

## **Exploring Children's Oral Reading Fluency from Parents' Perspectives: Using Nominal Group Technique**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores children's Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) from parents' perspectives using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). Note that the problem focuses on the role of parents in supporting reading skills development, which is crucial for achieving literacy milestones under Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). Here, seven experts collected data using NGT to assess reading frequency, accuracy, speed, and intonation. Findings show high parental involvement, with over 90% consensus in most constructs. Future research should explore enhancing collaboration between teachers and parents to improve children's reading fluency, particularly in recognizing new words and refining intonation.

**Keywords:** Nominal Group Technique; oral reading fluency; parental involvement; SDG 4.

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### **1.0 Introduction**

Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) plays an important role in the development of children's literacy. It is also in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) goals, which emphasize quality education for all. Reading fluency entails how well children can read with sufficient accuracy, speed, and expression (Roe et al., 2019; Wolters et al., 2022). It is known as a basis for their reading comprehension. For SDG 4, getting children to at least minimum proficiency in reading is more likely to guarantee a full foundation of quality and comprehensive education. Therefore, proficient reading fluency is one of the essential parts of obtaining good literacy, which can lead to higher education and a better life.

The role of parents in improving the fluency of oral reading is crucial, in line with efforts to achieve SDG 4 to provide equitable and inclusive education. Other than that, parents who support and actively engage in their children's learning can help accelerate their literacy development (Hsieh, 2023). Studies demonstrate that parents who guide their children in reading activities at home increase motivation and interest in reading and help children understand texts better (Wasik & Hindman, 2018). Parental support acts as a catalyst for improving children's reading performance, especially among those who struggle to achieve adequate literacy skills.

However, issues and challenges in improving reading fluency among children, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds, still exist. The lack of time faced by parents to guide their children is one of the main challenges (Evans et al., 2010; Hamidun et al., 2019). In addition, limited access to quality reading materials at home also makes it difficult for parents to provide adequate literacy support (Neuman & Celano, 2006; Wu & Hindman, 2024).

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This study examines parents' views on their children's reading fluency using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). This study also plays an important role in determining how to best support parents in assisting their children in reaching adequate reading ability, aligning with SDG 4. In this study, parents are the subject of, with the help of NGT, that explore questions on the perspectives about their children's ORF and how NGT can be used to identify the challenges and constructs from parental perspectives to support.

## 2.0 Literature Review

An individual who possesses this skill of reading accurately, speedily, and with proper intonation indicates mastery of ORF. Note that reading fluency is the ability to read for meaning and understand it in real time (Rasinski, 2004). This fluency forms a crucial part of the literacy content of children in the early phase. ORF connects word reading with reading comprehension in early literacy, where good fluency can allow a child to read more meaningfully. According to the Automaticity Theory of LaBerge and Samuels (1974), fluent reading involves efficient word recognition, which requires little of the readers' cognitive effort, leaving ample capacity for text comprehension.

There are three main components of reading fluency: accuracy, rate, and prosody. Fluency consists of two important components, which are accuracy, known as the recognition of words by the reader, and speed, known as an appropriate reading rate according to the age and level of learning. However, prosody includes the intonation and pattern of sound while reading aloud, demonstrating the reader's understanding of the text. They include the technical ability to read but are also distributed over cognitive and emotional components, which affect reading confidence and enjoyment. Facilitating ORF, in the educational scenario, is crucial for children to comprehend the reading material provided to them rather than just being able to read. This tells us that fluency is not only fast-spoken but also fully meaningful and profound comprehension of the meaning of the lyrics. Specifically among children first developing into reading, ORF needs the time and attention of educators and parents to grow well.

ORF is important in reading skills and is also closely related to text comprehension. Fluent readers devote more attention to meaning and content when reading a text, improving their comprehension. As per Rasinski et al. (2020), such children read fluently and tend to have superior text comprehension. Such a relationship exists as higher reading fluency enables the reader to integrate the meanings of the words and constructs of the sentences more quickly, enhancing the reading experience. It is well-established that students with higher reading fluency score higher on reading comprehension tests and overall academic performance (Rasinski, 2004). This is because they can spend more brainpower understanding and analyzing texts than decoding them. Hence, reading fluency directly affects early literacy development as well as the overall performance of the students in other subjects where reading and comprehension are important.

Parents play an important role in developing their children's reading fluency. According to Vygotsky's (1978) Theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), children can reach higher levels of development when they receive appropriate support from adults, especially parents. Shared reading experiences, assistance in tackling challenging words, and exchanges emphasizing text comprehension can assist children in developing fluency in reading with understanding. Consequently, there is a positive correlation between the amount by which parents contribute to their children's literacy and reading motivation and their literacy development (Wasik & Hindman, 2018). Studies show that children who receive continuous support from parents in reading activities at home have better reading abilities (Gay et al., 2021; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). This includes supporting children in reading with appropriate stress, intonation, and good prosody. Such parental involvement in activities aimed at literacy is very effective since this allows the children to practice reading in a fun and meaningful way at home, thereby improving their reading fluency.

Hence, parental support is equally important to help children understand the context of the texts better. Many parents who buy their children suitable reading material can develop reading comprehension. In this context, parents act as a crucial link between home and school learning and play an important role in early literacy development. Although the role of parents in enhancing children's reading fluency is significant, various challenges prevent them from providing sufficient support. One of the main challenges is time constraints. Evans et al. (2010) discovered that working parents often lack the time to engage in reading activities with their children. This situation directly affects the children's literacy development because they miss out on opportunities to practice reading at home.

In addition, limited access to quality reading materials is also a major challenge for some families (especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds). A study by Neuman and Celano (2006) shows that families from low-income backgrounds tend to have a limited collection of reading materials at home. This results in children not receiving sufficient exposure to various reading materials, which is important for improving their reading fluency and prosody.

Additionally, socio-economic differences create variations in parental interest in home literacy activities. Evidence has shown that high-income parents are in a better position and more inclined to devote their time towards engaging in their child's literacy. On the flip side, the more unfortunate families face more challenges in developing a proper reading atmosphere (Evans et al., 2010). It has consequences on how children approach reading because some continuity in literacy support is necessary to build the confidence to read fluently in a sustained manner.

Several research conducted in the past have investigated parents' perceptions of their children's reading fluency. How often reading at home is also related to the parent's perception of their children's reading abilities. Parents who view reading fluency as a significant component of literacy are likely to be more engaged in the literacy learning process with their children (Smith, 2020). The following qualitative studies show a dilemma for many parents regarding the best way to help their kids succeed in reading fluency (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002).

In the context of challenges, parents often feel that the lack of appropriate reading materials and the busyness of daily routines limit their ability to help their children achieve a good level of fluency. Other than that, studies also show that parents from low socio-economic

backgrounds face greater challenges in supporting their children's literacy development. This leads to less confidence in their role in improving their children's reading fluency (Neuman & Celano, 2006).

### 3.0 Methodology

This study uses the NGT method as the primary research method. This study involved seven face-to-face experts related to the fluency of oral reading. The experts gathered, and a brainstorming session using the NGT method was conducted to collect ideas and solutions based on their opinions. At the end of the session, the researchers performed specific calculations using the NGT method to obtain results that address the objectives of this study.

There are several debates regarding the most appropriate sample size for conducting studies using the NGT technique. Some scholars state that NGT can be conducted on a single cohort or a large group (Dobbie et al., 2004; Lomax & McLeman, 1984). Nevertheless, it can be divided into smaller groups so that effective communication can be achieved depending on the needs of the study. According to Clayton (1997), an expert sample of between 5 and 10 people is suggested. As a result of the above reference, the researcher has selected seven experts to participate in the NGT process in this study. Given the current situation that limits meetings, this number is considered appropriate for this study.

NGT is a systematic approach that identifies the shared opinions of a group on a certain topic. The following social planning scenarios were outlined by Harvey and Holmes (2012): proposal evaluation, transdisciplinary specialist use, citizen participation, and exploratory research. It was first regarded as a "participation technique for social planning situations." Since then, the technique has been applied in various group settings, such as empirical social science studies. Furthermore, it has been used to some extent in education research (Kennedy & Clinton, 2009; Lomax & McLeman, 1984; MacPhail, 2001; O'Neil & Jackson, 1983). Nonetheless, when it comes to social science research, it appears to be used more often.

There are four primary steps in the highly structured NGT process: (1) Coming up with concepts on one's own in answer to a stimulus. (2) These ideas are shared (and listed) round-robin without conversation. (3) Clearly state each idea and put related ideas together. (4) People cast votes to decide which concepts are prioritized. Note that NGT sessions typically take 1 1/2 to 2 hours and include five to ten participants (Harvey & Holmes, 2012; O'Neil & Jackson, 1983; Roberts, 2019). Kennedy and Clinton (2009) state that the researcher's role in NGT is to administer and assist, minimizing the impact on the data. Alternatively, Lomax and McLeman (1984) refer to the "omniscience of the researcher" (184) in many research procedures where the researcher's beliefs are enforced through question framing and answer coding.

#### 3.1 Sampling

A group of seven skilled persons with a focus on parents with young children were included in the study. This amount is sufficient to guarantee that the sample used is specialized and does not require a significant amount. A small or large cohort can apply the NGT (Lomax & McLeman, 1984; Mustapha et al., 2022; Wiggins et al., 2020). Alternatively, depending on the specific needs of the research, it can be separated into smaller clusters to improve effective communication. According to Horton (1980), the ideal sample size is seven to ten people. However, Harvey and Holmes (2012) contended that the NGT procedure can be implemented with a sample size of 6 to 12.

### 4.0 Research Findings

The study findings indicate that the frequency of reading activities at home received 100% approval, showing that parents frequently read with their children. Reading accuracy also received high approval, at 100%, but 80.95% of parents reported that their children needed help to read new or difficult words. In reading speed, 100% of parents agree that the children read at an appropriate speed, but 76.19% believe that some read too slowly. Correspondingly, intonation and comprehension reached a 100% consensus for understanding, although 85.71% agreed that intonation could be improved. Parental support shows a high level of commitment, with 100% of parents stating that they provide sufficient time and reading materials, as well as frequently discussing with teachers. Finally, the school's reading program evaluation shows that 100% of parents agree that this program helps improve reading fluency. In comparison, 95.24% acknowledge the role of teachers in enhancing their children's reading skills.

Table 1: Factors influencing children's oral reading fluency from parents' perspectives

Items/Elements	Voter1	Voter2	Voter3	Voter4	Voter5	Voter6	Voter7	Total item score	Percentage	Rank Priority	Voter Consensus
1. Frequency of Reading Activities at Home	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
I often read books with my child at home.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
My family members and I often guide my child during reading activities	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	19	90.48	3	Suitable
I often read aloud to my child.	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	19	90.48	3	Suitable
2. Reading Accuracy	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
My child often reads words correctly.	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	19	90.48	3	Suitable
My child often needs my assistance when reading new or difficult words	1	3	3	3	1	3	3	17	80.95	5	Suitable

3. Reading Rate	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
My child reads at a speed appropriate to their age.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
My child often reads at a very slow pace.	3	2	1	3	1	3	3	16	76.19	6	Suitable
4. Intonation and Comprehension	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
My child uses appropriate intonation when reading aloud.	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	18	85.71	4	Suitable
My child can read fluently without stopping or repeating words.	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	19	90.48	3	Suitable
My child is able to understand and retell what they have read.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
5. Parental Support	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
I allocate enough time to assist my child with reading at home	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	19	90.48	3	Suitable
I often discuss my child's reading progress with their teacher.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
I often discuss my child's reading progress with their teacher.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
6. School Reading Program	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
I believe the school's reading program is sufficient to support my child's oral reading fluency.	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	20	95.24	2	Suitable
Teachers at my child's school play an important role in improving my child's reading fluency.	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	20	95.24	2	Suitable

## 5.0 Discussion

As illustrated in Table 1, six factors influencing ORF were evaluated by seven voters who provided ratings on the effectiveness of each approach.

1. Reading Activities at Home. The frequency of reading activities at home received full support from parents with 100% agreement. This demonstrates that parents consistently engage in reading activities with their children, directly enhancing their children's reading skills. This activity also demonstrates the family's high awareness of the importance of reading.
2. Reading Accuracy. Reading Accuracy shows that children read accurately, with 90.48% agreement that they often read words correctly. However, 80.95% of parents reported that their child needs help reading new words, indicating room for improvement in recognizing more challenging words. Automaticity in word recognition is crucial for reducing cognitive load and improving fluency. Targeted interventions, such as phonics and repeated reading exercises, can address these challenges effectively.
3. Reading Rate. Reading rate or reading speed received 100% agreement that children read at an appropriate speed. Nevertheless, 76.19% believe that some read too slowly. This presents that some children need to improve their reading speed. Reading rate directly impacts comprehension, requiring structured interventions like guided oral reading and timed practices to enhance pace and efficiency, ensuring age-appropriate benchmarks are met.
4. Intonation and Comprehension. Intonation and Comprehension show 100% agreement that the children understand and can retell the reading material. Nonetheless, 85.71% of parents agree that intonation needs to be improved, emphasizing the importance of fluency. Meanwhile, comprehension was well-rated, and challenges in expressive reading require attention. Read-aloud sessions and modeling expressive reading can enhance prosody and comprehension integration.
5. Parental Support. The findings highlight the critical role of parental support in fostering children's reading fluency, with 100% consensus on its overall importance. Parents play a critical role in fostering literacy by providing time, materials, and guidance. This aligns with Vygotsky's theory of guided support for accelerated learning. Schools should engage parents through workshops and resources to strengthen their contributions to literacy development.
6. School Reading Program. Reading Program in Schools received 100% approval, with parents confident that the program is sufficient in helping their children's reading fluency, and 95.24% agree that teachers play an important role in this aspect.

## 6.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in reading activities at home and support for reading programs at school. The high frequency of reading at home and the parent's commitment to providing time and reading materials demonstrate their awareness of the importance of early childhood literacy. Although the accuracy and speed of reading were rated well, some children need help with new words and reading speed. The reading program at school is also rated positively, with parents recognizing teachers' important role in helping develop their children's reading fluency. This collaboration is important for the success of children's literacy.

These findings will be more significant and put into practice by schools and teachers who can work on specific problems, like the speed of reading and recognition of words. Still, these interventions need to be planned and formalized. Schools should promote home-school collaboration by holding regular workshops for parents and conducting literacy development programs to help parents with useful strategies to help their children. Moreover, improving school reading programs in ways that meet the needs of each child and using

technology to individualize their learning can also produce better results. This study showed that collaboration between teachers and parents is needed to bring better achievement of students' reading fluency. Therefore, future research should be done to improve the collaboration between teachers and parents in order to help students recognize new words and practicing their intonation. If these recommendations are implemented, stakeholders can guarantee that children become fluent and well-equipped with one of the most productive lifelong literacy skills.

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## Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

Therefore, this paper seems highly relevant in providing knowledge, theory, and practice within the framework of SDG 4, which is to ensure quality education that is inclusive and equitable in nature. The initial research context, which uses a modified version of the NGT to collect parental perspectives, draws attention to important variables in the literacy construction process, such as the importance of reading accuracy or expressiveness or reading (speed) and the crucial role that parents play in the development of reading ability from an early age. At a theoretical level, the study contributes to the literature on participatory models of educational research, bolstering family-school partnerships and building on models informed by participatory approaches in view of collaborative strategies that can encourage activities such as reading together more frequently.

Practically, it offers actionable solutions, including guided reading and intonation improvement, fostering effective home-school collaboration to strengthen literacy foundations. This holistic approach ensures sustainable literacy development, preparing children for academic success and lifelong learning while aligning with SDG 4's goals.

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