the game. As they play, the 'siyatiso' is thrown in the air without allowing it to fall. During the throwing intervals, the player should scoop some stones or seeds from the hole and take them back at the next throw, leaving only one which

is regarded as a point. Dropping the '*siyatiso*' on the ground or leaving more than one stone/seed when pushing them back makes the defaulter to be disqualified and gives the next player chance to play. At the end of the game, players count the stones/seeds to find out who has a lot of stones and one with a lot of stones is declared a winner).

Attempting to find out what educational value could children gain from the game, the parent said that he did not see any educational value in *muyato* until when we were discussing.

One of the community leaders mentioned that he showed his grandchildren how to play a traditional game called *Nakutambekela* and reported that he had taught them how to play the game because it has a very big lesson that each and every well-meaning Lozi should learn. He further said the game is very important because it has trained his grandchildren how to always be alert and do things the way they are supposed to be done. The community leader explained how the game was played, and emphasised that while playing, players should sing the following song:

*Nakutambekela sika sona se. Usike wafosa weze sina na sina na* (I am passing this thing to you. Do not make a mistake do as I have done as I have done).

When asked to explain how this game could help children learn to read and write, the community leader said the manner in which children were used to passing stones to one another without making mistakes would be the same way information would be passed from the teacher to them. Everything would be done in a well-coordinated way. He added that children who had learned this game would always pay attention to the teacher.

Another parent, who was a retired teacher in village A, explained that she taught her children how to play *peba nikakaze* (a rat and a cat). She narrated how the game was played. On the reason why she taught her children that game and how it could help them learn to read and write, she said that it had trained her children to learn things quickly and to be creative and helped in strengthening their bodies. She believed the issue of learning things quickly which they had learned so far would help them learn to read and write quickly as well.

The common response that was given by some parents as to whether or not they engaged their children in games was that much as they would like to engage in these activities with their children, the main stumbling block was that they did not have time to do so because of their busy schedules. One parent revealed that it was more important to concentrate on things that would help sustain their families than jumping up and down with their children.

#### 4.3.4 Storytelling

One of the early literacy practices that parents in the targeted rural community of Mongu District exposed their children to was storytelling. 10 out of 16 parents interviewed from the two villages engaged their children in storytelling while one parent from village B revealed that during the day when she was not busy she would normally chat with her children and tell them a lot of stories and later asked them questions to find out whether they were listening or not. Another parent from the same village said:

*Mwanaaka wa lilimo zeketalizoho uni komokisanga kuli kasamulaho wakuutwa likande kuluna bashemi bahae, hakaliutwa kokuñwi ukakanana kaze sazamaeleli ni za nautwile. Sesibonisa fokusweu kuli wautwanga* (My 5-year-old child normally surprises me in the sense that after listening to a story from one of us (parents), if he happens to listen to the same story somewhere else, he would argue over the incorrect details. This clearly indicates that he understands what parents normally say).

One of the village headmen reported that in the evenings after supper, when his grandchildren were not busy, it became a habit for them to gather around a fire to listen to some stories. He said he told his grandchildren short stories about what used to happen in the past so that they could learn more about the past. The researcher was privileged to listen to one of his stories which went on like this:

*Kwa kale-kale kafo likomu ni linali nelipila hamoho mwahae sina ka limunanu zakuuta. Baana nebabalela likomu, haili linali zona nelibabalelwa ki basali. Zazi leliñwi, linali anelifula kwa mandamino amunzi. Basali bane balilisa zazi leo neli bo mambututu mi nebapatehile kuanyisa, zeo alinze liezahala limunanu zafumana nzila ya kubata mafulelo amande kusili, mafelelezo zayoipumana mwa mushitu za yoebelelwa mi nelisikakuta kwahae hape, mi le kona libaka lelitisize kuli*

*linali lifetuhe lifolofolo za mwa naheñi* (Once upon a time, both cattle and buffaloes were domestic animals. Men were in charge of cattle while buffaloes were herded by women. One day, while buffaloes were grazing just near the village, all women who were in charge that day had babies and were busy breastfeeding. As that was happening, the animals found their way out to look for green pastures, and in the end found themselves in the forest and they did not come back to the village again. This is the reason why buffaloes are now wild animals. As a way of ending a story he said '*ka kayonge ka kasiyale*', which literally means this is where the story ends).

The study found out that sometimes parents were taken by surprise with stories from their children which they tell their peers. The village head said sometimes he got surprised to hear his grandchildren narrating same stories to their age mates. Other than learning about the past, his grandchildren were also developing good oral language skills which would help them express themselves freely in future.

Touching on how stories used to teach moral values, one community leader (a PTA chairman) said in the olden days, stories helped them learn some important lessons of their lives. They taught them about the good and bad and also helped in making them who they are today as leaders in society.

#### **4.3.5 Riddle sessions**

The study indicated that 10 out of 16 parents interviewed in the two villages exposed their children to riddling. One parent explained why children should be engaged in riddling and said that playing riddles instils team spirit because players always work together to find solutions to puzzling questions or statements. In addition, she said riddles train children to be disciplined because players are expected to be patient even if some may make fun of them or rather annoy them.

Finding out the time parents recite riddles with their children in this biting economy, one mother who told the researcher that she dropped out of school in Grade 11 due to problems beyond her control said that, according to the Afrian tradition, it was a taboo to tell folktale and riddles during the day. Telling stories and riddles should be done after supper and mostly in winter when it is very cold. The justification she gave was that if people tell stories and riddles during the day, no one would work, and if they do not

work there would be no food. Other than this, she revealed that going by what she learned at school, in winter when it is very cold, Zambia experiences longest nights and shortest days. As a way of shortening the longer and cooler nights, Africans, *Lozis* in particular, have come up with a strategy that all oral traditions such as riddles, storytelling and other entertaining activities should be done at night, but she concluded that due to the fact that people were now living in a changing society, these activities could still be done any time as long as the players were not busy.

The above statement was confirmed by one parent who said that children in their village normally gathered around the fire in the evenings and sometimes even during daytime to tell folktales and riddles. One of the village headmen narrated what normally happens in village B when children engage in riddles:

*Hakubapalwa mayumbo, banana baabelwa mwa likwata zepeli; banyumbi ni baalabi. Banyumbi bali: Ako, baalabi: Keye. Banyumbi a banyumba, baalabi baswanela kufa kalabo yelukile. Kalabo haiba ilukile kwa cincwana. Haiba kalabo ifosahalile balaabi bali pwapwa. kufitela kalabo yelukile ifiwa hakuna kucincana. Kwa mafelelezo, sikwata sesina ni likalabo zeñata zelukile ki sona sesiwina* (When riddles are played, children are divided into two teams: challengers' team and respondents' team. The challengers' team says: 'Ako' there it is or there it comes. The respondents' team answers: 'Keye' let it come. Then the challengers' team throws a riddle either by a question or statement. It is expected that the respondents' team would give the correct answer. When the correct answer is given, the challengers' team becomes the respondents' team and vice-versa. If the correct answer is not achieved by respondents they say 'pwapwaa', which means they do not know the answer. The teams would not change positions until the right answer is given by the respondents. At the end of the game, the team with more correct answers becomes the winner)

The village head further said when children were divided into two teams, the young ones fused among older siblings so that they could work hand in hand when dealing with challenging riddles. When all fail to come up with a correct answer, parents come in and take time to explain how an answer could be achieved. In line with the village head's explanation, one grandparent from the same village reported that whenever she was free she used to sit under a Mango tree and tell riddles with her 4 and 7-year-old grandchildren. She revealed that riddles were very important in children's lives because

they encouraged critical thinking. She said riddles have hidden meanings and that for children to come up with correct answers, it simply means they should first think critically. Thinking critically, therefore, lays a strong foundation for learning a lot of things in life.

Table 1 shows some of the riddles for kids that a grandparent recited with her grandchildren:

**Table 1: Examples of Silozi riddles for kids which a grandparent played with her grandchildren**

<b>Riddles (Question)</b>	<b>Response</b>
Challenger - <i>Ako</i> (There it comes)	Respondent- <i>Keye</i> (Let it come)
<i>Ndu yesina munyako</i> (A house without a door)	<i>Ki lii</i> (It is an egg.)
<i>Musali yomutelele kalipaswana</i> (A tall and beautiful woman)	<i>Ki nuka</i> (It is a river)
<i>Kanwela katumuka</i> (That sinks in water and comes out)	<i>Ki silabo</i> (It is a paddling stick)

The grandparent further reported that just like folktales and traditional songs, riddles were slowly fading away in preference to watching television particularly in homes which had solar-powered televisions. He said something should be done to stop this trend.

#### **4.3.6 Singing**

The study found out that one of the ways parents in Mongu rural enhanced emergent literacy skills among their 2 to 6-year-old children prior to school entry was to engage them in singing. Giving various reasons, four out of 16 parents interviewed in the two villages reported that they did not engage their children in singing. The rest pointed out that they taught their children different songs. One parent, a retired teacher in village A, said:

*Lipina zeni lata hahulu kuopela ni baikulwange ki lilaimu. Zehaliopelwa batu ba bulela hande kabunya kufita mobabulelelanga kamita ili mukwa womunde wo banana baituta manzwi ni kuutwisisa moabupelwa* (Among the songs that I like singing with my grandchildren are nursery rhymes. When singing nursery rhymes, people naturally speak more clearly and slowly than they normally would, which is a good way for children to learn the words and understand how they are formed).

One parent, a pastor from village A, reported that he enjoyed singing church hymns accompanied by clapping with his grandchildren. He explained that songs have for a long time played a significant role in helping children remember things and always learn about the world around them. However, another parent from village B revealed that they had a cultural club in their village. During rehearsals for public performance, they sang and danced in the presence of their children. He added that these cultural gatherings had really helped their children learn a lot of songs which they could later perform on their own.

Another parent in village A mentioned that the Sunday school teacher had taught their children a good number of religious songs accompanied by clapping which they could perform even when they were at home. One parent in village B had this to say:

*Matangu alutangutelanga bana baluna kamita a latelelwangwa ki lipina ni kukambela. Matangu a cwalo atiseza banana kuikola ngambolo mi hañata lwa bautwanga ni ku babona a bakandekela balikani babona matangu aswana* (Some folktales that we tell our children are normally accompanied by songs incorporated with clapping. Folktales with songs make our children enjoy the interaction and many times we hear and see them narrating the same stories accompanied by songs to their friends).

The findings revealed that 12 out of 16 parents interviewed, though most of them were not aware that what they were doing had some educational value, engaged their children in singing, which in most cases was accompanied by clapping. Through songs and clapping, children learned how to count. They also learned a lot of words and their pronunciations. These activities unconsciously promoted the acquisition of emergent

literacy skills that are an important foundation for learning to read and write once children are in conventional schools.

#### **4.3.7 Helping children learn to write their names**

In the two villages, 10 out of 16 parents, when asked whether they did help their children learn to write their names or not, agreed that they did. One parent in village A, an adult literacy teacher, shared that when she taught her child how to write his name, she started with vowel sounds, demonstrating how to write them on the ground with a stick as a way of helping him learn how to hold a pencil. Thereafter, she taught him consonants and later demonstrated how to blend the two to come up with syllables. From syllables, she showed him how to write his name by simply blending the syllables. She further said sounds that her child was first exposed to were mainly that made up his name. Another parent, a retired teacher from the same village, said:

*Kutusa muikulyange kuituta kuñola libizo la hae pili neni kalile kumuswalanga kwa lizoho kumutusa kuituta kuswala hande potoloto ni kuñola hande litaku. Kasamulaho seni panga sipepa sa masuba-suba abupa libizo la hae. Katuso yaka haituta kungungahanya masuba awo kubupa libizo la hae mi kwa kutelwa-kutelwa kufitela fanakonezi kuñola libizo la hae fa pepa isili kusina kutusiwa (To help my grandchild learn to write her name, at first I used to hold her hand in order to help her hold a pencil correctly and form correct letters. Thereafter, I made a worksheet that showed letters of her name composed of dots. With my help, the child learned how to connect the dots to come up with her name and this was repeated over and over until she was able to write her name on a separate piece of paper without being assisted).*

Related responses from other parents also indicated that World Vision donated some alphabet letter toys that helped them to expose their children to letter sounds that in turn helped them learn to write their names. One parent explained that he first taught his child how to arrange letter toys that made up her name and after that dismantled the arrangement and requested her to rearrange the letter toys accordingly. Following the arrangement, he demonstrated how to write the letters on the ground and later on paper and then she was given time as well to copy the letters on the ground and later on paper. This worked out well as she was now able to write her name.

Six parents out of 16 reported that because of their busy schedules, it was difficult for them to sit down with their children and show them how to write their names. Instead, their children were helped by their older siblings who were already in school.

#### **4.3.8 Helping children learn other letter sounds (Silozi alphabet)**

Six out of 16 parents interviewed in the two villages reported that they did not have time to teach their children letter sounds because they were busy most of the time. For instance, some said they were busy working in their fields to ensure they had food on the table. They said their children were being helped by their older siblings. Among parents who took time to teach their children the Silozi alphabet one narrated the pain she felt when she dropped out of school in Grade 11 due to circumstances beyond her reach. She clearly stated that she wanted her child, a boy, to complete school so that she could heal some of her wounds. She further said she had started teaching him letter sounds and she began with vowels:

I taught my child vowels using locally made flash cards. To help my child learn and remember the vowels easily, the following learning technique was used: We used to recite together that ‘*a*’ *ina ni kakota* (has a stick), ‘*e*’ *isikami mulala* (has a curved neck), ‘*i*’ *itinile kasoti* (is wearing a knit cap), ‘*o*’ *haina musima* (has no hole) and ‘*u*’ *ina ni musima* (has a hole). Thereafter, I would ask him questions like: Which letter sound has a curved neck? Which one had a hole? This extended even to other vowel sounds. When it came to writing vowels, the same technique was employed and it worked out well. At the moment we are on consonants in conjunction with vowels and he is doing fine.

One parent, an adult literacy teacher pointed out that she taught her child how to utter letter sounds with the help of key pictures and how to write them by providing him with a worksheet that had letters composed of dots. The child then connected the dots to form letters. Another adult literacy teacher mentioned that her 5-year-old child was lucky because she was doing everything possible to teach him how to read and write with the help of materials that she was using when teaching adult literacy learners.

From parents’ responses, it can be concluded that although parents had limited knowledge about emergent literacy, they played a significant role in encouraging

development of their children's emergent literacy skills as they exposed them to some practices like writing, reading, games, stories, riddles, songs, and letter sounds, among others which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once a child is in conventional school.

#### **4.4 Types of Literacy Environments Children are exposed to in their Homes and Surrounding Areas which Support Early Literacy Development**

The third objective was to identify the types of home literacy environments children in the targeted Mongu rural community were exposed to which support early literacy development. Environment is the third teacher- it is recognized for its potential to inspire children. Some types of literacy environments that children were exposed to which supported early literacy development were: a variety of literacy materials in many homes, household and environmental print, as well as friendly environments that allowed children to interact among siblings.

##### **4.4.1 Variety of literacy materials in many homes**

A variety of literacy supportive materials found in many homes was one of the forms of home literacy environments that children in the targeted Mongu rural community were exposed to which supported development of emergent literacy skills. Parents unveiled a variety of literacy materials to the researcher ranging from reading materials (picture books, church magazines like *Our Family*), writing materials (pencils, crayons, erasers, papers) and other literacy materials such as alphabet toys. Most of these encouraged children to engage in literacy-related activities like interpreting pictures in books and painting, among others. Finding out why a good number of modern literacy materials were available in many rural homes, one parent in village A said:

*Buñata bwa lika ze mubona mo, nelulifilwe ki ba 'World Vision' nesi za kuleka. Mabasi amañata mwa silalanda saluna se nafilwe lika ze kono mukwa wolilateha kaona wautwisa pilu butuku mi kona sesitisa kuli lupatange lika ze nako kaufela* (Most of the items which you see in our homes were donated by World Vision and not purchased. A good number of households in this community were provided with these materials but the rate at which they are getting lost is a bit

disturbing and this is the reason why most of the time we do not expose them to our children).

Additionally, another parent who was an adult literacy teacher from the same village said that other than those donated by World Vision, some materials that were seen in her home were those that she normally used when teaching her adult literacy learners. When she was at home, she used the same materials to teach her kids how to read and write.

Figure 5 shows some of the literacy materials that World Vision donated to a number of households who had children in school and to those whose children were not yet in school as in the case of the young ones under study.



**Figure 5: Examples of literacy materials donated by World Vision to various homes**

As can be seen from figure 5 above, most of the children who were part of this study from the two villages had access to these materials. Following complaints from village A, one parent in village B also said:

*Nihaike bana baluna bafumana lika zecwana, zebasusueza kuswanisa mane ni kubala maswaniso, mukwa wamo lilatehela luli wa sabisa kona sesiluhapeleza kulipata nako kaufela* (Even if these literacy materials like books, pencils and erasers are provided for our children, which encourage them to write, draw and read pictures, the rate at

which they are getting lost is alarming and this is the reason why we are forced to hide them most of the time).

Four out of 16 parents said they did not receive any literacy materials from World Vision and one parent from village B reported that due to financial constraints, she was only able to secure what she regarded as basic needs not those literacy items.

Other home literacy environments that children were exposed to in their homes were shelves for literature. It was observed that 10 out of 16 homes visited in the two villages had shelves. When the researcher asked why most of the shelves were not well stocked with the reading materials, one village head said:

*Libuka zenyinyani zeli mwa ma shelufu aluna zemubona sihulu kiza mulimu ze lulekanga kwa keleke kateko yenyinyani feela. Masheleñi hasiyo hande ki ona alupaleiswa kuleka libuka zeñata sihulu zale za mwa masintolo alekisa libuka* (A few books that are in our shelves are mainly religious books that we normally buy from our church at a reasonable price, and because of financial problems, we cannot afford to buy a lot of books, especially those from the bookshops).

When asked how their children benefited from those few books in their shelves, the village head had this to say:

*Libuka za maswaniso libutokwa kufita zesina kakuli musizana waluna waikolanga kutoloka maswaniso hafeza ubuza lipuzo zeñata kuzwelela fa maswaniso awo zelupalelwanga kualaba fokuñwi* (The books with pictures are of more help than those without pictures because our girl enjoys interpreting or rather discussing pictures and after that she asks a lot of questions regarding those pictures which we sometimes fail to answer).

It can be concluded that homes that were stocked with various literacy materials encouraged a good number of children to participate in early literacy promotion activities such as scribbling, drawing, painting, reading pictures and so on, though it was revealed that most of the time the literacy materials like pencils, crayons and picture books were hidden by parents to avoid losing them.

#### **4.4.2 Household and environmental print**

##### **Household print**

Household print was another type of home literacy environment that children in selected Mongu rural households were exposed to which supported early literacy development. This was in form of labelled sacks such as Makuyu roller meal, labelled food containers like that of salt which were also prominent in some households, soap packaging materials like Boom and Romeo, labelled medicine packs, religious charts, magazines, Bibles, calendars and writings on clothes, though it was reported that in most homes some household publications like Bibles, calendars and Our Family magazines were hidden in bedrooms. When an attempt was made to find out from the parents how children benefited from the household printed materials in as far as learning to read and write was concerned, one parent from village A asked the following question:

*Ki sikamañi sakona kuituta mwanana fa kakotana kabupi kapa fa kalenda?*(What can a child learn from a bag of mealie-meal or a calendar?)

Quite a good number of parents reported that they were not aware that household print could help a child learn to read and write until then when we were discussing the issue and one of the parents disclosed that the reason why some household print like Bibles, calendars, magazines were always hidden in bedrooms was because of their ignorance.

##### **Environmental print**

Environmental print was another type of literacy environment that children in the targeted Mongu rural households were exposed to which supported early literacy development. The fact that the area was small, some environmental print identified included: mobile money-top-up posters, church signs, school signposts and road signs, since part of the area is along Mongu-Senanga road. When the researcher asked some of the children what was written on some nearby posters, they read almost those that were in big font, meaning that most of them especially those that were 5 and 6 years old, were aware of the environmental print around them, a cardinal aspect that may help them

understand what written language looks like. Figure 6 is a good example of environmental print that children in the targeted area were exposed to.



**Figure 6: Church poster as an example of environmental print**

As can be seen from the figure above some 5 to 6 years old children were able to read the visible font on posters like *Gabriel, church* or rather they were aware of most posters in their community although it was clear that most of them lacked support from parents, many of whom were not aware that extending children's attention to print was important as it could assist them to notice that print has meaning.

#### **4.4.3 Friendly environment that allowed children to interact among siblings**

Providing an enabling environment that allowed children to interact freely among siblings was yet another important type of home literacy environment that children in selected rural households of Mongu district were exposed to which was helping in supporting early literacy development. Allowing children to interact freely amongst themselves encouraged them to playfully engage in interest-based literacy-building activities.

Interviews, focus group discussions and observations that were done in the two villages revealed that as most parents were knowingly or unknowingly modelling the use of some literacy practices in functional ways, children were quick to imitate what was happening and this in turn gave birth to literacy-building activities that most of them engaged in during play in their homes and surrounding areas.

The most popular literacy-building activities that most children engaged in during play that were revealed included: games followed by inquisitiveness, singing, then pretend writing, storytelling, riddling and the least was pretend reading. These have been presented in detail in the paragraphs below:

### **Games**

Exposure to friendly environments provided by parents in many homes encouraged children to engage in games such as *mandwani* (pretent play), *muyato*, *psi* (piece), *nakutambekela* (I am passing this thing to you), *peba ni kakaze* (a rat and a cat). As children took part in these games, they were using oral language which was unconsciously contributing to the development of their vocabulary.

### **Inquisitiveness/asking a lot of questions**

Due to condusive environment created by most parents in many homes, children were free to ask all sorts of questions. It was noticed that most children were very inquisitive. During interviews, while children were busy playing, the researcher overhead one of them asking:

*Ki mupulusi wa mina woo?*(Is this your saviour?) Instead of saying, is this pumpkin yours? *Mupusi* in Silozi is a type of pumpkin. The boy used the word *mupulusi* which simply means (Saviour) instead of *mupusi* (pumpkin).

After being corrected by his mother, he asked another question:

*Mukolo waluna awa mukolozwani waluna upangwa kibo mañi?*(who is making our dugout canoe, no our lizard?) His father again helped him to distiquish the word *mukolo* (dugout canoe) from the word *mukolozwani* (Lizard.) Through inquisitiveness, the child learned four words at once.

As the researcher sought to know the reaction of that boy's parents towards such questions, father said:

*Selutwaetezi kualaba lipuzo ze cwalo kakuli mwanaa luna una ni mukwa wakubata kuziba lika zeñata ka kubuzisisa. Kuicanganisa lipuzo zecwalo hanisepi kuli ki mukwa womunde wa kumutusa. Lualabanga lipuzo zahae kaufela kakuli halueza cwalo niluna lufumana mukwa wa kumubuza, ka cwale lumutusa kuituta lika zeñata* (We are now used to answering such questions, because our child has a natural curiosity that helps him learn a lot of things. Ignoring such questions, I do not think we are helping the boy. As loving and caring parents we answer all his questions because as we do so, instead of just answering his questions, we also find something to ask him from what he has asked. In that way we help him learn a lot of things).

Inquiring from other parents whether or not their children were fond of asking a lot of nonsensical questions, 12 out of 16 parents gave a positive response and one parent had this to say:

*Nisenikatezi kualaba lipuzo zecwalo mi fokuñwi ni kuzanga feela, kakuli wakona kubuza lipuzo zeñata mwa nako iliñwi ni kubata kuli ualabe onafu. Habuza lipuzo zeo hakuna taba kapa upatehile kapa cwañi, sesibutokwa kuyena ki likalabo* (I am even tired of answering such type of questions, sometimes I just keep quiet because my child can ask a lot questions and demand for answers here and there. When he asks such questions, he does not care whether you are busy or not).

However, Parents should support such literacy-related activities because they help children learn a lot of words which they will be exposed to when time for learning to read and write comes.

### **Singing**

During discussions most children revealed that they learned a lot of songs from their parents, older siblings who were already in school and from their Sunday school teachers which they were able to sing on their own during play. Through songs children learned a good number of words and how they were pronounced.

### **Pretend writing**

It was established that due to considerable environments that parents provided, children pretended to write as a way of imitating what their parents and older siblings were doing. One parent in village A reported that writing in their village was one of their children's important games as she said:

*Mwa lintolo za banana ba pumapumanga tupepa, kuswanisa. Kupenta maswaniso ni kupanga masheleñi* (In children's play shops they usually cut papers into small pieces, Thereafter, they draw and paint the drawings on those small pieces of paper to make their own play notes. In some cases, they even indicate the figures. If it is K2.00 they just write 2, K5.00, they write 5 and so on. As they pretend selling and buying in their shops, they use these child-made notes).

The findings also did reveal that during play, some children did a lot of writing on the ground as a way of imitating some decorations that were on their houses though their parents most of the time discouraged them that they would just make themselves dirty.

### **Storytelling and riddling**

The other literacy-building activities children engaged in during play were telling stories and riddles. During a discussion in village B, when children were asked whether or not they tell stories and play riddles, one 5-year-old girl said:

*Lwa kandekanga makande ni kubapala mayumbu fa patelo hañata alubapala* (Most of the time when we are playing on our village playground, we tell stories and riddles).

As this was happening they were unconsciously developing their oral language vocabulary, a prerequisite for learning to read and write.

### **Pretend Reading**

Pretend reading was yet another literacy-building activity that children engaged in during play, though only a few were involved. During one of the discussions, a 4-year-old girl in village A said:

*Nina ni libuka za maswaniso zeba patanga bo kuku nako kaufela. Naziba kubala lika kaufela mwa libuka mo kakuli bo kuku banibalela nga zona. Zatabisa kono bo kuku balipata nako kaufela ni kubulela kuli ni kalipazaula kapa kulifa balikani haiba basali lipati (I have picture books. I can read everything in those books because my grandmother had read them for me several times. They are very interesting but they are always hidden by my grandmother, who always tells me that I will tear or give them out to my friends if she does not hide them).*

Generally, it was established that most children from the two villages did not engage in reading because the picture books and magazines they had in their homes were always hidden by their parents to avoid losing them.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The chapter has presented the research findings based on the topic: *'The role of parents in fostering children's emergent literacy skills in selected rural households of Mongu District.'* The findings have revealed that despite parents' levels of education, most of them had limited understanding of their role in their children's literacy journey and this rendered them not able to fully support their children's early literacy experiences. This could be one of the contributory factors to low literacy levels recorded among most early grade learners in the area where the research was undertaken. The study further established that although most parents lacked understanding of the concept, knowingly or unknowingly, children were exposed to a number of early literacy practices like writing, reading, games, riddling, and storytelling, among others, which were helping in fostering their emergent literacy skills, an important foundation for learning to read and write once they are in school. Finally, the findings showed that the literacy materials, household/environmental print and friendly environments that children were exposed to, encouraged them to engage in literacy-building activities, though support from most parents was not all that encouraging. The next chapter provides the discussion of the research findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Overview**

This chapter presents a discussion of findings based on the research objectives. The discussion is presented by using the findings and how they are related to the literature reviewed earlier in chapter two as well as marrying it with its theory and bringing in the researcher's voice. The objectives of this study were:

1. To establish parents' understanding of emergent literacy.
2. To establish early literacy practices that parents expose their children to prior to school entry.
3. To identify the types of literacy environments children are exposed to in their homes and surrounding areas which support early literacy development.

### **5.2 To establish parents' understanding of emergent literacy**

In response to this objective, analysis of data collected revealed that most parents had limited understanding of emergent literacy, children's essential foundational skills for learning to read and write. Although studies conducted by Meehan (1998); Anderson (1994) and Tabbada et al. (2014) indicated that parents had considerable knowledge regarding the concept of emergent literacy, meaning that they were aware of their role in their children's literacy development, on the contrary, none of the parents interviewed in selected rural households of Mongu District, regardless of their educational attainment, knew what emergent literacy really was, and this rendered them not able to realise how important the concept was on their children's literacy journey. Their inability to answer questions to do with emergent literacy correctly expressed their highest levels of ignorance about the subject. Ignorance is lack of knowledge. Iimage and Simwinga's (2014) research, though its focus was on teachers' knowledge of emergent literacy, proves relevant to the current study as it revealed that primary school teachers lacked knowledge of emergent literacy and this rendered them incapable of creating the

necessary classroom conditions that should bring continuity in the learning of conventional literacy.

On Mongu rural parents' lack of knowledge regarding the concept of emergent literacy, the researcher's argument is that if most parents lacked knowledge, it simply meant that a lot of children were living in homes where parents were failing to support their early literacy behaviours, and this was contributing negatively to children's acquisition and development of emergent literacy skills, an important foundation for learning to read and write once they are in school. Justifying the above assertion, MOCE (2013) contends that children who begin school with less prior knowledge and skills in relevant emergent literacy domains are particularly likely to have difficulties in learning to read and write in the primary grades. What this really means is that children who grow up in homes where early literacy support is not well provided start school with little knowledge of literacy and this contributes to poor literacy performance normally experienced among learners in most primary schools. In simpler terms, the researcher can argue that children from home environments with poor literacy experiences are at risk of entering conventional schools without adequate literacy foundations. This could be one of the reasons why there were many early grade learners in the targeted Mongu rural community whose reading abilities were low. There are some similarities between this study and that of Musonda (2011), which revealed that parents played a very insignificant role in their children's literacy development because they lacked the knowledge on the importance of home literacy as well as basic literacy skills to transfer to their children. The argument here is that parents need to understand the concept thoroughly so that effective models of emergent literacy interventions are developed in order to decrease the likelihood of reading and writing difficulties in school-aged children. In light of this, it is of great value to educate parents on the significant contribution they can make on their children's literacy journey. As Vygotsky (1978) in his theory which informs this study states, that the process of literacy learning relates to a child's early experiences. The able instructor in the home (parent) must offer the necessary literacy support the child needs in order to progress to another level of literacy skills, those of reading and writing in conventional sense.

During interviews, further probe on parents' understanding of emergent literacy showed that parents in Mongu District still believed in the notion that anything to do with children's learning to read and write was supposed to be done at school with teachers only. With this mentality, children, in some cases, were discouraged from getting involved in literacy activities that could promote emergent literacy skills in readiness for conventional school. For example, they were discouraged from scribbling and drawing on the ground giving reasons that, they would just make themselves dirty, while in the actual sense, parents were still clinging to their traditional belief that reading and writing were associated exclusively with school, not home. That being the case, instead of encouraging development of their children's emergent literacy skills, they were busy delaying the acquisition and development of such important literacy foundational skills (see Kaunda, 2013; Musonda, 2011). It can be argued that for many years, parents in Africa and Zambia in particular, have held teachers in high esteem as they entrusted them with everything to do with the education of their children, and this in turn has contributed much to their ignorance on the issue of emergent literacy. It is time, therefore, that teachers not only meet parents' expectations but insist that they join them in creating an educational process that supports high levels of learners' literacy achievement.

Additionally, this study has shown that, although most parents lacked understanding of emergent literacy, some of the literacy structures that children were exposed to were linked to the concept itself. For example, children were involved in storytelling, riddling, singing, reading and many other literacy practices which had a lot of influence on the development of oral language and vocabulary. The development of oral language and vocabulary enhances development of emergent literacy skills, the basic building blocks for learning to read and write once children are in school. In line with the above finding, the researcher's argument is that parents in selected rural households of Mongu District who knowingly or unknowingly exposed their children to the above-mentioned literacy structures were encouraging development of their children's emergent literacy skills through the use of Whitehurst and Lonigan's (1998) interdependent sets of skills called inside-out and inside-indomains. For example, as parents in the study site engaged their

children in singing, they were utilising an inside-out domain which involves phonological awareness to foster their children's emergent literacy skills. According to Whitehurst and Lonigani (1998), songs involve the use of sounds, basic units of phonemes. This simply implies that as parents were singing along with their children, they were exposing them to phonemic awareness, which sets the foundation for phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness is a component of phonological awareness which involves understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds like phonemes and syllables. Before children in the area where the study was conducted learn to decode and read printed words, phonemic awareness would help them to understand that spoken words are made up of individual sounds such as: /a/, /e/, /i/, /m/, /k/ and many more. It would also help them to understand that these individual segments of sounds can be combined to form words. The implication here is that phonemic awareness creates a bridge between spoken and written language. A child needs to be able to apply his/her understanding of phonemes in order to begin learning to read and write. When a child understands and can manipulate sounds verbally, he/she is ready to transfer this knowledge to printed words. If a child cannot hear the individual sounds in a word, he/she will always struggle to figure out the letters in that word because a child who has learned to hear the sounds within the word is ready to start connecting those sounds to letters and written words. In consolidating the above argument, Teresa (2000) has clearly pointed out that, children who perform well on sound awareness tasks become successful readers and writers.

In summary, although the study showed that most parents exposed their children to a good number of early literacy structures, it was evident that they had limited understanding of their role in their children's literacy development. Lack of knowledge among parents rendered them not able to fully expose their children to literacy activities that were fully supporting the development of emergent literacy skills. To help parents in the sample to have adequate knowledge on the subject, there is need, therefore, for teachers, during meetings, to sensitise community leaders who in turn would educate parents on how they can help their children develop interest in early literacy activities,

long before official lessons in school so that those without pre-school experience benefit from their home environments.

### **5.3 To establish early literacy practices that parents expose their children to prior to school entry**

The second objective was to establish the early literacy practices that parents expose children to prior to school entry. It was clear from the findings that although parents had limited knowledge of emergent literacy, they did play a significant role in supporting emergent literacy as they exposed their children to some early literacy practices such as the ones discussed below.

Regarding writing, findings showed that parents/guardians in the targeted rural community of Mongu District, knowingly or unknowingly, exposed their children to writing practices. Parents who were adult literacy teachers prepared their lesson notes in front of their children. Those who were church secretaries organised their minutes in the presence of their young ones. Clergymen prepared their religious education programmes for their congregations in the company of their children. Older siblings were writing their homework whilst socialising with their non-school-going brothers and sisters. As all these forms of writing were taking place, young ones were busy demanding for pieces of paper and pencils so that they could put their thoughts on paper as well. The only way to get rid of them was to give them papers and pencils for them to do their own writing and stop bothering them. After pieces of paper and pencils were provided, they started scribbling and drawing. The researcher's argument here is that observing adults writing made children in the targeted Mongu rural community to understand that thoughts could be put in writing. That was the reason why after pieces of paper and pencils were given to them they started scribbling and drawing, a way of putting their thoughts in writing because children's first effort in writing typically resembles scribbling and drawing, but usually they know that they have written something if someone asks them. This situation is similar to that of Kenney (2012), who revealed in his study that as a way of imitating the act of writing, some children scribbled and drew pictures that could only be interpreted by them. The above finding is supported by Rowe

and Neitzel (2010), who noted that the pictographic sense that includes the use of drawings and scribbled-like markings with meaning only known to the child is the beginning of the series of stages that children progress through as they learn to write. Dennis and Vottler (2013) take the same stance when they say children as young as 2 years old begin to imitate the act of writing by creating drawings and symbolic markings that represent their thoughts and ideas. It could be, therefore, said that children in Mongu rural community communicated their thoughts and recorded their ideas when they were scribbling and drawing. The researcher's argument, in line with that of Dennis and Volter (2013), is that scribbles may not make any sense to an adult because they look like a lot of lines, loops and so on, but these marks are very important to children because they are their way of writing their thoughts. Therefore, scribbling and drawing are the first steps in using the skills children will need later for writing. Based on their observations, children in the targeted households of Mongu rural community, as they were imitating the act of writing by means of scribbling and drawing, they began to learn how to hold pencils/pens, where to start from when writing and how to turn pages when one is writing, emergent writing skills which would serve as an important foundation for learning to write once they are in conventional schools.

The implication arising from the above finding, in line with Whitehurst and Lonigan's (1998) report, is that the act of imitating writing by scribbling and drawing that was observed among children revealed how parents in Mongu District were enhancing the inside-out domain as a way of fostering their children's emergent writing skills. As already pointed out, as children were imitating the act of writing, they were acquiring, as well as developing, a good number of emergent writing skills which would be handy later in conventional school.

The study also showed that parents whose houses were decorated with paintings of various kinds of drawings, purely serving as decorations, could see their children copying those drawings. Children were sometimes seen imitating drawing the same items on the ground, but their parents discouraged them from scribbling and drawing on the ground because, according to them (parents), they (children) would just make

themselves dirty (see Kaunda, 2013). Hindering children from such practices clearly indicated how much parents in the targeted households of Mongu rural community contributed to the problem of low literacy achievement that was identified among their school-going children, because just a mere attempt of scribbling on the soil could have gone a long way in supporting emergent writing. The researcher's line of thought is that parents should try by all means to encourage and support such practices because they mark the first steps in learning to write. Indeed, with adult guidance, children move to another developmental level. In this context, an able instructor, a parent or any other knowledgeable family member must offer the necessary guidance the child needs in order to help him/her develop the writing skills that would help him/her progress to the next level as indicated by (Vygotsky, (1978). This argument can be extended by acknowledging the fact that scaffolding structure provided by parents or older peers when children start scribbling or drawing is an important step in encouraging children's emergent writing skills which could serve as basic building blocks for learning to write once children are enrolled in school.

It can, therefore, be concluded that parent-child interaction in writing, or rather seeing adults writing, is actually regarded as an important condition for learning to write. Children need to see parents or older peers writing for a purpose such as preparing shopping lists, writing homework, minutes, or writing short messages (SMS) on cell phones. The researcher's advice is that parents/guardians should share their thoughts with their children while writing, like what some did in this study, and then read back what has been written for their children to realise that thoughts can be written and that what is written can be read. In this manner a love for reading and writing would be created, a simple way of encouraging development of children's emergent literacy skills which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once such children are in formal schools.

On the part of reading to children, a good number of parents did not do this. Most of them gave various reasons why they could not read to their children. Most of the reasons parents in the targeted households of Mongu rural community gave for not reading to

their children tally with what was established in the study conducted in Botswana entitled: Attitudes of parents towards reading in rural communities (see Mathangwane and Arua, 2006). From the parents' responses, the researcher simply concluded that most children in the targeted households of Mongu rural community were not developing effective listening and speaking skills (oral language skills) because of not receiving adequate reading inputs during their pre-school years. This is in agreement with Roskos et al. (2004), and Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) who pointed out that without oral language, it might be impossible for a child to develop the ability to read and write because a child's familiarity with language and vocabulary is strongly linked to his/her literacy success. This could be one of the contributory factors to poor literacy performance identified among early grade learners in the area where this study was conducted.

Parents who read to their children played a very significant role in their children's lives, though most of them were not aware that by so doing they were helping in encouraging their children's literacy development. This finding is supported by Kenny (2012), in his study conducted in south-eastern Michigan. The implication arising from it is that interaction between a parent and a child during book reading nurtures the child's motivation for reading. The study conducted by Sarlina (2016) also demonstrated that consistent interaction between children and parents in homes is a serious predictor of early language development and early literacy skills. Consolidating the above finding, Vygotskian's socio-constructivist theory that informs this study, holds that in the social environment, which in this case is the home environment, knowledgeable parents and other older siblings, should guide children's emergent reading activities through positive interactions during book reading. The above finding is validated by Arnold and Whitehurst (1994), who clearly indicated that a child who is read to at an early age tends to display greater interest in reading at a later stage. In other words, shared book reading is very important because it creates a fertile ground for children to notice sounds and associate print with spoken words. It also teaches children to begin learning how to hold a book, to follow words across the page from left to right, top to bottom, and turn pages, which are emergent reading skills that benefit children and help them to become better

readers when they are in school (Bus, et al., 1995). An added advantage to consistently reading to children is not only showing them how to sound out words, but also developing their key comprehension skills, building their vocabulary and exposing them to what a fluent reader sounds like. These activities would help them develop love for reading, the best way to set them up for reading success because love for reading does not come automatically. It needs to be nurtured, as indicated by (Morrow and Gambrel, 2002; Teale, 1987). In simpler terms, reading to children helps to broaden their oral language skills that are critical to vocabulary acquisition. According to MoE (2013), vocabulary contributes significantly to literacy because early vocabulary, or the number of words a child has in his/her working vocabulary, greatly impacts reading success or difficulties and this further impacts success in school.

In summary, the study has established that reading to children by parents or even older peers was less valued in Mongu rural community, implying that the problem of low literacy levels identified among some school-going children, particularly those who were still in the lower grades, somehow resulted from lack of parental support in children's early reading activities. From the above assertion, the researcher's argument is that parents were not fully utilising Whitehurst and Lonigan's (1998) outside-in domain to encourage the development of their children's emergent reading skills, which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read once a child is in school. Bus et al. (1995) states that parental support, or rather involvement in their children's reading, has been found to be a great determinant in language acquisition and emergent literacy.

From the findings presented in chapter four, it was clear that parents in the targeted Mongu rural community exposed their children to games. Although most parents were not aware that some games could be of more help in as far as encouraging their children's literacy development was concerned, most parents indicated that they taught their children how to play different types of traditional games such as *muyato*, *mulabalaba*, *nakutambekela*, *peba ni kakaze*. The early literacy practice of exposing children to games also happened in the United States of America (USA). Kenney (2012) did a research that aimed at observing and examining parent-child literacy interactions in

the home environment that influenced early language and literacy development. In his study, parents and their children participated in three semi-structured literacy activities: storybook reading, play session and writing task. Play activity was a context where parents were very interactive with their children. The results pointed to the importance of adult-child play as being beneficial to early language and literacy learning.

Going by the findings of this study, most of the traditional games such as *nakutambekele* and *peba ni kakaze* that parents taught their children were accompanied by songs. Games like *muyato* and *mulabalaba* had some aspects of counting. This being the case, participation of Mongu rural community children in these games had some implications. One of them was that, as children participated in songs accompanying games, they were unconsciously developing phonemic awareness recognition that words are made up of separate speech sounds, as MoE (2013) has put it, that as children playfully engage in sound play, they learn to segment words into their separate sounds and when time for conventional reading comes, it would be easier for them to map sounds onto their printed letters. Another implication was that as children were engaging in games like *muyato* and *mulabalaba* which had some aspects of counting, they were unconsciously acquiring numeracy skills, another form of emergent literacy skills because more advanced numeracy skills, when children are in conventional school are based on early numeracy foundation, just like a house is built on a strong foundation. Supporting the above finding, a study conducted in Lusaka urban by Musonda (2011) on literacy behaviours exhibited by pre-schoolers showed that children played a lot of games such as *ciyato* and *nsolo* which were very useful in the development of emergent numeracy as well. The study revealed that most of the children were mere observers in *nsolo* as it required higher thinking skills, but in the current study most of those aged 5 to 6 years were participants while scaffolded by their parents and older siblings, most of whom were actually not aware that those games could be of great help to children's literacy development. The other implication was that as children were playing those games, they were using the word of mouth to express themselves and this was supporting their oral language development. It has been argued that successful acquisition of reading and writing depends on a solid background of oral language skills,

as supported by Grazer (1989), who stated that oral language is an important prerequisite to reading and writing. Without it, it could be impossible for children to develop the ability to read and write. This generally shows that games lay a foundation for literacy because they facilitate oral communication. The finding is affirmed by Vygotsky's social-constructivist theory, which calls for parents to support their children's play in their social environment that is in their communities before they are enrolled in school, making sure that children's play helps in broadening their oral language and emergent literacy skills that open the gates for learning to read and write once children are in conventional schools. It was noted that all the games that parents exposed their children to in Mongu rural had to do with oral language communication, an outside-in process which Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) considered to be a strong foundation for learning to read and write. In simpler terms, what this finding really implies is that as children in Mongu rural were playing those games, they were using known words as well as learning new ones, and this was helping in broadening their oral language vocabulary, which is an important prerequisite to reading and writing. The findings are in line with Kasonde (2015), who revealed in her study that all the games that children in the two selected compounds of Kitwe played except *ranger*, required them to use oral language, and this was helping in enriching their speech as they were preparing for learning how to read and write. A study conducted by Day (2013), consolidates the above assertion, that through play/games children are constantly exposed to language, sounds, and behavior that influence development of their emergent literacy skills.

Games like *nakutambekela* (I am passing this thing to you) and *peba ni kakaze* (a rat and a cat), which parents in Mongu rural community taught their children, played a very big role as far as teaching moral values was concerned. For instance, it was found out that the *nakutambekela* game provided a very important lesson to children. It taught them that information from someone should be received the way it is, and if it means passing it over to another person, that must be done without twisting it. The researcher's argument, tallying with one of the community leaders, is that in the case of children in Mongu rural community who are already used to such experiences, it would definitely work out even when they are enrolled in school, in that information to do with literacy

from teachers, would be received with both hands, and if it means passing it over to their classmates, that would be done without diluting it.

In summary, though some parents were engaging their children in games without the knowledge that they were helping them, the most important thing was that, knowingly or unknowingly, they contributed to the development of their young ones' emergent literacy skills that would serve as an important foundation for learning how to read and write once such children are in conventional schools.

With regard to storytelling, the study revealed that stories were important in children's lives because they helped them learn some important lessons in life. In simpler terms, they helped them to realise the dos and don'ts of this world. Apart from the above-mentioned aspect, the findings further indicated that children, after listening to stories, were able to argue over incorrect details of a story and others were able to retell stories heard from parents to their peers (see Kipepe, 2016). This simply meant that they were developing some oral language skills. Oral language in this context refers to listening and speaking. Richgels (2004) argues that storytelling exposes children to some form of language which is holistic, rich and complex. He further states that storytelling allows children to tune into rhythms and broaden their vocabulary to express themselves. The researcher sees it worth to argue that in the targeted Mongu rural community, children did not just listen but participated in speaking since they were able to argue over incorrect details of a story as well as retelling stories that they heard from their parents to friends. This was quite encouraging. In this context, it can be argued that as children in Mongu rural community were applying those practices, they were developing their outside-in skills, which involved understanding and production of narratives from which reading and writing develop. Consolidating the above finding, Sampa (2000) says that children who learn to express themselves clearly via the spoken word will eventually be able to express themselves clearly and sequentially in reading and writing. The four macro-skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, are closely linked to emergent literacy in that oral language (listening and speaking) greatly contributes to the

development of early reading and writing skills, which serve as an important foundation for subsequent literacy development (Neumann and Dickson, 2001).

What the study revealed was that riddles have moral aspects in the sense that they instil team spirit among children, and this is always done as they work together to find solutions to puzzling questions or statements. Data further showed that riddles trained children in the targeted Mongu rural households good discipline because players were expected to be patient even if they were annoyed or rather made fun by other players. The researcher's argument, which is, in line with some parents' views, is that riddling trained children in the targeted community to bond with others, a great way of forming good relationships. It also taught them good discipline; an important foundation for children's emergent literacy development in that, if children learn to form relationships and learn good discipline early in their homes, this would even extend to conventional school. Bonding with teachers and fellow learners would help them learn to read and write in a relaxed atmosphere. It could simply be argued that the *riddle* game enhances cooperative learning among learners which the social constructivist theory by Vygotsky (1978) advocated.

Additionally, the full explanation on how riddles were played that indicated the order of presentation from the beginning to the end has helped children in the targeted area to learn that doing certain things requires the issue of taking turns, giving one another time. For instance, a challenger was given time to throw his or her question without interference, and in the same manner, a respondent was given time to answer. If the correct answer was not achieved, the knowledgeable person was as well given time to explain how an answer could be arrived at. As this was the case, the argument is that facilitators, who were more knowledgeable parents or older siblings, were sowing some important seeds of emergent social skills in children which would enable them, when they are in formal school, to listen to the teacher and to their fellow learners when it is their turn to speak, and this would make the learning of literacy easy and enjoyable. This corresponds to what Kipepe (2016) found in her study.

The study also revealed that riddles trained children of Mongu district to become critical thinkers. Since the nature of riddles is that they have hidden meanings, the implication is that, for children to come up with correct answers, they should first think critically. Thinking critically, therefore, lays a foundation for acquiring literacy or learning a subject because the clue used in riddles prior to school entry will help children to face advanced problems in school which will require critical thinking. In short, riddles develop children's critical reasoning and solving capacity which prepares them for what lies ahead of them in conventional school.

The findings further showed that playing riddles with adults expanded children's vocabulary because it forced them to ask more questions about words they did not understand. This was clarified by Morrow (1989), who pointed out that riddles are important in children's lives as they facilitate the development of vocabulary, which is required for a child to communicate with curiosity regarding the world around him/her. The researcher's argument is that teaching kids of Mongu District riddles helped them to learn more about language, understanding that words could have more than one meaning, and this helped in improving their comprehension skills, which in turn would help them to comprehend advanced skills regarding reading and writing once they are in school. In view of the above, parents in Mongu District enhanced Whitehurst and Lonigan's (1998) outside-in domain when they helped children to make discoveries about language-understanding that a word can have more than one meaning, and this in turn helped in broadening children's oral language vocabulary. The acquisition of more words is consistent with Hodgskiss (2007: 67), who said "the larger a child's vocabulary, the better he/she is likely to be able to read and write".

It can be concluded that although riddles, just like folktales, are slowly fading away, giving way to other social networks, the researcher encourages parents to try by all means to find ways to bond with their children and help them learn outside these social networks, and one way of doing this is to share riddles with them and impart to them what teachers would cherish once their children are in conventional schools.

The findings in this study showed that singing was one of the literacy practices parents exposed their children to prior to school entry. As parents in Mongu District were singing songs like nursery rhymes along with their children, they were naturally speaking clearly and slowly, and this helped their children learn a lot of words and understood how they were pronounced. This implies that singing to children or singing along with them has the capacity to expose them to a good number of literacy skills that could be of more help when children start school. The other argument is that songs and rhymes that children are exposed to provide opportunities to develop listening comprehension and speaking skills which, in turn, are key to the development of vocabulary, letter identification and knowledge, as well as phonological awareness (see Kaunda, 2013). In the same manner, the songs and nursery rhymes in which parents in Mongu District engaged their children, exposed them to sounds that aid phonological awareness which Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998), in one of their interdependent sets of skills, called inside-out domain, considered as a realisation that words are made up of a variety of smaller sound units like syllables and phonemes. This realisation is one of the first stages of learning to read and write. Singing, therefore, is about phonological awareness. Through singing, children learn how to segment sounds, and create blends and different sounds just as they could learn the alphabet by singing the alphabet song. They could also recognise letter sounds and become aware of their structure through songs. A study conducted by Bryant et al. (1990) supports the above findings, as one of its findings indicated that knowledge of rhymes, which are a characteristic of songs, contributes to reading by increasing sensitivity to phonemic differences and preparing a child to recognise the similar spelling patterns shared by words that rhyme.

In summary, Vygotsky (1962) contends that exposing children to oral language such as songs, riddles, storytelling and other several games enhances the development of emergent literacy skills, but this is dependent on the positive interactions that children receive from their older family members. In this study, the researcher can simply argue that parents/guardians interacted positively as it was noted that a good number of them engaged their children in singing activities, which in most cases were accompanied by clapping, though it was observed that most of them were not aware that such activities

had some educational values. The implication, therefore, is that most children who were subjects of this study were unconsciously acquiring emergent literacy skills, which would serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once they are in conventional school.

Helping children learn to write their names was yet another literacy practice that parents exposed their children to prior to school experience. The study showed that it was very difficult for some parents to sit down with their children and teach them how to write their names because they were always busy. Instead, that job was left in the hands of their older siblings who were already in school. This simply gave a clear picture that parents in Mongu District were not doing much in as far as encouraging development of their children's emergent literacy skills through the use of inside-out domain. They failed to fully expose their children to letter sounds, thereby depriving them a chance of acquiring letter knowledge. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) argue that letter knowledge is important, it is a prerequisite to reading in the sense that it significantly influences the acquisition of some phonological awareness skills which involve the understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds. A child's ability to decode the letters in a sentence into correct phonological representations depends on knowing letter sounds. The above finding is validated by Kaunda (2013), who revealed in his study that households helped the children to name letters of the alphabet even though the current study established that households first helped children learn letter sounds that made up their names before teaching them their local language alphabet. The researcher can attribute this finding to the fact that a child begins his/her journey of conventional reading and writing as he/she learns to read and write his/her first word. For most children their first word is their name. The above statements seem to explain why Both-dev Vries and Bus (2008) observed that one of the first legible marks children usually learn to write are letters in their first names. The implication here is that children are interested in their names because they represent who they are. They are proud of their names because they are their identity and this makes it very interesting to hear their own names and see them written down. Names increase children's conceptual and procedural knowledge.

It was further found that parents in the targeted rural community used a variety of methods to teach their children how to write their names. The researcher's argument here is that the fact that children cherished their names made it possible for them to learn something they treasured with less difficulty as they were being helped out by knowledgeable others because they were connecting print to something very meaningful in their lives. As parents and older siblings were using various techniques to teach children how to write their names, they were helping in fostering emergent literacy skills in the sense that children were learning a lot of skills at once, which included: how to hold a pencil and have enough fine motor control to make the pencil do what they wanted to do, recognising letters/sounds that made up their names and be able to reproduce them and, above all, they were being prepared for school so that most of them would know how to write at least a few letters by the time they would be ready for school.

Trying to cement the role children's names play in the development of literacy, Cambell et al. (2009) found name writing to be meaningful to children because it forms the springboard for learning to read and write. It could be argued that children's phonological awareness of their names and their eagerness to read and write them provide powerful literacy teaching opportunities. Exposing children to name writing long before they start formal schooling opens doors to alphabet knowledge, a key tool in learning literacy. As Puranik and Lonigan (2011) have put it, name writing proficiency, provides a foundation for other literacy skills. It is associated with alphabet knowledge, letter writing, print concepts and spelling, the key tools in emergent literacy, an important foundation for learning to read and write once children are in school.

Going by the social-constructivist theory, which informs this study, Vygotsky (1978) believes that adult assistance creates learning that leads to development. In the same way, the researcher can argue that parents and older siblings in Mongu District, who assisted children in learning their names prior to school entry encouraged development of emergent literacy skills that would help both children and teachers to build upon a strong foundation once a child is in conventional school. Their names are the most

important words to them and learning them leads to all other types of learning, of which alphabet knowledge, a key tool in learning to read and write, is not an exception.

In Mongu District, teaching children their names, therefore, gave birth to the teaching of other letter sounds (their local language alphabet, Silozi in particular). Parents who managed to teach their children letter sounds together with the older siblings who were already in school employed various techniques to help children learn and remember what they were being taught. This, according to Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998), entails that parents and older siblings were utilising the inside-out domain which has something to do with knowledge of grapheme, to foster their children's emergent literacy skills, because grapheme knowledge entails knowing the names of letters. Children were actually exposed to letter sounds, practising how to recite and write them, a prerequisite for learning conventional reading and writing. In as far as teaching children letter sounds prior to school experience was concerned, a research was done in Lusaka urban which revealed that some parents had some English alphabet books in their homes but failed to use them to teach their non-school-going-children because of the new policy that was implemented of using the recognised local language of the region where the school is located in teaching initial literacy. They thought teaching English alphabet would be sheer waste of time since children would start learning in a local language. Therefore, most of the work was left in the hands of teachers when children started school (see Musonda, 2011). In the case of this study, local language (Silozi) materials were used as children were helped to learn letter sounds following the new language policy, something that would benefit children once they are enrolled in formal schools. The main argument here is that, in most cases when children arrive at school for the first time, they find themselves in a new physical environment where almost everything is new, the teacher is a stranger and classmates are strangers, too. If on top of these there is an abrupt change in the language of instruction, then the situation would become worse. This could negatively affect children's performance. However, by using children's home language, in this case *Silozi*, a means by which they socialise in their families or communities, can help navigate the new environment and bridge the learning gap at school with the tacit knowledge of their experiences they bring from home. The

researcher.s position here is that since the same home language is used from grades 1 to 4, once children are enrolled in school they (children) would find the environment very conducive for learning. The new language policy, therefore, has direct relevance of home language that would help children pick out familiar concepts used at conventional school, thereby making the learning of literacy easy and enjoyable.

Going by the report that some parents were so busy that they could not find time to teach their children letter sounds. The implication is that parent-child interaction to influence the development of emergent literacy skills, which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once children are in school, was not well taken care of. Such parents failed to offer support towards their children's literacy acquisition. This could be one of the reasons why there were a good number of early grade learners in the area where the study was conducted whose literacy performance was poor.

#### **5.4 To identify the types of literacy environments children are exposed to in their homes and surrounding areas which support early literacy development**

It was found out that children were exposed to a variety of literacy materials that were interesting and inviting such as picture books, pencils, alphabet toys, erasers and crayons. Exposure to these materials encouraged children to learn how to handle and open books, interpret/read pictures from left to right and top to bottom, hold pencils, turn papers in books, start scribbling and drawing, an important foundation for learning to read and write. This finding is in agreement with Opiyo (2017), who revealed in her study that the literacy resources that were found in homes were more powerful predictors of children's early literacy skills. The implication drawn from the above finding is that the presence of such supportive literacy materials in many homes encouraged children to engage in the already mentioned literacy activities which helped them to realise the existence of print and how it could be constructed, thereby shaping a child's emergent literacy skills which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once he or she is in school.

Findings further showed that although a lot of literacy materials were available in many homes, children failed to access them most of the time because they were always hidden from them to avoid losing them. The researcher's argument is that such acts disadvantaged most children in terms of participation in early literacy promotion activities, a situation which delayed the development of emergent literacy skills. Morrow and Weinstein (1986) stated that one of the effective approaches to helping children develop literacy skills is to have a home environment that supports literacy because the home is where the child gets his or her first experiences with books and reading. The implication drawn from what has been stated above is that children who grow up in homes where early literacy support is not well provided start school with little knowledge of literacy, and this contributes to poor literacy performance normally experienced among learners in most Zambian primary schools.

The other type of home literacy environment that children were exposed to in the targeted Mongu rural community which supported the development of emergent literacy skills that was identified was household and environmental print. Most children who were subjects of this study were surrounded by various kinds of print. Kassow (2006) considers both household print and environmental print as those prints that surround children in their daily lives and further said they enhance emergent literacy because the presence of such print in any given community helps children to realise what written language is like and how it is used in everyday life. This is in line with Gates (1988), who emphasises that household and environmental prints are cardinal because they help children understand that there is a one-to-one relationship between print and oral language that results from reading. Print that was identified in the targeted area provided resources for children to look at and think about written language. It was found that some children were able to read some environmental print that was in big font. This clearly showed how children in Mongu District exhibited Whitehurst and Lonigan's (1998) outside-in knowledge of conventions of print in their literacy journey. The argument here is that continuous exposure to print even when children are not reading and writing in conventional sense enhances reading and writing when they begin formal school. The reason behind this argument is that children will continue seeing and

relating the similar print in their homes and surrounding areas to what they will find when they are in conventional school. This is the reason why Barbara (1995) contends that children who have access to print environments learn to read more easily than those that do not have access to such. Supporting the above finding, Neumann et al. (2009), in their study revealed that a 2-year-old child's interaction with his mother helped him learn to distinguish print from non-print. Morrow (1995) argues that environmental print is of no value to a child if no adult brings that child's attention to it. Morrow's (1995) argument is in line with Nutbrown (2005), who explains that print can only lead to the development of emergent literacy if parents participate in scaffolding their children. Vygotsky (1978), in the theoretical framework of this study, consolidates the above assertion when he emphasises the role of more capable others in scaffolding the learning of children, in this context, to encourage early literacy development through the use of print.

It could be justified that extending children's attention to print is important because it assists them to notice that print has meaning. Therefore, it is not just exposure to environmental print but it is the attention children receive from parents by means of scaffolding- efforts made by parents to ensure that children are aware of its importance. Contrary to this view, what was revealed was that some households were not utilising print that was on their doorsteps because they had no idea on how it could be used to enhance emergent literacy among their children. For example, calendars and Bibles were hidden in bedrooms. The argument is that it was difficult for children in such homes to really understand what written language really looked like and how it was used in everyday life situations. This could actually delay development of emergent literacy skills, which open the doors for conventional reading and writing.

All in all, a home environment plays an important role in the development of emergent literacy skills in children. The researcher adds her voice in line with what was revealed in the two studies conducted by Joann (2011) and Chansa-Tamara (2014) that the ideal home environment should be arranged in such a way that a variety of print, reading and writing materials that encourage early literacy activities are easily accessible to all

children when appropriate and parents who demonstrate how literacy materials are used in everyday activities are readily available and willing to help. Literacy materials, household and environmental print have a place in children's early literacy development and, therefore, parents should make them part of their children's daily experiences.

The other type of home literacy environment that parents in Mongu District exposed their children to was that of providing a friendly environment that allowed their children to interact among siblings. Exposure to friendly environments encouraged most children to playfully engage in interest-based literacy-building activities. One of the most popular literacy building activities that the study revealed was games. In literacy development, the presence of play activities such as games plays a significant role. Due to enabling environment created by parents, children participated in games like *mandwani* (pretend play), *muyato* and *nakutambekela*. As children in the targeted rural community engaged in the above-mentioned games, they were using the word of mouth to express themselves and this in turn supported oral language development, which contributed to the expansion of their vocabulary, an outside-in emergent literacy skill, an important prerequisite to reading and writing (Whitehurst and Lonigan 1998). The importance of vocabulary in literacy development is supported by MoE (2013), which contends that the larger the child's vocabulary, the quicker he/she will learn to read and write as he/she is familiar with more words he/she will encounter. Related to the above assertion, Kasonde (2015) and Day (2013)'s studies indicated that activities such as games/play are very cardinal in the development of literacy. What this implies is that by playing games, children are unconsciously building up their emergent literacy skills, a prerequisite for learning to read and write. Vygotsky (1978) states that play is important not only because it is a predominant feature of childhood, but also a leading factor in a child's development. Play encourages children to share knowledge and learn from each other in a social environment created by parents and other primary caregivers.

Other than acquiring oral language skills, as children were engaged in games like *muyato* and *pisi*, they were playfully engaging in sound awareness tasks. With repeated practices, their retention of words and figures was increasing, hence developing their

literacy and numeracy skills, which would serve as an important foundation for learning literacy and mathematics once in conventional school. In addition, certain games had rules, an experience that would help children to follow literacy rules when they are enrolled in school. It is also worth mentioning that physical actions in certain games like *nakutambekela* which required children to manipulate their fingers relate to pre-writing activities that children would be exposed to in conventional schools that would help in developing good handwriting. This assertion is supported by Woods (2009), who states that when children are having fun as they participate in games, they are at the most receptive in refining their foundational motor skills and establish behaviours which are building foundations of literacy. This view is linked to Santrock (2002), who emphasises that if children are engaged in play, they will practise their competencies and acquire skills in a more relaxed manner.

It can be summed up that parents should take keen interest in scaffolding their children's games because young ones do not merely play but gain some literacy skills from what they do.

From the findings presented in chapter four, it is clear that some children acquire literacy skills through inquisitiveness. Some children in the study area were very inquisitive. They asked a lot of questions, some of which did not even make sense. In a related development, Kaunda (2013) revealed that two children were fond of asking a lot of questions about people they did not know. In the current study, children asked a lot of questions on anything, not only people. The implication drawn from here is that as children asked a lot of questions, they were figuring out the meaning of a number of words, and this simply meant that they were broadening their working vocabulary. Having a wider vocabulary implies that children would learn to read and write easily because they are already familiar with more of the words they will encounter (MoE, 2013).

The researcher's view in line with that of some parents is that it is a parent's responsibility to scaffold learning through responding to his/her child's questions. Parents should answer their children's questions and try to ask for additional information

from those questions. In that way they could expand their children's vocabulary through the use of a technique called scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Children who acquire a wide vocabulary increase their ability to make sense of what a word might be while using what they know when it comes to reading and writing. It can be concluded that there is a strong relationship between vocabulary development and reading and writing achievements as confirmed by (Hodgskiss, 2007).

Another activity brought out by the research which most children engaged in during play was singing. As children engaged in singing, they were exposed to a number of literacy behaviours which Clay (1966) described as emergent literacy skills that could be used later as a starting point once they start conventional school. The argument is that songs and rhymes sung and cited by children were not just for fun. The rhymes and rhythm helped them to hear the sounds and syllables in words which would help them learn to read and write. Some songs were accompanied by clapping and dancing, a playful way that could help children in building phonemic awareness (see Kipepe, 2016). In consolidating the above assertion, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998), through the use of their inside-out domain, pointed out that clapping done by children together in a specific fashion and reciting songs in unison is one of the most important skills in learning to read and write. This playful and bonding activity is a good way for children to implicitly develop emergent literacy skills that would set them up for reading and writing success.

The researcher's position is that since all the children who were subjects of this study engaged in singing during play, they learned a good number of words and how sounds work within a word, and this was unconsciously enhancing their emergent literacy skills. The only problem was that even if some parents were sometimes part of such activities, they were not aware that songs are very important in the development of their children's early literacy skills. So there is need to sensitise them as is the case in the theoretical framework of this study where Vygotsky (1978) postulates that children's learning could only be successful if parents and other caregivers come in to bridge the gap through what is referred to as scaffolding.

The study further showed that children as young as two years old pretended to write by forming some marks or scribbles on the page as well as on the ground, which would later advance to text that would be identified verbally as writing. It could be argued that scribbling and drawings are the first steps in learning to write. Scribbles may not make sense to an adult, but these marks are very important to a child. They are a child's way of writing his/her thoughts. Scribbling and drawings are good examples of emergent writing, an important skill that children would need later for writing when they are in school. Those children who were not involved in pretend writing would start school without knowledge of the concept of print, which would make it difficult for them to learn to write.

As children in the sample were making their own 'money' by cutting papers into small pieces, draw and paint, as well as writing figures on them, they were unconsciously learning the conventions of print, thereby learning how to hold a pencil/pen, where to start from when writing, as well as putting their first marks in form of drawings on the page (Whitehurst and Lonigan 1998). These activities matter because they form a strong foundation for learning to write. To those children who mainly did their first writing on the ground, physical plays such as 'dough' was by far one of the activities which encouraged them to use their hands in several different ways to build their fine motor skills. The activity can actually prepare pre-schoolers on how to hold a pencil/pen when they start learning to write in the conventional sense.

The researcher's argument is that learning to write is a developmental process just like learning to talk, walk or read. Parents should support their children's writing process by creating enabling environments and providing a lot of time for them to practise writing, not forgetting to provide them with paper, markers, crayons and pencils. And for those who practise writing on the ground, parents should find means of supporting them as well because children's attempt to writing might seem like scribbling or drawings, but the truth is that they are essential and important steps in learning to write.

The study further indicated that children participated in storytelling. Those who were in the range of 4, 5 and 6 years exhibited good oral language skills by the way they

participated in focus group discussions, how they narrated stories when the researcher requested them to tell their stories and by engaging in conversations with family members that extended simple sentences. Following Whitehurst and Lonigan's (1998) outside-in domain, the above finding had revealed the presence of children's knowledge of narratives from which reading and writing develop. The argument here is that children's engagement in storytelling and having conversations with adults contribute to language and vocabulary development. The development of language and vocabulary enhances development of emergent literacy skills, which are the basic building blocks for learning to read and write. The implication of this finding is that children who were not taking part in oral activities like storytelling would find it difficult to learn to read and write once in conventional school. This was clarified by Richgels (2004), who clearly indicated that studies which have been conducted around the world discovered that storytelling allows children to tune into the rhythms and structures of language and broaden their conceptual language and their vocabulary to express themselves, The researcher's view is that parents in homes should find interesting ways of encouraging their children to listen and tell stories so that they become familiar with certain structures that would prepare them learn to read and write once they are in conventional school.

As children playfully engaged in riddling, they were trying to find out who could think fast and generate convincing results, a desirable ability to achieving academic success and workable solutions in real-life situations. Riddling was one of the convincing ways children in the targeted area learned to listen to sounds of words, understand that some words have more than one meaning because, as they were thinking flexibly about what the appropriate meaning might be, it also helped to improve their understanding. The study also found out that when children encountered words they did not understand, they figured their meanings out through contexts. Riddles therefore give words a great deal of context, which makes it easier for children to learn, remember and use these words. As children uttered riddles, they were also forced to ask a lot of questions about words they did not understand, giving them an opportunity to build a rich vocabulary, a strong foundation for learning to read and write.

It can be summarised that just like other oral traditions, riddles are also fading away. The researcher's argument, or rather suggestion, is that parents should find suitable means of engaging their children in oral traditions because they are always eager and willing to listen to anything good that comes from them.

Pretend reading was another literacy-building activity children engaged in during play in the targeted Mongu rural community. A few pre-schoolers in this study were able to engage in this exercise as was the case in the studies conducted by (Musonda, 2011; Kaunda, 2013 and Kipepe, 2016). Those children who were provided with picture books were able to read or rather interpret pictures. Supporting the above finding, Foldaway (1975) states that pretend reading fosters children's reading by themselves as they concentrate on re-telling the story by means of pictures. What a few children in Mongu rural community were trying to do was very important because it displayed some of the first skills of becoming a reader. Those children who pretended to read or who attempted to interpret pictures in books were learning how to handle a book, how to open it, how to turn pages and learn that stories progress as readers flip pages. These are important emergent reading skills which lay a solid foundation for learning to read once a child is in formal school. In short, children who are able to read pictures demonstrate behaviour associated with emergent literacy. Before children can read words, they first start by interpreting pictures, but this could only happen when their parents or advanced peers are always reading and interacting with them as they read. In that way, children would as well start displaying interest in reading as a matter of imitating. Vygotsky (1978) consolidates the argument above as he states that what a child is able to do in collaboration with others today, he/she will be able to do it independently tomorrow. Sharing book reading today with a child would help him/her become an independent reader in future.

It was further revealed that most of the children who were part of this study could not read because their books which were donated by World Vision were always hidden by their parents. This being the case, Whitehurst and Lonigan's (1998) outside-in domain to do with children's knowledge of conventions of print was not well promoted because

hiding those books from the children most of the time rendered them not able to fully become aware of print and see how it appears. According to Ferreiro and Teberosky (1986), such type of children with less experience with books prior to conventional schooling would develop reading at a low pace as compared to those who always see people reading as well as playing with books most of the time. The researcher's position here is that since most of the children were not involved in reading, this, of course, could be one of the reasons why the school located in the area where the study was conducted recorded low literacy performance, mostly among early graders.

In summary, a home-rich literacy environment plays a very important role in children's early literacy development. Parents can promote their children's early literacy by surrounding them with a variety of supportive literacy materials such as crayons, pencils and picture books which could encourage them to engage in literacy activities most of the time, as well as involving them in riddling, storytelling, games, and singing among other activities. Home-rich literacy environment for children could also be created by parents who are responsive to their children's many questions, who are accepting and appreciating children's early literacy attempts and who serve as good models through reading and writing. Above all, providing a friendly environment that allows children to interact among siblings is one of the best home-rich literacy environments a parent can ever expose his/her child to because a child can learn a lot through such arrangements.

## **5.5 Summary**

The chapter presented a detailed discussion of findings based on the research objectives. The discussion has been presented by using the findings and how they were related to the literature reviewed earlier in chapter two as well as marrying it with its theory and bringing in the researcher's voice. The next chapter presents the conclusion and some recommendations.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Overview

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study based on the findings and discussion on the topic: *‘The role of parents in fostering children’s emergent literacy skills in selected rural households of Mongu District, Zambia.’*

### 6.2 Conclusion

The study has established that most parents lacked understanding of emergent literacy. None of them knew how important the concept really was in their children’s literacy journey, a situation which rendered them not to fully expose their children to literacy practices that were fully supporting the development of emergent literacy skills, important foundational skills for learning to read and write once children are enrolled in formal school. To this effect, there is need to educate parents about emergent literacy, to provide them with suggestions on how they can support their children’s literacy journey and travel with them with true inspiration because young ones are easily inspired by what they see from their parents. They need parents to be their role models with daily literacy activities, and through modelling, parents should demonstrate the process and importance of reading and writing because when children observe a model, they do not only imitate that behaviour, but also strive to acquire its underlying structure.

The study has further established that although most parents had limited understanding of emergent literacy, knowingly or unknowingly, they did play a role in supporting emergent literacy as they exposed their children to a number of early literacy practices such as writing, reading, games, storytelling, riddling, and singing, among other activities which were helping in fostering their children’s emergent literacy skills, an important foundation for learning to read and write once they are in conventional school. It was further revealed that the practice of exposing children to reading was less valued by parents, a situation that was delaying acquisition and development of children’s emergent reading skills, a solid foundation for learning to read. This could be one of the contributory factors to low literacy achievements identified among most early grade

learners in the study area where the research was undertaken. As Vygotsky (1978) clearly indicated, children can only become literate members in society if they are supported by people that surround them.

Finally, the study has shown that the forms of home literacy environments that children were exposed to such as print, reading and writing materials encouraged them to engage in interest-based literacy-related activities that were greatly contributing to the development of emergent literacy skills, building blocks for learning to read and write, though scaffolding from most parents was not all that encouraging. Exposing children to a friendly environment that allowed them to interact among siblings was yet another important gift parents gave their children which contributed to the development of emergent literacy skills. An enabling environment that was provided by parents encouraged children to playfully engage in a good number of literacy-building activities which were unconsciously developing their emergent literacy skills, a prerequisite for learning to read and write.

It can therefore be summed up that, although the study has revealed that children in the targeted rural households of Mongu District were exposed to a number of early literacy support structures, the true picture on the ground was that most parents lacked understanding of the concept of emergent literacy, a situation which rendered them not able to fully support their children's early literacy experiences. This scenario actually had given a clear answer as to why there were a lot of early grade learners in the targeted Mongu rural community whose reading abilities were low. To this effect, an increasing body of evidence points to a child's early years as critical to future academic and lifelong success. The attainment of emergent literacy skills during the pre-school years is essential for later achievement in reading and writing. It is therefore important that effective models of emergent literacy interventions are developed in order to decrease the likelihood of reading and writing difficulties in the school-aged population. Within this context, many scholars and institutions have revealed that parental involvement has a powerful influence on the attainment of reading and writing skills. Since no school/teacher, college/lecturer, university/lecturer has taught/trained parents/guardians

to make their children sit, eat, talk, walk or run, this simply means that every parent/guardian has a definite experience that could impact positively on his/her children's early literacy-related behaviours.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

In view of the findings and conclusion, the following are the recommendations:

- (a) The findings revealed that most parents had limited understanding of their role in their children's literacy journey and this rendered them not able to fully support their children's early literacy behaviours. For example, some parents still believed in the notion that anything to do with children's learning to read and write was supposed to be done at school with teachers only. To help parents to have a sound knowledge of emergent literacy, it is recommended that teachers, during PTA meetings, should educate parents that their children's early literacy-related matters should no longer be left in the hands of teachers alone, but they should now work hand in hand whereby parents first lay a foundation that teachers later build upon.
- (b) The findings further showed that, although most parents had limited understanding of emergent literacy, knowingly or unknowingly, children were exposed to some early literacy practices which were helping in fostering their emergent literacy skills. To help parents to fully support the development of their children's emergent literacy skills, Government, through the Department of Community Development, should use adult literacy programmes in the study site as a stepping stone to sensitise community leaders, who in turn would educate their subjects (parents) in their communities on the importance of utilising oral traditions such as stories, riddles, poems, and songs with their young ones as this would help in encouraging development of early literacy skills at a very tender age.
- (c) Further, since the study revealed that literacy material like pencils, picture books, and crayons encouraged children's literacy-building activities, teachers, during meetings, should educate parents to avoid hiding such materials. Instead, they

should always make them available to their children so that they develop interest in early literacy activities before official lessons in school.

- (d) Considering that household print like labelled food containers, Bibles, plastic bags as well as environmental print such as church, road and school signposts, were some of the types of literacy environments that were identified which supported the development of children's emergent literacy skills, the study recommends that teachers in the targeted area, during meetings, should educate parents on how to use those basic resources that are always at the disposal of their children and engage them in various activities that can foster early literacy skills prior to school entry.

#### **6.4 Suggested topics for future research**

For future studies, the following topics are being recommended:

- (a) How early childhood education (ECE) teachers foster children's emergent literacy skills in public primary schools of Western Province, Zambia.
- (b) The role of parents in fostering emergent literacy skills among children with disabilities prior to any school experience.

#### **6.5 Summary**

The chapter has presented the conclusion in line with the study objectives. It also made recommendations based on the findings and conclusion of the study. Suggested topics for future research have brought this report to a close.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview guide for parents/guardians

**The University of Zambia**

**School of Education**

**Department of Language and Social Sciences Education**

**Dear parents/guardians,**

You are invited to take part in this research because we feel that your experience as a parent/guardian can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge on how best children can be helped to acquire early literacy skills which could serve as an important foundation for learning to read and write once a child is in conventional school. Your input in this research is very vital. You are therefore requested to be as objective as possible in your responses and you do not need to disclose your identity.

Date of interview.....

1. How far did you go in your education? .....

2. What do you understand by 'emergent literacy'? (Anything you know about emergent literacy).....

3. Being a parent, of what value is 'emergent literacy' in children?

.....

4. What activities do you do with your children during your spare time?

.....

5. What activities do children engage themselves in or spend a lot of time doing that can help them learn to read and write easily once in school?

.....  
6. How do you help them when they are involved in such activities?

.....  
7. Does your home have books or magazines that children can look at?

.....  
8. Other than books and magazines, what kind of print is found in your home?

.....  
9. If the answer in question 7 is yes, do you read for your child?

.....  
10. Does your child imitate elders when they are reading?

.....  
11. How does your child handle books?

.....  
12. How does he or she flip the pages in a book?

.....  
13. Do you buy any pencils, crayons, paint and brushes for your child?

.....  
14. If the answer in question 13 is yes, what do they do with these materials?

.....  
15. How do you help your child learn the sounds of the alphabet?  
.....

16. How do you help your child write the letters of the alphabet?

.....

17. Does your child know how to write his or her name?

.....

18. What activities do you normally have in the evening with the children?

.....

19. Do you allow your child to play with others?

.....

20. If the answer in question 19 is yes, what kind of games do they play?

.....

21. Do you teach your children riddles and songs?

.....

22. Do your children sing songs that relate to reading and writing?

.....

23. If they do, describe one song for me.

.....

24. Do you encourage your child to participate in oral language contexts like folktales, riddles and so on? .....

25. Which community literacy environment can help children learn to read?

.....

**Appendix B: Interview guide for community leaders**

**Research Topic ‘The role of parents in fostering children’s emergent literacy skills in selected rural households of Mongu District, Zambia’**

1. How far did you go in your education?

.....

2. What do you understand by ‘emergent literacy’? (Anything you know about emergent literacy).....

3. Being a community leader, of what value is ‘emergent literacy’ in children?

.....

4. What kind of activities do parents engage in with their children below the age of seven? .....

5. From the named list, what activities do you think can help children learn to read and write? .....

6. What community-based activities have you put in place to promote literacy?

.....

7. What is the role of parents in initiating literacy activities?

.....

8. How is the participation of children in literacy activities?

.....

9. What is your role in the promotion of literacy?

10. What activities do you do to prepare your children to read and write once they are in formal school system? .....

## **Appendix C: Household and surrounding areas' observation checklist**

**Research topic 'The role of parents in fostering children's emergent literacy skills in selected rural households of Mongu District, Zambia'**

**Village:** .....

### **What to look for**

1. Any visible efforts of parents/guardians of promoting literacy in their homes.
2. Emergent literacy activities done by children.
3. The village environment:
  - The state of the surrounding area, any sign of literacy activities?
  - Any sign of literacy activities inside homes?
  - Is there enough space in what may be reading corners?
  - Any shelves for reading materials?

**Appendix D: Focus group discussion guide for children**

**Research Title ‘The role of parents in fostering children’s emergent literacy skills in selected rural households of Mongu District, Zambia’**

**Questions**

1. What activities are you involved in during the day when you are on your own?

.....

2. What activities do your parents or guardians engage you in during the day?

.....

3. What activities do you normally have most in the evenings with your parents or guardians when supper time is over? .....

4. What type of reading and writing materials do you like your parents or guardians to buy for you? .....

5. What kind of print material is found in your homes?

.....

6. Do elders read for you? .....

7. If the answer in question 6 is yes, what do they usually read?

.....

8. What do you do when they read? .....

9. Do your parents tell you stories? .....

10. If the answer in question 9 is yes, what kind of stories do you love to listen to?

.....

11. Do your parents or guardians teach you riddles and songs?

.....

12. If the answer in question 11 is yes, could you sing one song for me?

.....

13. What school songs do you always hear from your elder brothers and sisters?

.....

14. Could you play some riddles for me?

.....

15. Have you ever written your names?

.....

16. If so, who helps you learn to write your name?

.....

17. Do your parents give you time to play with others?

.....

18. If they do, what type of games do you play?

.....

19. Could you show me how you play some of the games?

.....

20. What type of print do you normally see in your surrounding area?

.....

Appendix E: Introductory Letter

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA  
CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE  
**11 JAN 2019**  
DEPUTY REGIONAL STATISTICIAN  
P.O. BOX 910078  
MONGU



**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA  
MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION  
WESTERN PROVINCE  
**10 JAN 2019**  
PROVINCIAL EDUCATION OFFICER  
PROVINCIAL EDUCATION OFFICE  
P.O. BOX 910031, MONGU

Telephone: 291381  
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PO Box 32379  
Lusaka, Zambia  
Fax: +260-1-292702

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Date 13/12/2018

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: FIELD WORK FOR MASTERS/PHD STUDENTS**

The bearer of this letter Mr/Ms MALUMO INONGE Computer number 2016145781 is a duly registered student at the University of Zambia, School of Education.

~~He~~/She is taking a Masters/~~PhD~~ programme in Education. The programme has a fieldwork component which ~~he~~/she has to complete.

We shall greatly appreciate if the necessary assistance is rendered to ~~him~~/her/.

Yours faithfully



Emmy Mbozi (Dr)  
ASSISTANT DEAN POSTGRADUATE STUDIES - SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA  
ASSISTANT DEAN (PG)  
**13 DEC 2018**  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
LUSAKA

cc: Dean-Education  
Director-DRGS



Namayasha Lizzi  
Area In-charge



Maitambo Timothius  
B.R.E