

Abstract

This study was conducted during the outbreak of the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in Israel. We focused on the Arab society in Israel, where the children at the age of kindergarten are at risk for literacy acquisition in the future. We assumed that this period had influence on home literacy, including the literacy activity duration of young children. We examined the contribution of the socio-economic status (SES) of the child's family, the age group of the child, and the traditional (with hard copy materials) and digital literacy activity duration (individual or with the parent) to the level of early literacy as the parent evaluated it. One hundred and thirty-four parents of kindergarten children participated in the research (divided equally between mothers and fathers) of the Arab Muslim society, 78 parents with academic education and 56 parents with high school education or lower. Half of the children went to pre-kindergarten (age 4-5) and half of the children went to kindergarten (age 5-6). They were divided equally by their gender. The parents filled in a digital questionnaire between February and March 2021 during the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in Israel. The questionnaire collected information on the demographic data of the family, description of the home literacy, the literacy duration of the child at home before and during the Covid-19 pandemic (traditional and digital, individual and shared) and the level of early literacy of the child as evaluated by their parents. We hypothesized: (a) the level of home literacy will be related to the SES level, (b) the level of literacy of pre-school kindergarten children will be evaluated by the parents as higher than the pre-kindergarten children. (c) the level of early literacy of the medium SES will be evaluated as higher than that of the lower SES children. (d) the traditional activity duration before the Covid-19 pandemic and at the period of the Covid-19 pandemic will be longer in the medium SES and the digital activity duration will be the same in both, (e) the traditional activity duration of the period before Covid-19 pandemic and at the pandemic will be higher with the pre-school kindergarten children than the pre-kindergarten children. However, the digital

activity duration will be higher similarly during the crisis with both age groups. (f) the SES of the child's family, the level of home literacy, the age group of the child and the traditional and digital activity duration will contribute to the evaluation of the parent of the level of early literacy of his or her child by this order. As we have hypothesized the home literacy level and the evaluation of the parents of the child's level of early literacy were higher in the medium SES in comparison to the low SES. The literacy level of the pre-school kindergarten children was evaluated as higher than the pre-kindergarten children. The traditional literacy activity duration of the children of the medium SES in comparison with the low SES was longer before the Covid-19 pandemic and during the pandemic. The individual digital literacy activity duration was longer significantly of the medium SES during the pandemic. There were no differences found in the duration in both SES before and after the Covid-19 pandemic regarding the shared digital activity. There were no significant differences in the digital and traditional activity duration before the Covid-19 pandemic and at the pandemic in the various age groups. The home literacy level, the age group of the child, the independent traditional activity duration before the Covid-19 pandemic and the shared traditional activity duration at the Covid-19 pandemic contributed to a higher evaluation of the parents of the early literacy level of the child. Regression analysis shows that the home literacy level that is expressed by the frequency of reading books out loud to the children, had the highest contribution to the difference of the evaluation of the parents of the early literacy level of their child. In the discussion we will explain these findings, present the limitations of the study, and suggest educational implications and future research.