

**PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES OF
CHILDREN'S BOOKS AMONG PARENTS IN THE GA
NORTH MUNICIPALITY**

**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil IN HOME**

SCIENCE DEGREE

BY

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DECEMBER, 2021

DECLARATION

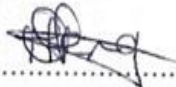
I, Diane Muriel Fleischer- Djoletto hereby declare that except the references which have been duly cited, the work in this dissertation, “**PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES FOR CHILDREN’S PICTURE BOOKS AMONG PARENTS IN THE GA NORTH MUNICIPALITY**” was done entirely by me in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, College of Basic and Applied Sciences, University of Ghana, Legon. This work has never been presented either in whole or in part for any other degree in this University or elsewhere.



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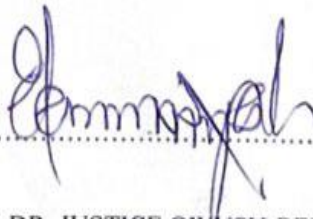
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ABSTRACT

Children's books contribute immensely to their cognitive, social and emotional development. Some considerations have been adopted to guide adults in selecting appropriate books for children however, few studies have been done to understand parents' perceptions and preferences in the selection of books for their children within the Ghanaian context. The study sought to explore parents' considerations in selecting children's books and the reasons for those considerations. This study employed a mixed method approach. Parents of children below 8 years were first interviewed on their perceptions of the books available on the market and their preferences for children's books. Data were transcribed and analysed using NVIVO 12 (to generate themes). Findings from the interviews were used to modify an adapted scale to create a contextually appropriate questionnaire. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to a larger number of parents with similar characteristics. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Version 26). The study revealed that more than half (12) of the parents bought books from various bookshops. More parents (7) stated that they came across more foreign books, even though a few (3) mentioned that they saw a few local books. The study also showed that parents were displeased with the type of books available and would have wanted more local books in the market. Parents stated that they prioritized the quality of the book. Various factors including children's age, content and illustrations of books were mentioned as factors they would consider when selecting books. Of all the factors, the illustrations and aesthetics as well as the content of books were the main factors considered. Correlation analysis showed a strong relationship ($r= 0.612$, $p>0.01$) between recommendations parents receive and their discretion. The findings of the study when documented would serve as a guide for parents in the selection of books for their children.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to God and my loving and ever-supportive family.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would, first of all, thank God Almighty for the strength and wisdom to carry out this project. Without Him, I would not have successfully completed this project. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Nana Yaa Nyarko and Dr. Justice Owusu- Bempah for their support, guidance and encouragement throughout this project. I would also like to thank my family for their support and encouragement. They have been with me and will always be with me. I also appreciate all respondents for their participation, response, and input in this work.

I appreciate you all.



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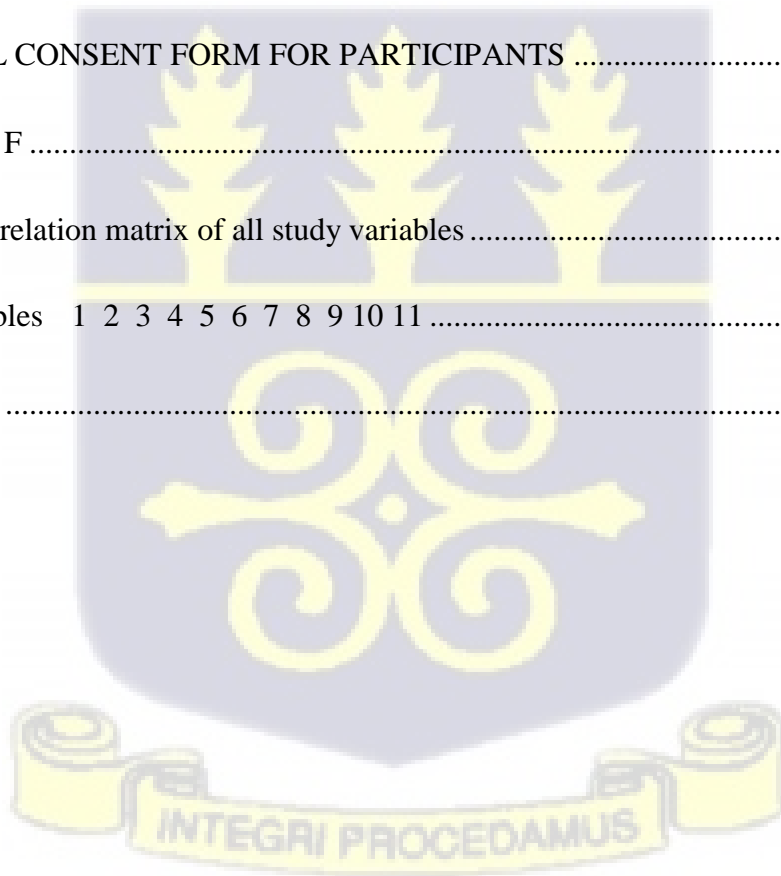
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBAS	College of Basic and Applied Sciences
GNMA	Ga North Municipal Assembly
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UAE	United Arab Emirates
WHO	World Health Organisation



CHAPTER ONE

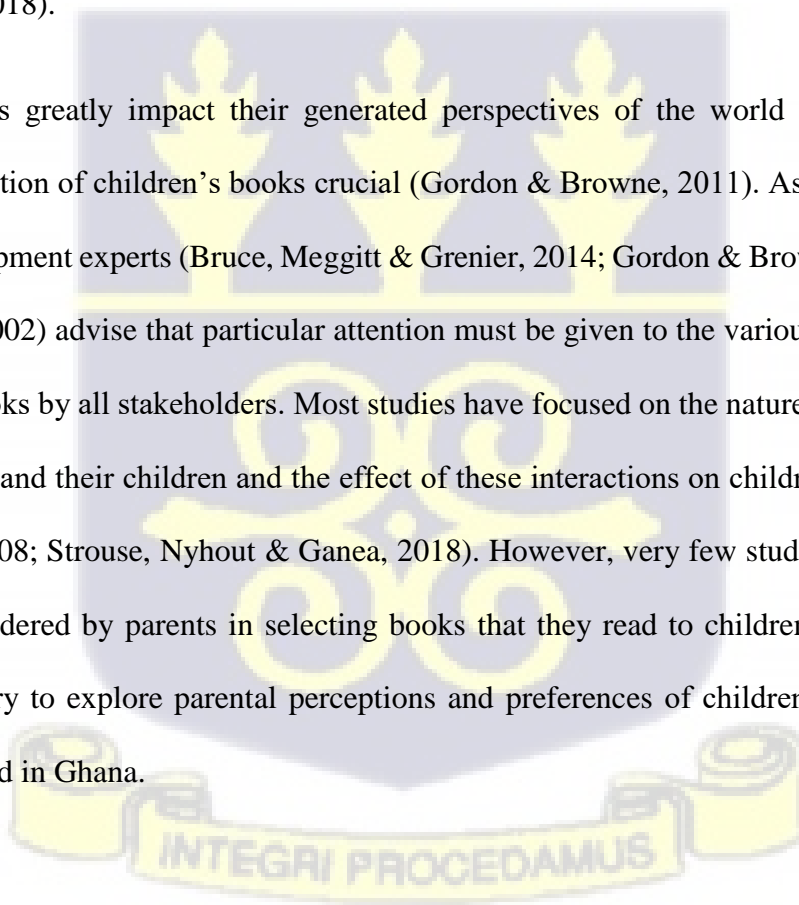
INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Children's books are books that have unique combinations of written texts and pictures (Driggs Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007; Ganea, Pickard & DeLoache, 2008; Mantei & Kervin, 2014). Children's books are used to introduce concepts, societal values and morals to children. Children's books and their impact on the overall development of the child have been of great concern to researchers, parents and other interested stakeholders over the years. Research has it that children's books play key developmental roles in their cognition, and socio-emotional development (Adjei, 2014; Koss, 2015; McIver, 2018). With regards to cognitive development, Gordon and Browne (2011) explained that exposure to children's books provides opportunities for them to develop divergent thinking as well as skills and attitudes that culminate in conventional forms of reading and writing. Repeated storybook reading with children encourages important emergent literacy skills such as vocabulary growth and letter recognition (Sigelman & Rider, 2006). This helps to develop the connection between written words and spoken words, hence influencing their ability to pronounce, spell and read (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Sigelman & Rider, 2006; Tudisco, 2004). Such relationships and associations can help children to develop critical thinking and later success. Children's books expose them to human conditions which help in their emotional development and foster a positive interpersonal attitude (Kucirkova, 2019; Stan, 2015). Thus, children's books encourage empathy (McIver, 2018) and emotional intelligence as they develop the ability to identify and understand their feelings about themselves and others (Feeney & Moravcik, 2005; Stan, 2015). Nikolajeva (2013) explained that pictures in children's books showed various emotions such as joy, anger and fear, and the recognition of these emotions fostered the

development of empathy. Children's books further help to develop socially acceptable behaviours apart from developing cues on how to understand other individuals' perspectives and perceptions (social sensitivity skills). For instance, through children's books, societal norms, values, and expectations (Koss, 2015; Mann-Boykin, 2016; McIver, 2018; Munthree, 2013; Yitah & Komasi, 2009) are learnt. Mann-Boykin (2016) and McIver (2018) added that children through books are introduced to other cultures, they, therefore, pick up the ability to respect and appreciate these other cultures (cultural sensitivity) as they grow. Mann-Boykin, (2016) further added that as children learn about their own culture and become aware of the existence of others, they are introduced to the concept of self-awareness and identity which invariably enables them to become aware of who they are and who others are (Chaudhri & Teale, 2013; Colby & Lyon, 2004; Koss, 2015; McIver, 2018).

Children's books greatly impact their generated perspectives of the world (Munthree, 2013) making the selection of children's books crucial (Gordon & Browne, 2011). As such, researchers and child development experts (Bruce, Meggitt & Grenier, 2014; Gordon & Browne, 2011; Justice & Kaderavek, 2002) advise that particular attention must be given to the various forms and types of children's books by all stakeholders. Most studies have focused on the nature of the interaction between parents and their children and the effect of these interactions on children's development (Ganea et al., 2008; Strouse, Nyhout & Ganea, 2018). However, very few studies have looked at the factors considered by parents in selecting books that they read to children. It had therefore become necessary to explore parental perceptions and preferences of children's books in these modern times and in Ghana.



1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Children's books play an important role in their cognitive, social and emotional development. The type of books children are exposed to is believed to affect their perceptions and views of themselves, others and their overall world. This makes the selection of books for children crucial. There was the possibility that parents considered certain factors or had specific objectives when selecting books for their children. Although fewer studies had investigated these factors in other countries, this area has been minimally explored in Ghana. Hence, it was important to assess these factors and the preferences (selection) of Ghanaian parents for their children or wards. This study explored perceptions and preferences of children's books among parents in the Ga North Municipality in Accra, Ghana.

1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to explore perceptions and preferences of children's books among parents in the Ga North Municipality of the Greater Accra Region in Ghana.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the study were to;

1. Explore the children's books available to children.
2. Explore parents' perceptions of children's books
3. Assess parents' preferences for children's books

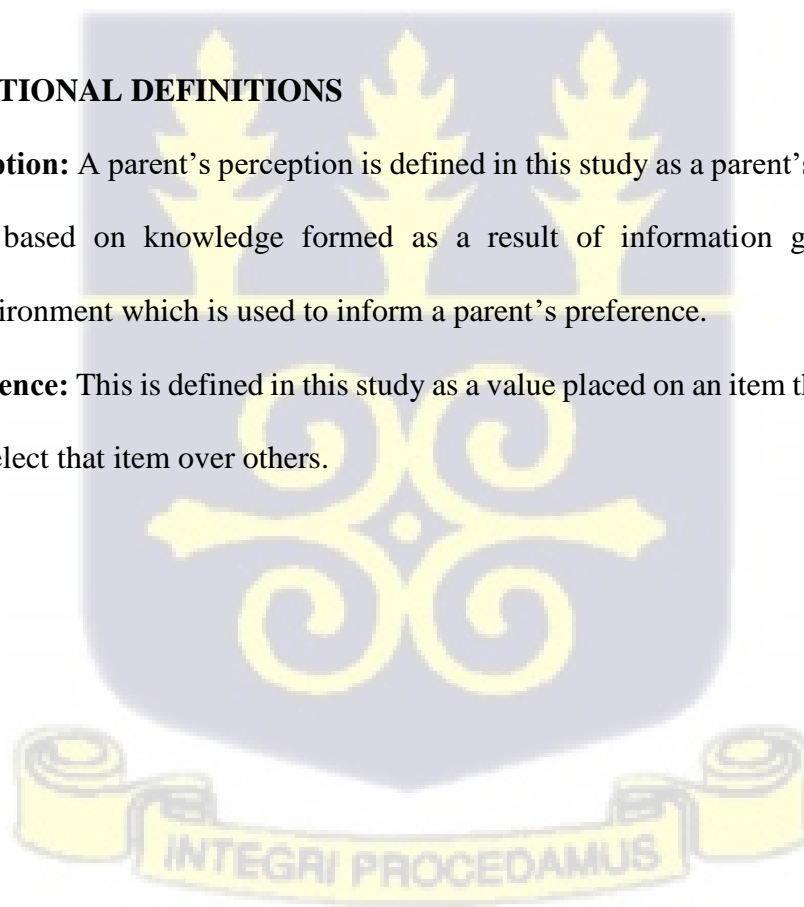
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1. Research on parents' perceptions and preferences of children in Africa and Ghana is little. Hence, this study adds to the corpus of literature in the area.
2. The study brought to light the type of books to which children are exposed and the reasons for parents' choices. Such knowledge, when published, could be useful for schools and other stakeholders interested in stocking their libraries and bookshops with children's books.
3. The findings of the study when published would serve as a guide for parents to purchase children's books

1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Parents' Perception: A parent's perception is defined in this study as a parent's understanding of a phenomenon based on knowledge formed as a result of information gathered from the surrounding environment which is used to inform a parent's preference.

Parents' Preference: This is defined in this study as a value placed on an item that makes a parent more likely to select that item over others.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents reviewed literature on children's books and their benefits to children's development, perceptions and preferences of children's books as well as the need for proper guidance and selection to ensure the expected development in these children. The chapter further discusses some selected theories to back preferences in book selection.

2.1 Children's Books

Early literacy begins to develop in a child's life with listening, recognition and then a gradual use of sounds which develop into words (Birckmayer, Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2008). Further, children can comprehend pictures before texts (words). Hence, children's first experience with reading is usually with picture books (Agyün & Abaci, 2014; Ganea, Pickard & DeLoache, 2008; Gonen, Durmusoglu & Severcan, 2009). These are books that are presented with more pictures and little or no words (Ganea, Pickard & DeLoache, 2008). Driggs, Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) also define picture books as books with representations of unique art that engage children in not only learning but pleasure. Koss (2015) described children's books as "written artefacts" which carry messages that introduce and teach children societal values. These books are used to tell stories, give information and/ or develop concepts (Gonen, Durmusoglu & Severcan, 2009; Gonen & Guler, 2011). As noted by Birckmayer, Kennedy and Stonehouse (2008), children's books have been a way to share information and ideas for generations. The definitions given by researchers suggest that children's books make use of written texts and drawings because a combination of texts and pictures is more beneficial than using only written texts or drawings (Weeks, 2013).

Drawing from this analogy, children's books can be said to have two overlapping elements. These include *text (content)*, and *pictures (illustrations and aesthetics)* (Anderson et al., 2001; Birckmayer, Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2008). The following sections describe these elements.

2.1.1 Illustrations and Aesthetics

Pictures form an imperative aspect of children's books. Illustrations have been described as the most important element of children's stories (Agyün & Abaci, 2014; Gonen & Guler, 2011). Tursunmurotovich (2020) argued that illustrations are pictures that improve the decorative structure of a children's book. This is because the pictures expand, interpret and decorate written text (Fang, 1996). In addition, illustrations improve the story while clarifying and defining concepts in the book (Batchelor, 2017). Though some studies have argued that illustrations can distract children from the text, many studies have debunked this argument by showing that illustrations rather lure children to read and interact with the text (Fang, 1996).

Children need books with pictures that remind them of their prior experiences (Bruce, Meggitt & Grenier (2010, p. 198). The pictures in the children's books present the whole environment to the child in a realistic and original manner that deepens children's understanding and perspective of the world (Ozsenser & Canbazoglu, 2018). This helps to effectively bond children with life as they associate elements of the children's books with their life experiences (Fang, 1996). Fang (1996) and Nikolajeva (2013) claimed that children's books have pictures that set the mood of the books and evoke emotions. They explain that such books offer images of characters that help a child understand and relate to people's emotions in real life (Nikolajeva, 2013). It is therefore important that the illustrations of a book support the story of a book to ease the understanding of children (Gonen, Durmusoglu & Severcan, 2009).

Again, the pictures in children's books create a deeper meaning when used together with the texts in the books (Fang, 1996; Ozsezer & Canbazoglu, 2018). This helps to trigger their imagination and develop an appreciation for aesthetics (Agyün & Abaci, 2014). Agyün and Abaci (2014) stated that the aesthetics, layout and colour of children's books arouse curiosity and interest in these books. Therefore, the appearance and style of a children's book attract children. Discussing their findings, Treiman, Rosales and Kessler (2016) explain that books usually have visually salient print on the cover because it is a deliberate act to draw the attention of children.

The aesthetics of a book also comprise the materials used for the book. The materials used to produce books for children are important to ensure the safety of children and facilitate easy use of books (Birckmayer, Kennedy and Stonehouse (2008). One material normally used for children's books is cardboard (board books). These are defined as books with hard covers that contain big bright pictures on each page (Brown, Gillon & Westerveld, 2017). Birckmayer, Kennedy and Stonehouse (2008) expounded that such books are made with heavy cardboards because this material is appropriate for toddlers who may want to flip through the books by themselves without parents worrying about children tearing or damaging the book. It may therefore explain why this material is probably the most commonly used in the production of children's books.

2.1.2 Content

The content of a children's book is vital to a child's development. The content is made up of texts and pictures that form the story told by the book. Words in children's books are primary tools that can be used to introduce various concepts to children (Cer, 2016). Experts say children's books have plots that are understandable, flowing, easy to follow and have whole, and well-rounded characters (Aram & Aviram, 2009). They also use responses that enrich readers' language and

evoke emotional responses (Aram & Aviram, 2009). This is because children's books that touch on sensitive issues offer chances for caregivers and children to talk about feelings (Gordon & Browne, 2011). Cer (2016) concluded that children's books have designs as well as contextual and didactic attributes that correspond with children's nature, interests and needs.

The content of a children's book can be either fictional or non-fictional (factual). Fictional books contain characters, settings, themes, goals and a plot or action (Price et al., 2009). Non-fictional books, on the other hand, usually aim to convey information about the natural and social world by describing, comparing and contrasting the social and natural world while providing problem-solutions and cause-effect text structures (Yopp & Yopp, 2009; Kotaman & Tekin, 2017).

Even though educators have concluded that a blend of these genres is important for cognitive and emotional development (Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish & Shapiro, 2007; Robertson & Reese, 2017), it has been documented that fictional books are usually preferred for younger children (Harris, 2008; Kotaman & Tekin, 2017; Korkmaz, 2021).

All these elements come together to form a book that will help meet every child's developmental needs. The benefits that children's books contribute are explained in the following sections.

2.2 Role of Children's Books in Children's Development

Several researchers have hammered on the benefits of children's books on children's development. For instance, Munthree (2013) stated that the information in children's books influences their generated perspectives of the world. The stories in children's books, according to Saracho and Spodek (2010), are couched such that as the children are introduced to them, they become immersed in reading at such a young age, which helps in nurturing their ability to understand, organize and identify concepts, thereby preparing them for future development. Ahmetoglu and

Ceylan (2011) added that an early introduction of books to children is crucial in cultivating a love for books among children while nurturing them to be good readers in future. Positive attitudes and the power of love are added advantages, in the view of Korkmaz (2021) that children acquire as they read more children's books. This explains how such illustrated books are in bonding children to life experiences (Agyün & Abaci, 2014). Ozsezer and Canbazoglu (2018), and Korkmaz (2021) indicated that children's books are one of the basic tools that contribute to children's overall development and learning. In subsequent sections, this review will focus on and discuss the benefits of children's picture books on the development of children under three domains namely; cognitive, social and emotional.

2.2.1 Children's Books and Cognitive Development

Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between reading (by or to children) and their cognitive development (Duursma, 2014). Gordon and Browne (2011) argued that the general role books play with children is to help them use their senses to acquire knowledge and thought as they experience the texts and pictures. Gordon and Browne (2011) indicated that an additional benefit children acquire from picture books is that it broadens their interests and concepts making them more literate. Thus, their skills, knowledge, and attitudes are developed for reading and writing. Children can develop critical thinking (Ozsezer & Canbazoglu, 2018; Stan, 2015) as they experience pictures and text in books because they can create their interpretations of what they see and read. Children's books with text have been argued to have a positive effect on the language development of children (Birckmayer, Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2008; Boutte, Hopkins & Waklatsi 2008; Shapiro et al., 1997; Smith, 2001). This is because they can pick new vocabularies (Duursma, 2014; Saracho, 2017) from the books. Duursma (2014) explained that the language in

children's books is usually more complex than in spoken English. Hence, as the children encounter these books, they can commit new vocabularies to memory and use them whenever convenient. In the view of Blackwell and Munakata (2014), this part played by picture books in children is very important and must not be taken for granted, because; as children's cognition develops and they gain control over it, positive life outcomes develop in the near future as they grow. Additionally, as children gain control over their cognition, they can suppress unwanted memories and control impulses (Anderson & Green, 2001; Logan, Schachar, & Tannock, 1997). It is therefore imperative that parents' concentration (Bruce, Meggitt & Grenier, 2010) should and must be on promoting and encouraging young children to experience picture books. Additionally, children's books for children have been documented to have the ability to help in the development of the children's social perspectives. The next section discusses how picture books help in developing children's social development.

2.2.2 Children's Books and Social Development

Children's books have been noted as one of the main sources from which children imbibe expected social values and develop them further as they grow. For instance, Boudreaux (2006) stated that in the United States, books have been used as a medium of transmitting cultural values to the citizenry for over 2000 years. Researchers (e.g. Boutte, Hopkins & Waklatsi, 2008; Colby & Lyon, 2004; Metusela, 2014; Ozsezer & Canbazoglu, 2018) explained that books provide avenues for children to learn about their world and their own culture as well as the cultures of others. Children's books usually have characters (individuals or personified animals) that constantly interact with each other (Aram & Aviram, 2009). Belcher (2018) continued that, some of the books for children mostly show how humans and animals live together and outline expectations placed on individuals. Therefore, as they constantly and consistently see these and are socialised by parents, siblings and

school teachers, such virtues are imprinted in their minds as they grow (Belcher, 2018; McIver, 2018). By implication, reading such books, according to McIver (2018), encourages children to learn various social expectations such as acceptable social morals, norms and values, and what is good and evil, while fostering positive interpersonal attitudes (Stan, 2015) and providing models of positive ways to relate to others and solve problems (Feeney & Moravcik, 2005; Hoyne & Egan, 2019). Hence, Yitah and Komasi (2009), and Tepper and Cassidy (1999), cited in Munthre, (2013), stated that the African cultural heritage is kept alive using storytelling and picture books with text. Through this, the children get the opportunity to learn about their culture and develop a sense of self-awareness and identity (Koss, 2015; Chaudhri & Teale, 2013) which helps them to develop self-esteem and understanding of themselves, the world and others (Feeney & Moravcik, 2005; Hoyne & Egan, 2019).

While the children get the opportunity to identify themselves, they are also able to develop and understand the accepted and expected emotions. The next section discusses children's picture books and emotional development.

2.2.3 Children's Books and Emotional Development

Children's books evoke emotions and relationships, and aid in the fostering of empathy in children (Aram & Aviram, 2009; Kucirkova, 2019; Nikolajeva, 2013). Children's books are therefore known to be effective tools for eliciting emotions (like empathy) and social cognition in children (Miller, 2001) because they expose the children to human conditions and thus help in their emotional development (Stan, 2015). Nikolajeva (2013), postulated that children's books especially those with little or no words carry the primary task of emotional engagement because the stories are told mainly by pictures. Hence, as the characters in the books show emotions, the

children can read accurately. This is how empathy, tolerance for diversity, imagination and emotional intelligence (Stan, 2015) starts developing. It is therefore not out of place to attribute the emotional and other related virtues such as compassion, kindness, generosity, cooperation and interdependence (Aram & Aviram, 2009; Feeney & Moravcik, 2005) to them. Craig (2008) argued that as children encounter characters in picture books, they also learn to portray the emotional expressions and experiences that are prevalent and acceptable within a given culture which are pre-requisites to the development of their socio-emotional intelligence (Nikolajeva, 2013). This is because children mainly rely on another person's emotional reaction to inform their judgement in some uncertain situations (Gordon & Browne, 2011).

It must be noted that up to the time when children develop numeracy and literacy skills themselves, it takes parents, teachers and/or older siblings to help them pick up all the benefits discussed above. This means that adults to follow some principles to select appropriate books that will help children reap all the benefits outlined. Some principles that will guide adults in their children's book selection as explained by exerts are discussed below.

2.3 SELECTION OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Book selection carries equal importance to reading to or with the children and must be given the needed consideration (Anderson et al., 2001). This is because the selection of appropriate books is important if a child's interest is to be maximized (Hsiao & Chang, 2016). There have been various studies to determine the types of books that are appropriate for children at the various development stages. For instance, Hsiao and Chang (2016) advised that, in selecting children's books, the primary factor to consider is the child's developmental needs. This should be carefully considered if parents and adults want to make a significant influence on cognitive, social and emotional

development (Dwyer & Neuman, 2008). In this regard, teachers of children, according to Gonen, Durmusoglu and Severcan, (2009), advised that parents and adults must consider the content and language used in a child's book to ensure that it is appropriate for the child's age and development. Guldenoglu (2020) added that teachers also suggested the appropriateness of images used in children's picture books. They explain that the images ought to be original and support visualization of the content, apart from attracting the interest of the children. Guldenoglu (2020) further cautioned that the age of the child in selecting a book is critical and must be taken into consideration. For instance, Dwyer and Neuman (2008) explained that a 6-month-old child may need a book that will stimulate her senses. At that stage, the children explore more as they make more use of their sensorimotor skills (such as licking, shaking and feeling with their palms) to manipulate items in their environment. It will therefore be appropriate to give them books with thick cardboard to support their fine motor skills (finger dexterity).

Though the responsibility of selecting an appropriate book seems to be placed on parents, Hsiao and Chang (2016) were of the view that with the availability of a wide range and variety of published children's books in the market, it can be overwhelming for adults who are seeking to select appropriate books for their children. This is because some parents and adults may not know and understand the developmental domains of a child, let alone the reading requirements associated with each developmental stage (Anderson et al., 2001). Anderson et al. (2001) suggested that teachers who have been trained to teach children, aid parents' selection of children's books. It is, however, important to note that any book selection is subject to the books *available* to these stakeholders (teachers, parents and guardians). The availability of books is discussed below.

2.3.1 Availability of Children's Books

Availability of books is defined broadly as the books that are readily present in the environment of stakeholders (Ugah, 2008). Generally, books have been made available in libraries, bookstores, malls and supermarkets (Suchodoletz, 2016). However, bookshops are probably the most visible places for the display of children's books (Steiner, 2017). With the few libraries that may have children's books, Knowles (2008) explained that many African libraries are filled with books donated by developed countries. Hence, most books found in libraries are of foreign origin (Knowles, 2008). Edwards and Ngwaru (2012) argued that books in the African language were not readily available for children ages between 0 and 11. Textbooks, however, were found to be more readily available (Edwards and Ngwaru, 2012). The limited range of books available in Africa saddled parents with selecting appropriate books for their children. As Anderson et al. (2001) explained, some parents were ignorant of the kinds of books appropriate at each stage of children's development.

Few studies have assessed parents' perceptions and preferences of books. More recently for instance, Korkmaz (2021), found that parents preferred stories, fairy tales, novels, and historical books to the other types/ genres. Aram and Avriam (2009) compared mothers' capabilities in choosing books to that of experts and found that both mothers and experts used similar criteria. Their study limited to a small sample size of 40 mothers, discussed preferences but didn't investigate parents' perceptions. Assessing the processes that parents go through in choosing or selecting a book is relevant to understanding parents' perceptions and preferences. As a result, there is the need to delve into the phenomena - *perceptions* and *preferences*, and especially how they influence parents in book selection. Parents' perceptions and preferences are explained in the sections below.

2.4 DEFINING PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Perceptions and preferences have been used in various studies to denote various factors. Some studies define perceptions as opinions (Johnson, 2007) and preferences as choices (Warren, Mcraw & Boven, 2010). Perceptions and preferences as used in this study are explained in Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 below.

2.4.1 Perception

Perception has been defined as how an individual “thinks and feels about a product” (The Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). This definition signifies any response to a stimulus provided by the product (in this case, a book) that an individual interacts with. Psychologists have defined perception as an understanding of information gathered using the senses of an individual (smell, sight, taste and hearing). It has been explained that the brain gathers and assembles various sensations to create a meaningful image which is referred to as a perception. Plotnik and Kouyoumdijan (2013) explained that every individual may have a different set of experiences which will influence a person's perception. This causes every individual to have a personal interpretation of the world.

Barroso (2013) stated that perception is formed when information gathered from the surrounding environment of an individual is used to construct knowledge about certain phenomena. Such information may be from the individual's personal experiences as well as passed-on beliefs and values. It is with a similar ideology that Merriam Webster dictionary (2021) defined perception as the knowledge that is gained from a process of coming to know or understand a phenomenon. With this understanding, Barroso (2013) expressed that perception is the foundation of knowledge. McDonald (2011) argued that perception does not necessarily mean knowledge but rather the

understanding that the individual assigns to the situation. Because they are meanings to sensations, they may not be the real copies of the real world. That is why the same stimuli may be interpreted differently among different people. For instance, the same music or storybook may bring out different reactions to different things. Some people may like the music or book while others dislike them. It is explained that perceptions are sifted through an individual's expectations, needs, values and beliefs which are all gained through experiences (Plotnik and Kouyoumdijan, 2013). These experiences could be cultural, emotional or personal. Therefore, these experiences skew the stimuli coming from the environment such that the individual can determine distinctive stimuli and interpret them in a unique way (Shaffer and Kipp, 2010).

Besides a person's experiences, perception may be influenced by the context and cognitive abilities of the individual. Since contexts, experiences and abilities differ, every individual may have a unique perception. For instance, Barza and Suchodoletz (2017) described that the Arab culture adopted a predominantly oral tradition where norms and values were passed on by word of mouth. However, this may have changed when the primary medium of instruction was changed to English in many schools in addition to the introduction of western cultures. Hence, Barza and Suchodoletz (2017) assumed that parents' perceptions may be influenced by Western teachers as they know more about the literacy of the child. Similarly, several countries in Africa (including Ghana) have evolved from oral transmission of morals and values to the use of written literature. Amenumey and Greiman (2009) explained that storytelling has been an essential tradition in Africa as the elderly used stories, lullabies and riddles to instil morals and values in children. However, due to modernization and migration, these stories are told using written literature (Amenumey and Greiman, 2009; Udoh, 2021).

Various researchers have measured perceptions to various extents. Some use the term to imply individuals' reasoning behind their choices. For instance, Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish and Shapiro (2007) measured perceptions by assessing children's reasons for their preferences for books. Other researchers use perception to assess individuals' views and opinions about a phenomenon. For instance, Omeluzor, Akibu and Akinwoye (2016) measured the perception of students by assessing their views and opinions on electronic information resources. Yenaisir, Karabacak and Gumuş (2021), in their study, explored parents' perceptions of characteristics of their children's books. Perceptions were measured by assessing parents' awareness of children's books to establish a relationship between their educational level and the choice of books.

This study sought to explore parents' views of children's books that informed their choices. Hence the following definition of perception was adopted:

A parent's perception is that parent's understanding of a phenomenon based on knowledge formed as a result of information gathered from the surrounding environment which is used to inform a parent's preference.

2.4.2 Preferences

Preference, from the perspective of psychologists, is used to signify a "latent tendency to consider something desirable" (Warren, McGraw & Boven, 2010). This implies that a preference is shown when something is perceived as more suitable. Hence, more value is placed on that item. It is on this basis that preference is sometimes used interchangeably with value. Warren, McGraw and Boven (2010) explained that preferring one item over the other means that more value is placed on the preferred item as compared to the latter. Economists liken preference with choice because once a product is preferred, it is more likely to be chosen (Warren, McGraw & Boven, 2010). It

seems to be with this same analogy that Anderson, Anderson, Shapiro and Lynch (2001) conducted their study. This is because they presented parents with books of various characteristics and asked them to choose the most suitable and least suitable books they would choose. These choices were then captured as their preferences. A similar study was done by Gaylord, O’Rear, Hornburg and McNeil (2020) who focused on the preferences for four categories of counting books for their children. Similar to the study by Anderson et al. (2001), ten counting books under each book category were presented to parents for them to choose and provide reasons for their choice.

Udomkum, Ilukor, Mockshell, Mujawamaroya, Okafor, Bullock, Nabahungu and Vanlauwe (2018) stated that preferences are influenced by an individual’s quality expectations, experiences and information derived from the market. It was added that the context, culture and attributes of the product (Udomkum et al., 2018). In their study, Udomkum et al. (2018) assessed key influencing factors of consumers’ preference for meat products. The main aim was to examine the effect of two influencing factors on a consumer’s choice. Similarly, Wagner (2017) assessed factors that influence parents’ preferences for children’s books. Wolf (2021) on the other hand measured the preferences of millennial parents by exploring the elements of books that parents prioritize when choosing books for their children.

The study relied on the definition of preference which is “a value placed on an item that makes the individual more likely to select that item over others.”

Based on the definitions above, some studies that focused on parents’ perceptions and preferences were reviewed. They are discussed in the following section.



2.5 PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

It must be noted that regardless of the seeming difficulties associated with selecting appropriate books for children of specific ages, studies have found some strategies parents adopt to overcome such dynamics. For example, some studies (e.g. Anderson, et al., 2001; Wagner 2017; Deitcher, Aram & Adar, 2019) found that the main selection criteria employed by some parents are the reliance on their own preferences in terms of the type or kind of book(s) they want their child(ren) to read and the preferences parents feel their children have (Wagner, 2017). Delving further into parental preferences, Barza and Suchodoletz (2017) found that parents had a strong preference for books with illustrations that reflected their cultural values in addition to books that were deemed familiar, simple, colourful and realistic. Deitcher et al. (2019) explained that some parents associated colourful books with cheerfulness thus they selected or preferred such books for their children. Barza and von Suchodoletz (2016) found that parental interest, familiarity and the overall characteristics of the book were also some of the factors parents considered when selecting their children's books. Further, there were instances where some of the books selected were read to them when some of them were children themselves (Anderson, et al., 2001). In contrast, Korkmaz (2021) revealed that 42% of the participants studied were more particular about the content than most of the earlier factors mentioned in the literature. Korkmaz (2021) explained that the respondents said they would choose a book if it was educative and instructive.

The foregone discussions can be seen in the light of some theoretical perspectives. For instance, some parents relying on their own preferences in terms of their familiarity and their own intents of how they feel a particular book will meet a need they may have identified in their children can be likened to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio-ecological perspective which postulates that individuals often see their current world from the lens of their past experiences or how they interpret their

world today. A study by Wagner (2017) mentioned the child's preferences being taken into consideration when selecting books. Thus, the children are portrayed in their book selection as relatively passive members who just consume anything bought or passed to them by their parents. This instance can also be likened to Sheth's (1974) family buying decision theory

2.6 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This study employed a unique combination of the bio-ecological and family buying decisions theories. The study combined the autonomous buying decision aspect of the family decision theory and the first two systems of the bio-ecological model. These aspects are relevant and speak directly to the study.

2.6.1 The Bio-ecological Perspective

Bronfenbrenner (1979), through his bio-ecological theory, argued that humans keep developing as they interact with different environments, physical and social. As Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) put it, development is “the phenomenon of continuity and change in the bio-psychological characteristics of human beings, both as individuals and as groups” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; pg. 793). Thus, development involves the combination of changes in the biological and psychosocial makeup of the individual or the group. However, these changes do not happen in a vacuum – instead, as individuals interact with the environment (i.e. family, friends and other social settings), changes take place in their development. This is because, in the process of interactions, the individual influences and is influenced by the environment and this should, therefore, be understood in their future actions and inactions (Sigelman & Rider, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the various environments within which individuals interact, namely Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macro system and finally the Chronosystem. The

microsystem is the innermost system of the individual comprising the immediate environment within which an individual lives and functions (Sigelman & Rider, 2006; Santrock, 2016). In this environment is a “pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 24). It is within this immediate environment that an individual is socialised by his family and other relations. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris, (2006), it is in this environment that personalities, preferences, desires and values are formed.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the mesosystem involves interactions between two or more systems (such as school, work, family and social life). Thus, the individual now operates within other social settings in addition to his or her microsystem. Within this conceptualization, the individual is not seen as a passive member but one whose actions can influence and is influenced by others and processes within the system. To succeed, the individual has to learn new things, to be able to operate and cooperate with the requirements outlined in the system. These influence the actions and inactions of the individual both now and in the future.

The next system is the exosystem which encompasses several linkages between the social systems and the microsystems (Rus et al., 2010). This system includes those which are not directly experienced by individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25; Rus et al., 2010; Sigelman & Rider, 2006) but affects the individual directly. However, individuals are affected by events that occur in the surrounding system in which he or she directly participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pg. 25; Rus et al., 2010). Examples may include the social relationships of an individual’s family members which can affect a member’s behaviour in the home (Sigelman & Rider, 2006).

The macro system comprises the larger system that embeds and influences all the other systems (Rus et al., 2010; Sigelman & Rider, 2006). This system covers the larger social and cultural context in which the individual and family are found. This context has shared understandings,

beliefs and ways of life that become the norm of the society and influence every member directly. Finally, there is the chronosystem which captures the idea that the changes that occur in humans and their environment do not happen in an instant (Sigelman & Rider, 2006). Rather, it unfolds in specific patterns over a time frame (one's lifetime). Therefore, to understand a concept such as decision, preferences and choices an individual makes today, one needs to track and trace it back to the very beginning by understanding all the respective systems the individual had operated in the past till now. Thus, in the light of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, understanding the selection of children's books by parents today will involve an understanding of the kinds of books parents were introduced to when they themselves were younger, coupled with books they read when they started interacting with the other environmental systems as well as books found in their environment and those recommended by their significant others. The phenomenon will also involve an understanding of all the individuals and life experiences that the parents had when interacting with the systems and the books the systems presented to the parent as all these culminate into the final selection of particular books for their respective children.

Once a particular book meets the parental preferences, it is selected with little or no contribution from the child. Technically, the child becomes the consumer of his/her parents' preferences which have been built by the parents' interactions with several environmental systems over time. This leads to the introduction and discussion of the family buying theory which, asserts that family decisions are sometimes influenced by one individual for all the others and to a minimal extent made jointly. The family buying decision theory is discussed below.



2.6.2 Family Buying Decisions Theory

Sheth in 1974 propounded the family buying decision theory. Sheth (1974) was of the view that family decisions were made on two levels, either solely or jointly. However, regardless of the level a decision was made, several antecedents happen before any one of the levels takes place. Family buying decisions according to Sheth (1974) was largely dependent on the role orientation of members and especially the decision maker. If decision-making is assigned to specific individuals in the home, then there was a likelihood that joint decisions may be minimal if not nonexistent. Thus, in such households, there are clear allocations of household activities and hence greater autonomy is given to members with regards to making decisions with less emphasis on joint decision making. However, Sheth (1974) warned that in such families, there is some risk associated with the decision makers' confidence and experience in making decisions for the greater good of the family. Therefore, the theory explains that a family's likelihood of making an autonomous or joint decision is dependent on the level of riskiness of the decision. This is because a family member who is not very confident about making the right decision may rely on support from other family members, making the final decision more joint than autonomous. Sheth (1974) again mentioned that for a decision to be made joint or autonomous depends on the beneficiaries of the outcomes associated with the decision. If a decision is very important to multiple members of the family, there will be a greater likelihood that the decision will be made jointly. One other antecedent Sheth (1974) mentioned is time factor. Sheth (1974) indicated that when there is a minimum time for a family member to make a decision; there was a higher likelihood that the final decision made will be autonomous.

When it comes to book selection for children (which is the focus of this study), most of the decisions are autonomous in nature. In autonomous buying decisions, Sheth (1974) explained that

a member of the family who was more likely to rely on specific requests and preferences of other family members was the child. Thus, the parents made the choice for the children to consume. Such actions, according to Sheth (1974) come with some predispositions which he claims have three components referred to as; perceptual bias, buying motives (a person's needs, wants or desires in buying a product) and evaluative beliefs (a person's evaluation of alternatives). Sheth (1974) continued that the combination of these three factors forms a person's (in this study, the parents) susceptibility to buy a particular product (called the cognitive world). However, for an individual to be susceptible to make a particular choice or decision, there should be the availability of information, and/or some internal family influence, and some other factors all working to inform the decisions. Based on the above discussions, a conceptual framework was developed on which this study relied. This is discussed below.

2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study argued that children's books available to children, especially at home, are purely selected for them by parents with minimal or no contribution from the children when it comes to the kind or type of book. This, therefore, makes the children the consumers of their parents' preferences and choices. Drawing from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio-ecological model and Sheth's (1974) family decisions theory this study postulated that parents are the ultimate selectors of their children's picture books which makes them sole decision-makers in the selection of children's books. However, their decisions do not happen in a vacuum but several antecedents must or may have taken place before the choice is finally made. It is being deduced from the literature that before a particular book is selected by a parent, there is the interplay of the parent's educational level, expectations, values and roles, in addition to the information that the parent may be having

or receiving from external sources (such as mass media, teachers, other parents, friends and family), and the child's age, interest and choice or selections. Thus, knowledge gathered throughout a parent's development, together with recommendations from friends, other parents and teachers, and information from the media all come together to form a certain kind of base which this study referred to as "understanding", on which a particular book is chosen for the children. These have been depicted diagrammatically in Figure 2.1.



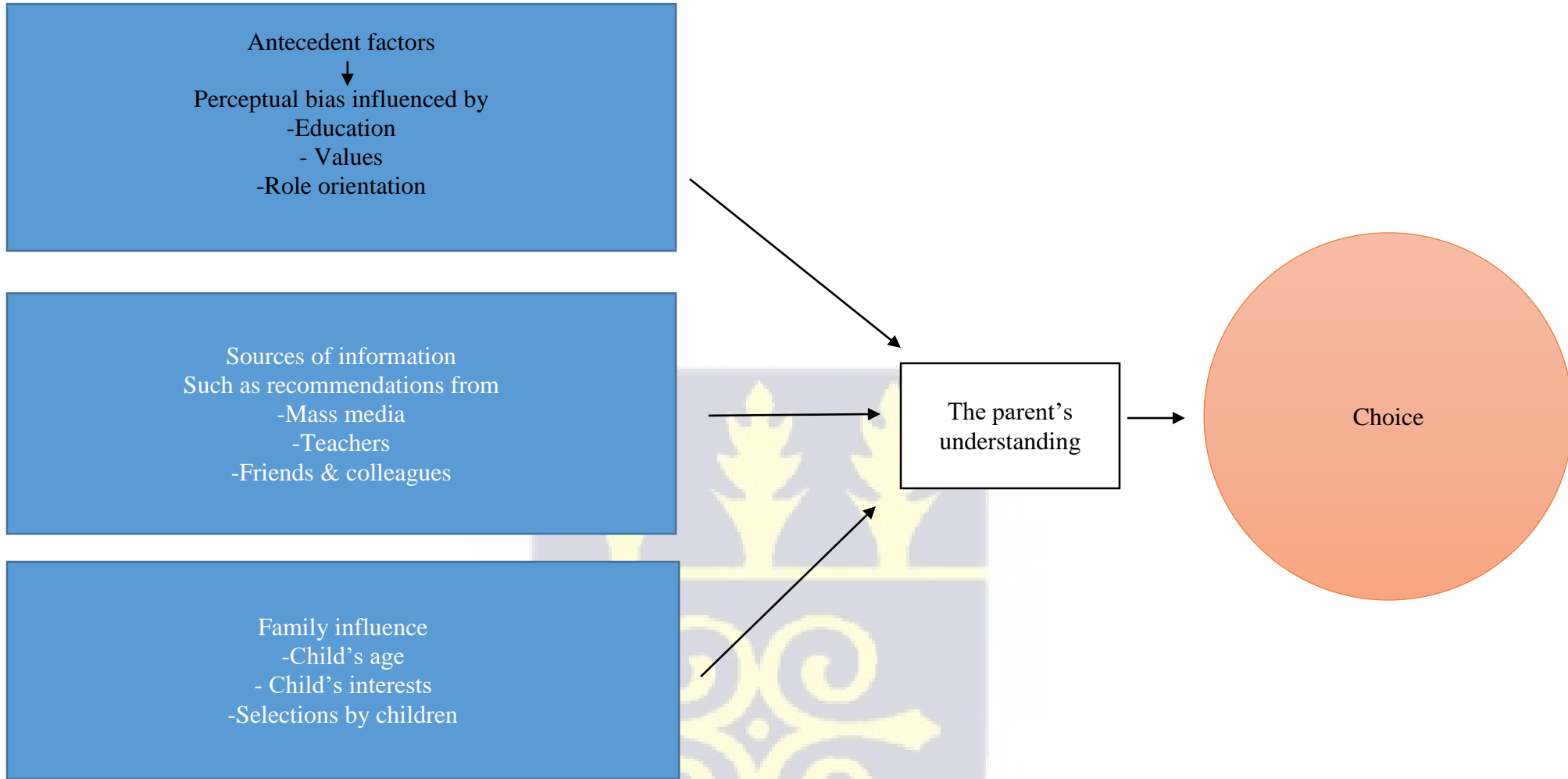


Figure 2.1: Proposed framework showing influencing factors of parents' choice of storybooks for their children

2.8 SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the role children's picture books play in the lives of children and the role parents play in carefully selecting these books for their children. It also presented information about factors parents considered when selecting children's books.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the design and methods used to plan for data collection and analyses. The chapter starts by discussing the design and approaches adopted for this study. It proceeds to discuss the study locations and the target populations. The chapter further describes the instruments for data collection and the overall procedure used during the data collection. The ethical considerations made for the study, limitations and how the collected data was analysed were also discussed.

3.1 STUDY DESIGN

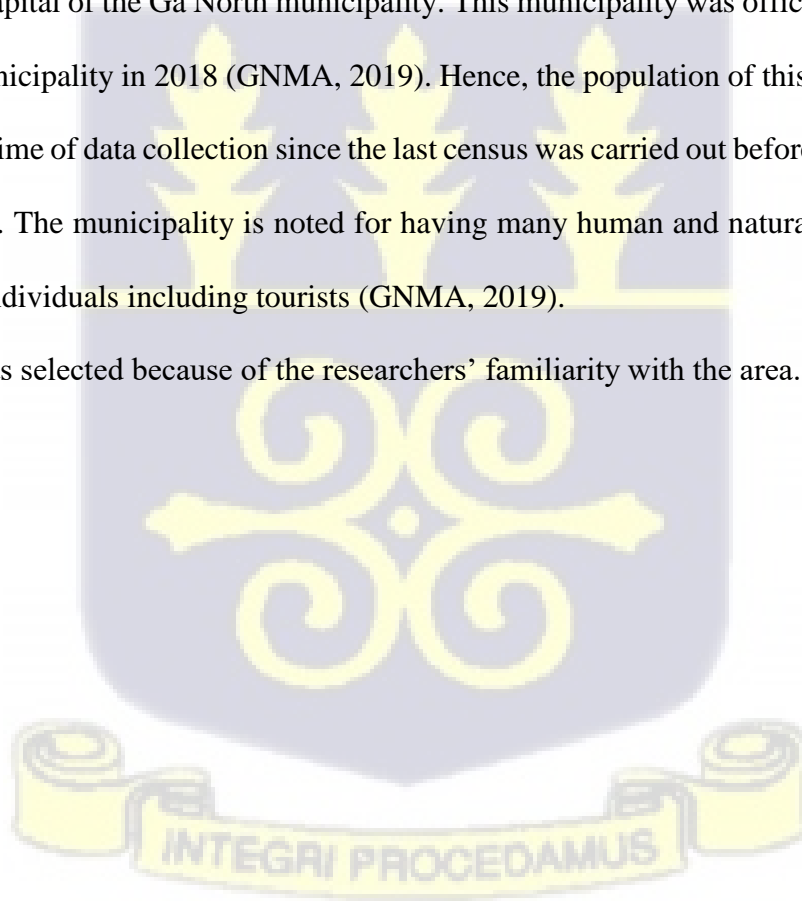
A research design is a plan or a set of procedures that spell out details of data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods (Creswell, 2014). Bryman (2012) also described a research design as a framework that guides data collection and analysis. A cross-sectional study design with a mixed method approach was employed in this study. Specifically, the exploratory sequential mixed method was used for this study (Creswell, 2014). The cross-sectional study design helped to collect data at a single point in time and also allowed the researcher to explore a phenomenon in-depth while measuring the prevalence of its dimensions (Bryman (2012; Creswell, 2018). Again, the design helped to study multiple cases to help derive variations (Bryman, 2012). For instance, individuals within different age groups could be studied to ascertain whether age differences exist in the behaviour under study (Vanderstoep & Johnson, 2009). When combined with the exploratory sequential mixed method, the design provided an opportunity for the researcher to identify the types of scales that may have existed to form categories of information that were

explored further in a quantitative phase (Creswell, 2014). The exploratory sequential mixed approach again allowed for the modification of questionnaires to suit the context within which they would be used (Creswell & Plano, 2018). Finally, the method helped to scale identified items that emerged from the qualitative research, so that better wording or more comprehensive closed answers could be generated (Bryman, 2012; Creswell & Plano, 2018). Thus, it was deemed the best approach to use for this study.

3.2 STUDY LOCATION

The study was conducted in the Ga North Municipality in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. The Ga North municipality is one of the twenty-nine municipalities in the Greater Accra Region. Ofankor is the capital of the Ga North municipality. This municipality was officially carved out of the Ga West municipality in 2018 (GNMA, 2019). Hence, the population of this municipality was unknown at the time of data collection since the last census was carried out before this municipality was inaugurated. The municipality is noted for having many human and natural resources which attract various individuals including tourists (GNMA, 2019).

This location was selected because of the researchers' familiarity with the area.



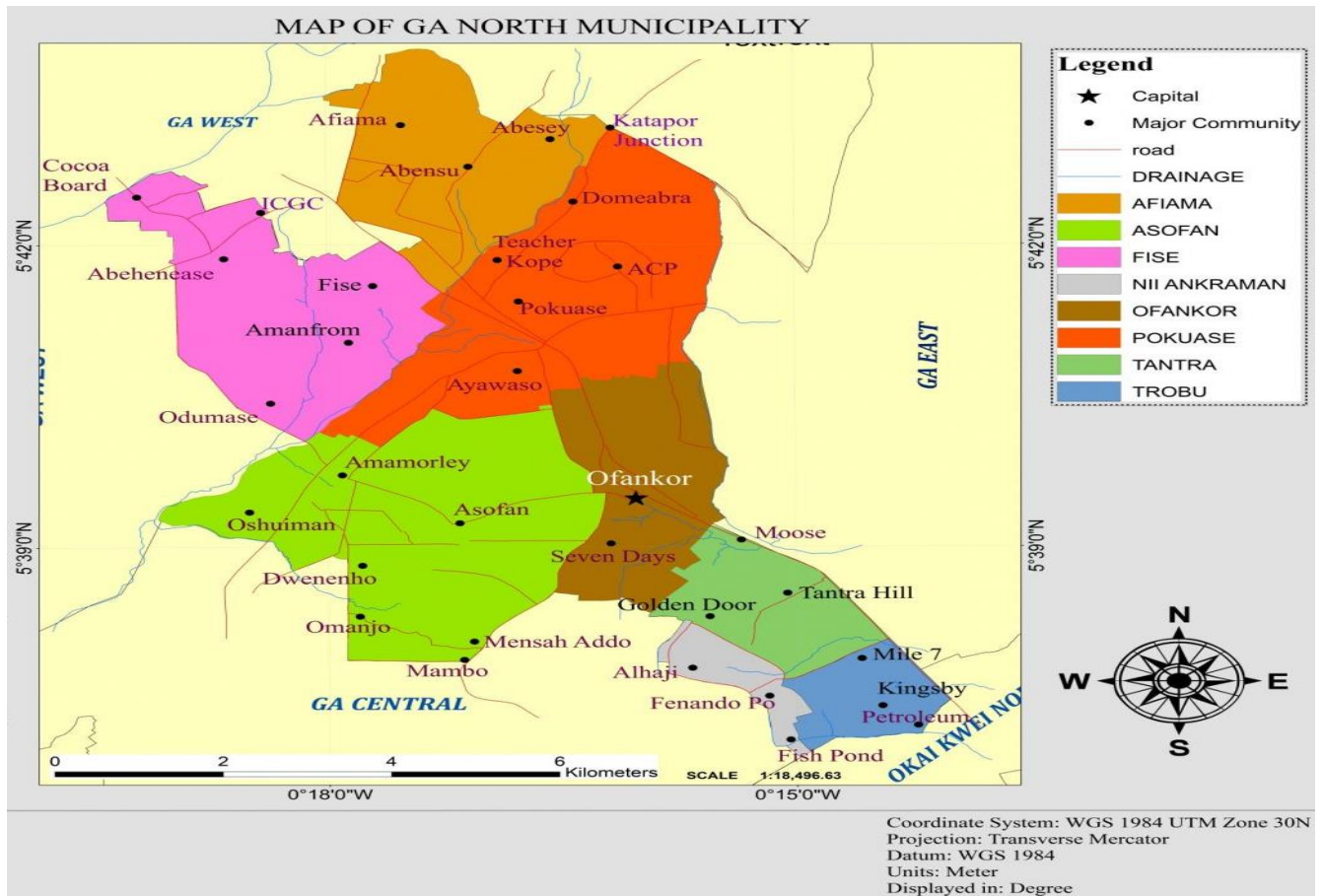


Figure 3.1 A map of the Ga North Municipality: Note. Adapted from Map of Ga North Municipality, by GNMA (2019).

3.3 TARGET POPULATION

A target population can be defined as a group of individuals (in this case, parents) who meet a set of specific attributes that are relevant to the scope of a study. It is necessary to have a target population to ensure that all participants selected for the study would provide information relevant to the study (Asiamah, Mensah & Oteng- Abayie, 2017). The main objective of this study was to explore perceptions and preferences of children’s books among parents and factors considered when selecting these books by parents. Thus, the study targeted all parents within the Ga North municipality who have children below the age of 8 years and buy books for their children. The

literature indicated that it is in this age group that the use of picture books is prevalently used (Ozturk, Sendogdu, Seker & Tekinsen, 2011).

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

An exploratory sequential mixed approach required the adoption of two levels of study (Creswell, 2014). The first level required the use of a qualitative approach to solicit information from a group of participants. The responses then guided the development of an instrument for the larger number of participants in a quantitative study. With regards to the first initial study, fifteen (15) parents were selected for the face-to-face interviews. These fifteen were selected using the snowballing sampling technique. The snowball technique allowed the researcher to make initial contact with a small group of people who were relevant to the research topic and further used them to establish contacts with other parents (Bryman, 2012; Vanderstoep & Johnson, 2009). The first parent who was contacted recommended the remaining participants who consented to provide information for the study. According to some researchers (e.g. Creswell 1998; Guest, Bruce & Johnson, 2006; Morse 1994), between five to twenty-five respondents could be used for a face-to-face interview. However, the researcher could ascertain the actual number for a particular study (Creswell, 2014) depending on the point of saturation. In this study, at the fifteenth participant, no new information was obtained so the interviews were stopped.

A total sample size of two hundred and two parents (202) was purposively selected for the second stage of data collection (survey). This is because the method allowed for participants to be sampled strategically, such that only those people who were more likely to have the required information relevant to the research questions posed were selected (Bryman, 2012; Kumar, 2011). However,

certain specific selection criteria for inclusion were to be met before a parent qualified to be part of this study. These included:

- a. Parents ought to live in any area within the Ga North municipal area.
- b. Parents ought to have at least one child below the age of 8.

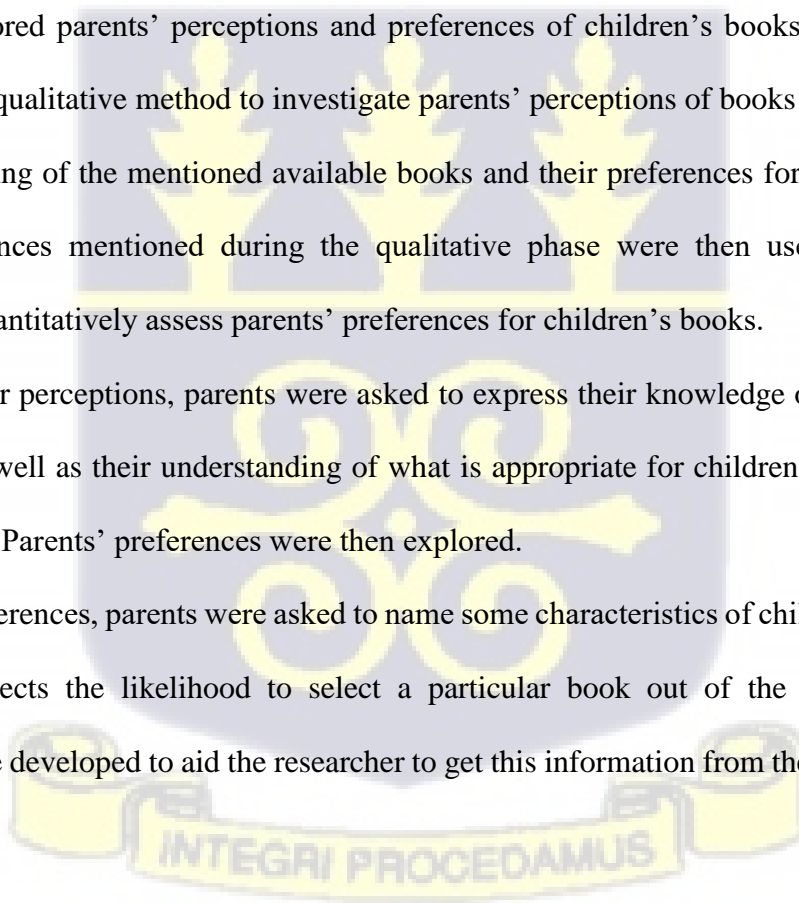
Parents who were within the selection criteria and willingly consented to volunteer information were given a copy of the questionnaire to fill out. This procedure continued until two hundred and two parents had completely filled out the questionnaire and none of the other parents was willing to volunteer information any longer though they were within the criteria set.

3.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study explored parents' perceptions and preferences of children's books. Specifically, the study adopted a qualitative method to investigate parents' perceptions of books available to them, their understanding of the mentioned available books and their preferences for children's books. Parents' preferences mentioned during the qualitative phase were then used to develop an instrument to quantitatively assess parents' preferences for children's books.

In exploring their perceptions, parents were asked to express their knowledge of books available for purchase as well as their understanding of what is appropriate for children which influenced their preference. Parents' preferences were then explored.

In assessing preferences, parents were asked to name some characteristics of children's books they value which directs the likelihood to select a particular book out of the variety available. Instruments were developed to aid the researcher to get this information from the participants. The



3.6 INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

As explained by Creswell (2018), the exploratory sequential mixed method requires an initial exploration of a phenomenon among a small sample of participants which informs the development of a contextually appropriate instrument for a larger sample of participants. Since this study followed the exploratory sequential mixed method, this study adopted two levels of data collection. Two instruments were used for data collection- a semi-structured interview guide and a questionnaire. The instruments are described in Sections 3.6.1 and 3.6.2.

3.6.1 Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was used to conduct the phone interviews (Refer to Appendix A). The semi- structured interview guide had predetermined questions that guided the interviewer to pose the questions while leaving room for probing (Vanderstoep & Johnson, 2009). The guide had the following sections three sections.

Section 1 had questions on the socio-demographic characteristics of parents and their children. The section had 6 questions on parents' age, gender, educational background, and place of residence as well as their children's ages and genders.

Section 2 had 4 main questions that focus on parents' perceptions of children's books available. Some of the questions included:

1. What kind of books do you find around?
2. What do you generally think of the books available?

Section 3 focused on parents' preferences for children's books and the reasons for their preferences. The section had questions such as:

1. What kinds of books do they generally buy for your children?
2. What informs your preference or choice?

As the parents answered these questions, follow-up questions were asked for clarification.

3.6.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to help the researcher collect a large amount of data from a large number of participants within a short time (Vanderstoep & Johnson, 2009; Walliman, 2011). The questionnaire had both open and close-ended questions in two main sections;

Section 1 had open and close-ended questions which captured the demographic characteristics of respondents (e.g. age, gender, and educational levels of parents)

Section 2 had a scale developed using findings from the qualitative study and items from Aram and Aviram's (2009) scale. The developed scale had 38 items that were arranged into the seven themes that emerged from the qualitative phase of the study (i.e. content, illustrations, discretion, recommendation, children's interests, price and preference for country of origin). The items were rated on a 5- point Likert scale-1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 being Strongly Agree. To ascertain the reliability of the items in the scale, a Cronbach alpha test was conducted and a high value of 0.814 resulted. This indicated that all the items in the scale strongly measured the factors the study intended to measure (Refer to Appendix B).

3.7 PRE-TEST

The interview guide was pre-tested on 5 parents using the snowballing technique to pre-tested on 5 parents to ensure the clarity and understanding of items in the interview guide. After this exercise, the interviewing skills of the researcher were sharpened and the time needed for one interview was determined. It also helped the researcher to find other ways to ask the same questions depending on the direction of the interactions.

The questionnaire on the other hand was pretested on another 20 parents. This helped identify challenges parents faced with the use of the Likert scale. As a result of this actual participants were made to undergo a briefing session before being given the questionnaire.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

As indicated in Section 3.4, two levels of data were collected for this study. The first phase of the data collection involved interviews with parents. Parents were contacted and a time was booked to meet at their convenience. The interviews took between 10-20 minutes of their time to exhaust all sections of the interview guide and the follow-up questions. Initial contact was made with some parents within the community through schools, churches and the neighbourhood. As the intent of the study was introduced with the initial contacts during follow-up meetings, a relationship with these parents was established and nurtured as advised by Vanderstoep and Johnson (2009). Parental consent was sought (by signing consent forms) and the parents were interviewed on phone at a convenient time they set. At the start of each interview, the expectations and requirements were spelt out and they were assured that whatever information given by them would be used solely for academic purposes and nobody could trace back any information to them as individuals. With the permission of the parents, their responses were recorded using an audio recorder. Data

derived from the interviews were analysed and themes were generated immediately after the interview. Six main themes were generated from the interviews altogether. Based on the six themes identified as well as items from Aram and Aviram's (2009) scale, a contextually suitable scale was developed. In total, a 38-item scale was developed (refer to Appendix B) for the second phase of the data collection.

The second phase of data collection involved the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed electronically using a Google Form. The link was shared on various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter and email. To ensure that all the parents met the selection criteria, two exclusion criteria were set. These include:

1. The automatic removal of the survey when a parent indicates that his/her child is above 8 years of age.
2. The automatic removal of a parent whose residential address fell outside the study location.

3.9 DATA ANALYSES AND PRESENTATION

The qualitative data were analysed manually immediately after they were received. This helped to crosscheck the respondents' information provided and to ensure that the information they provided was captured as exactly as they gave it. The manually analysed data was then coded and analysed using NVIVO (version 12). The six themes generated were presented and interpreted with supporting statements made by the respondents for deeper understanding.

The quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26). Descriptive (frequencies, means and percentages) and correlational analyses were run and the results were presented in tables, graphs and charts, where necessary, to validate results from the qualitative data.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance was first sought from the Ethics Committee for Basic and Applied Sciences (ECBAS) (University of Ghana). Ethical approval was given to conduct this study. This was received after the research proposal and data collection instruments were made available to the committee. Final approval was received on the 14th of May, 2021. Ethical clearance with the ethics code of ECBAS 030/20-21 is attached in Appendix C. An introductory letter from the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences was sent to the selected schools for access (refer to Appendix D).

Again, consent forms were made available for parents who were interviewed (refer to Appendix E). This was done to receive parental consent before any data was collected. Parents who gave their consent and took part in the qualitative study were given incentives in the form of sanitisers and notepads.

3.11 LIMITATIONS

1. The questionnaire was online and had an exclusion clause for the age of children and the parents' place of residence. Questionnaires upon receipt were cleaned. Thus, they were scrutinized to ensure that all those parents who did not strictly meet the inclusion criteria were taken out.
2. This study was carried out in one municipality and therefore generalizing the findings to the Greater Accra Region or Ghana is not possible as only 217 parents were used. Though the findings cannot be generalized, this did not affect the valuable contributions this study had made to parental preferences for children's books in literature.

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology used in the study. It presented details of the steps followed to collect and analyse data.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the study. The chapter has three sections. The chapter first presents the demographic characteristics of the parent. It also presents the results and discussions from the qualitative phase of the study (Phase 1). It further presents findings from the quantitative phase of the study (Phase 2).

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The demographic characteristics of respondents relevant to this study included the age of the parents and their children, gender and educational levels of parents. These results are presented and discussed in the tables and graphs below.

4.1.1 Age of parents and Children

Table 4.1 presents the age ranges of the parents and their children. The parents were between the ages of 20 to 60 years while their children ranged from 2 months to 8 years. More than half (approx. 58%) of the parents were between the ages of 31-40 years, while a little above one-fifth (approx. 21%) were between 20 to 30 years. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) indicated that in most parts of the world women's reproductive age was between 15 – 45 years. Wolf (2021) added that this age group is noted to be very conversant with media and technology as these parents matured at a time when technology became very dominant in the world. Though the WHO

indicated that women’s reproductive age was between 15 to 45 years of age, this study found that less than 5% of the parents were between 51 to 60 years of age.

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Parents and Children

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Parents’ age		
21-30	45	20.8
31-40	125	57.6
41-50	40	18.4
51-60	7	3.2
Child’s Age		
0-2	34	15.7
3-5	105	48.4
6-8	78	35.9

The variations in parents’ ages present a valuable divergent of views for a study such as this because the parents were spread across several age ranges with varying experiences, values and preferences.

Concerning their children’s ages, a little less than half (approx. 48%) of them were between the ages of 3 to 5 years and more than one-third (approx. 36%) were between the ages of 6 to 8 years.

At this stage, many children would have started reading and also read successfully on their own.

Hence, it would be interesting to see how the kinds and types of books parents select for them and the main reasons behind their selection.

A cross-tabulation between the ages of the parents and their children (see Appendix G) revealed that 62 of the parents within the age 31-40 range had children within the age range of 3 to 5. Also, a correlation analysis (refer to Appendix F) revealed a significant relationship ($r= 0.238$, $p>0.01$) between the ages of parents and the ages of their children. This suggests that the age of the parent has a significant bearing on the age of the children. Thus, younger parents tend to have younger children while older parents had children who are a bit older.

4.1.2 Gender of Respondents

Figure 4.1 presents the distribution of the parents' gender. A few of the parents (approx. 2%) did not disclose their genders while more than two-thirds (65%) were females and more than a third were males (approx. 33%) It is evident from the results that more females participated in the study as compared to the males.

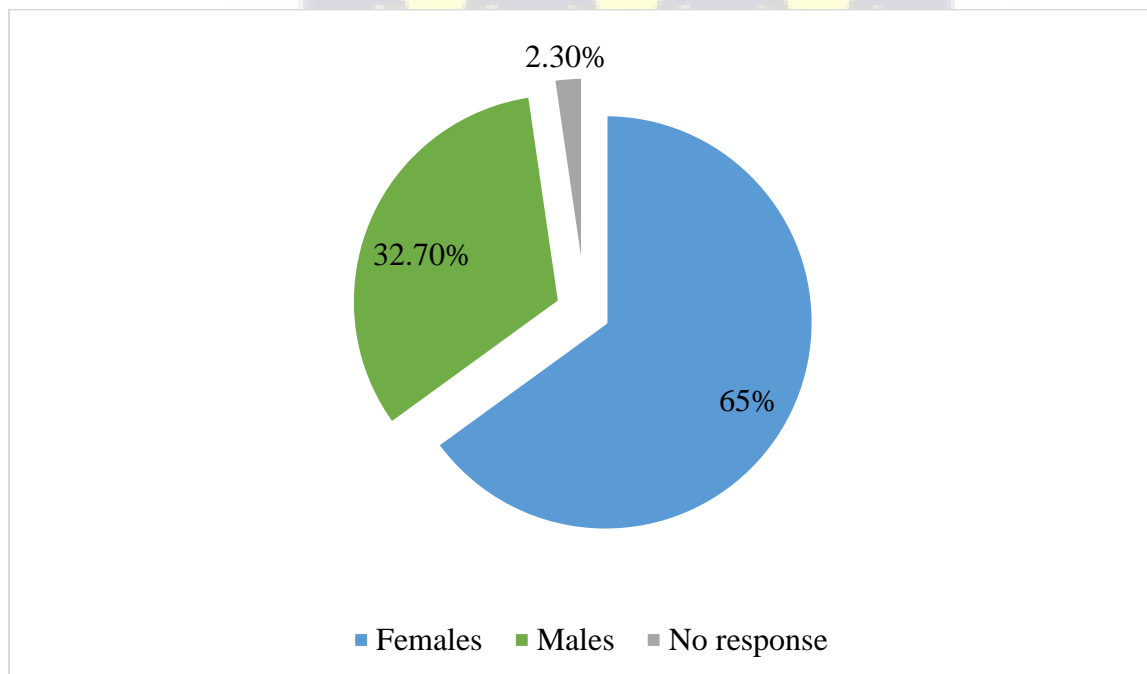


Figure 4.1 Distribution of parents by gender

Unlike Aram and Aviram’s (2009) study that focused on only mothers, this study focused on both fathers and mothers.

4.1.3 Educational level of Parents

Table 4.2 presents the educational levels of parents. Approximately one-third (approx. 60%) of the parents had tertiary education, while 16% had basic education and 23% had secondary education. A few (approx. 2%) of the parents did not have any formal education. The table showed that most of the parents (approximately 98%) had some formal education.

Table 4.2: Levels of Parents' Education

Level of Education	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
No education	4	1.8
Primary	7	3.2
JSS	27	12.4
SHS	49	22.6
Tertiary	130	59.9
Total	217	100

PHASE 1 (QUALITATIVE STUDY)

This section presents the results derived from the qualitative phase of the study. It discusses parents’ perceptions as well as their preferences of children’s books available.



4.2 CHILDREN’S BOOKS AVAILABLE IN THE MARKET.

The parents mentioned several places where they normally purchased their children’s books and the kinds or types of books available in the market for purchase. This section presents and discusses the responses received from the parents.

4.2.1 Places Parents Purchase Children’s Books.

Based on the qualitative study, parents mentioned places where they purchased their books. These are presented in Fig. 4.2. It showed parents bought their books from more than one source. Twelve (12) parents purchased books from bookshops. Four (4) of such parents, also bought their children’s books from malls or supermarkets. These sources are similar to sources from which parents in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) purchased books as reported by Barza and Suchodoletz (2016). However, only one parent indicated that she bought her child’s book from a book fair. Interestingly, none of the parents visited all three purchasing points identified.

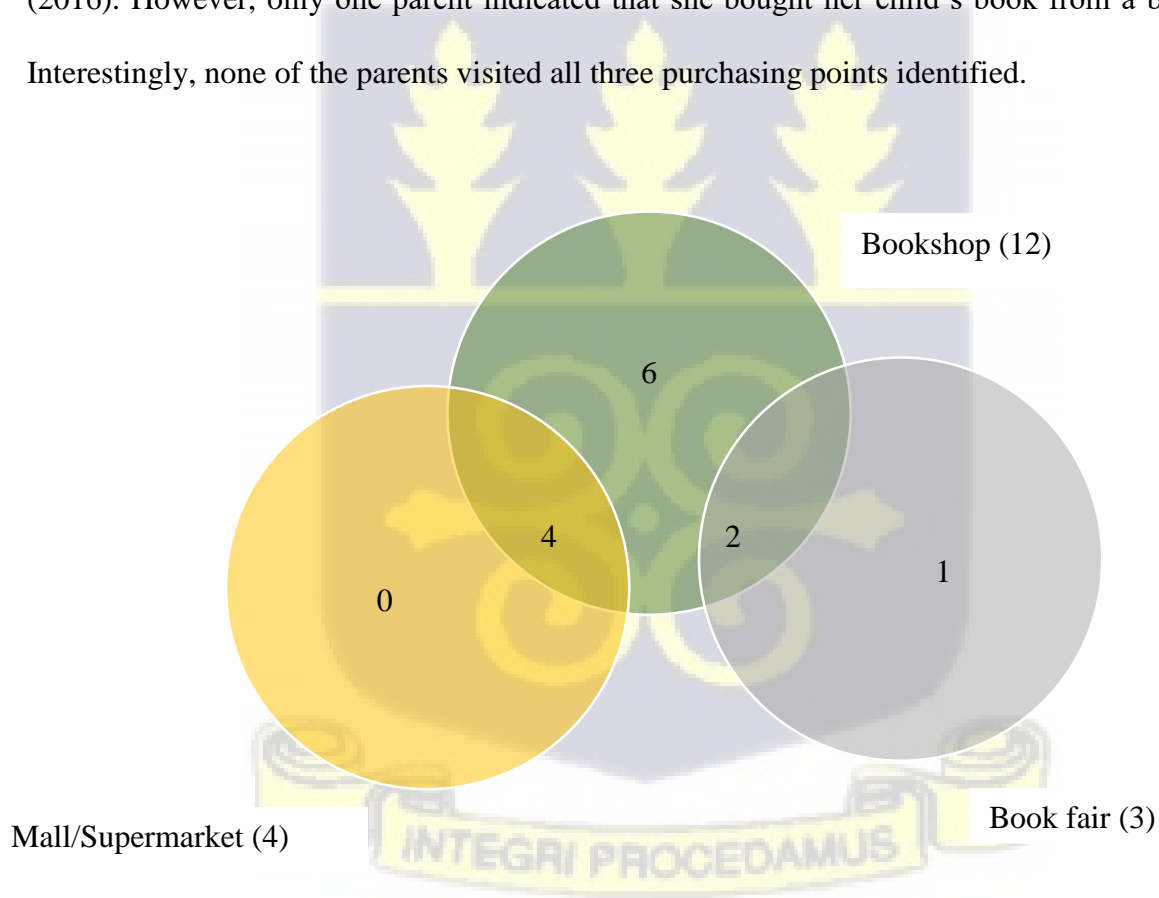


Figure 4.2: Places parents purchase their children’s books

4.2.2 Types of Children's Books Available in the Market.

Through the qualitative study, three main themes were identified and used to describe the types of books available on the market. These themes include:

- i. Titles of children's books (genre)
- ii. Publishing houses
- iii. Where children's books are from (origin).

These themes as identified are discussed below.

4.2.2.1 Titles of Children's Books

Titles of books were used to describe the type and kinds of children's books bought by parents. Some of the titles they mentioned included; "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty", "Kwaku Ananse (an Akan wise man)" and "Snow White." These kinds of books fall under fictional books. Price et al. (2009) explained that such books contain imaginary and fantastical plots, themes and characters that tickle children's imaginations.

The next group of titles the parents mentioned included; "Dinosaurs" and "Bible Stories for Children." These books, according to Kotaman and Tekin (2017), provide factual information and hence are non-fictional. Hsiao and Chang (2016) and Strouse, Nyhout and Ganea (2018) stated that in a given book market, one would find a wide variety of books including fictional and non-fictional books for preschoolers on display. Hence, it is possible to find both fictional and non-fictional books on the book shelves for pre-schoolers. However, in terms of the numbers, Barza

and Suchodoletz (2017) said there are more fictional books on the shelves of bookshops than non-fictional ones.

4.2.2.2 Publishing Houses

In Ghana, some publishing houses have designed their own children's books which are available on the market. Hence, some of the parents mentioned the names of the publishing houses to describe the type/kind of children's books they bought. Names like "Aki Ola" and "Adwinsa" were mentioned by a few (2) parents. It must be noted that these publication houses are known to publish both fictional and non-fictional books. One parent said:

"They have 'adwinsa wale' or something of the sort. As for the names, they were a lot. They have these local books and sometimes the authors are not only based on Ghana but Nigeria as well...." (P10, Female).

4.2.2.3 Origin of Children's Books

Children's books are made to either depict the Ghanaian culture (local books) or western cultures (foreign books). Many parents (7) indicated that they purchased foreign books for their children, while a few (3) emphatically mentioned that they purchased local books. According to the parents who bought foreign books for their children, there were almost no local books available for them to purchase. Seven (7) parents mentioned that they had not come across any local books for children. Those few parents who purchased local books cited "Adwinsa" and "Aki Ola" (which are all locally based) publishing houses as children's books they patronised. Some of the parents lamented their perception of no local books on the bookshelves by saying;

"...in terms of the local, not much. Most of the books that we find on the shelves are foreign books" (P3, Male)

"I don't find any local books that will help them as of now." (P3, Female)

“Some make books here in Ghana but the majority of them, especially with my older child, her books are not local” (P15, Female)

Judging the statements made by the three participants, there could be instances where there may be local books available. However, to the parents, what they were looking for in the book for their children was not met by those they found on the shelves. Hence, in their view, there were no local books. It could also be that those parents who indicated that there were no local books went to places where only foreign ones are available. However, one parent categorically stated that despite her thorough search in several places, she could not find local books on the shelves. She explained that:

“... Where we went..., because there was a library at the mall ..., there were mostly foreign books. I didn't see any local books. I had to look for them because they're not in the Ghana library, not the one by us anyway” (P4, Female).

Knowles (2008) is of the view that many African libraries are provided with books that are donated from developed countries. Hence, many of the books in African countries are foreign-based. It is worth noting that when parents were asked to indicate where they get their children's books, they only mentioned vending places and none mentioned the library. However, when parents were using the place of origin of books to describe the kinds and types of books they gave to their children, the library featured prominently. The implication of the above participant's (P4) statement is that, though she indicated that she had searched, it was realised that her search was limited to only one library that she visited and looked for a local pictured children's book which she did not find.

4.3 PARENTS' VIEWS ON THE CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS AVAILABLE

The parents expressed several views on the books they found for their children. Five (5) of the parents wished there were more local books available at all the places they visited to check on the

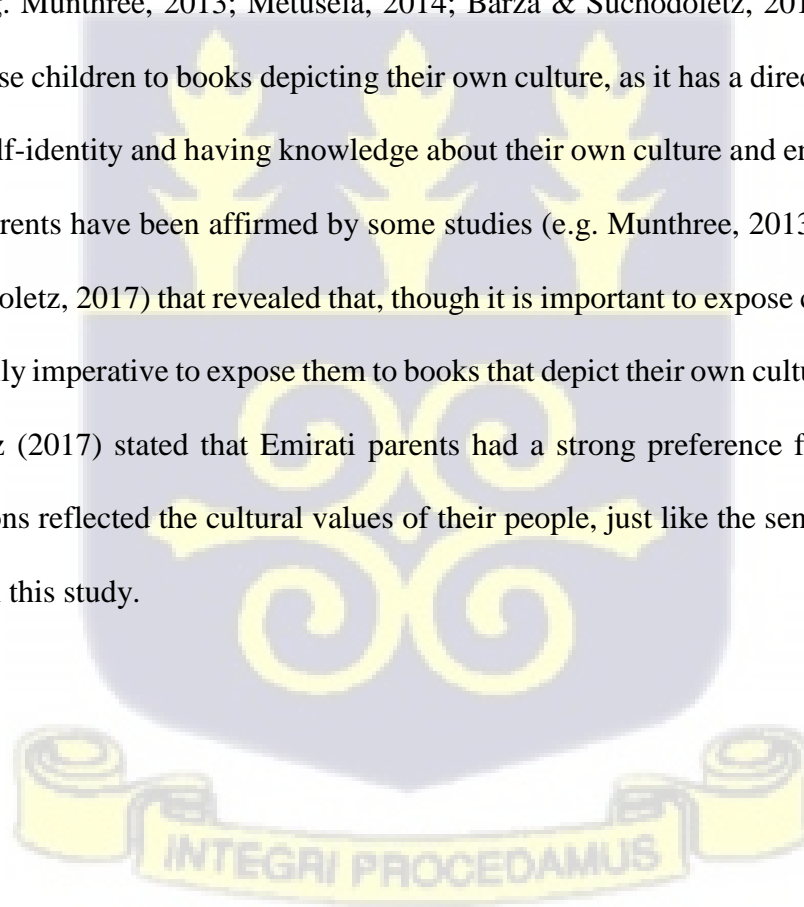
children's books. They explained that they would like to use those ones to instil the Ghanaian cultural practices in their children. Also, most of the parents indicated that they wanted their children to be exposed to their own backgrounds and not foreign ones. Some of the parents expressed their displeasure at the non-availability of pictured local children's books at the places they go looking for them. These sentiments were verbalized by some of the respondents as:

"I find it disturbing. One, because I didn't know and I didn't understand why I just can't find local books for my child. Is it because there's a lack of writers or there's a lack of publishers or there's just a lack of distributors or it's just in one location where I'm not finding or it is just not there ..., maybe I'm not looking in the right place" (P4, Female)

"Don't we have enough writers for the age bracket in Ghana so far as the local market is concerned?" (P9, Male)

"We wished that we will have more of such local books." (P5, Male)

Researchers (e.g. Munthree, 2013; Metusela, 2014; Barza & Suchodoletz, 2017) have indicated the need to expose children to books depicting their own culture, as it has a direct association with building their self-identity and having knowledge about their own culture and environment. These sentiments of parents have been affirmed by some studies (e.g. Munthree, 2013; Metusela, 2014; Barza & Suchodoletz, 2017) that revealed that, though it is important to expose children to foreign books, it is equally imperative to expose them to books that depict their own cultures as well. Barza and Suchodoletz (2017) stated that Emirati parents had a strong preference for pictured books whose illustrations reflected the cultural values of their people, just like the sentiments expressed by the parents in this study.



4.4 PARENTS' PREFERENCES OF THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS.

Parents expressed their worry about the limitedness of local books for their children. However, when asked to indicate which of the two books (i.e. foreign and local) they preferred, there were mixed reactions from them. One parent expressed a preference for local books. She explained that her children through television have already been exposed to foreign cultures and so to get a balance of ideas, she wished they could be exposed to all local children's books. She stated:

".... With me, if I'm choosing a book, I'll mostly choose the local one because the western, they're already exposed to it" (P5, Female)

Four parents preferred foreign books,

"Let's conclude that I prefer foreign books. Most of the school books they use are foreign books" (P9, Male).

"I would prefer to go to the library or the bookstore and have both of them available. So then they can have options. Not just have options but it's better to learn both. Even the Ghanaian people need to learn both cultures, they need to learn it so it'll be good to have both" (P2, Female).

"No I don't have any preference. Once I read the back of the book and the English is good, I'll buy it" (P1, Female).

A few parents (3) explained that they had noted some significant grammatical errors in local children's books and this reduced the quality expected of these books. Again, they stated that the foreign books were of better quality than the local books in terms of print, packaging durability and the overall attractive outlook. One male parent said:

".... you might get a book that is foreign and it has most of the things that the children do or most of the things that you need at that point but when it comes to the local one, you realise that there are some mistakes. I remember I bought a book for them which was a

local book and the spelling for some of the words you could see that if this is what we're going to go by for these kids then they will have issues with spelling” (P9, Male).

Six parents further explained that their preference for the foreign children's books was due to their friendliness and the age appropriateness of most of them when compared to the local ones. This, they explained that most foreign children's books had indicated the ages, and for which child the book was suitable. Hence, their preference for them.

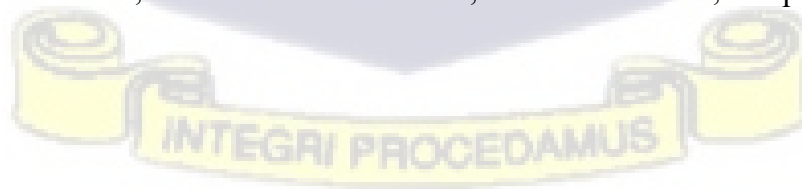
Three parents wanted a blend of both foreign and local books. To them, they believed that having a blend of both would help their child gain knowledge about themselves and those around them. One of them emphatically stated that she does not mind buying any of them.

“... both foreign and local, I can purchase for them” (P10, Female).

Five parents who were indifferent to the origin of the book stated that all they look out for is the content of the books and once they find that they are very pleased with the content, they will go for it regardless of its origin or the author. This affirms Sheth's (1974) theory of family buying decisions that some decisions are made autonomously for the consumption of other family members. Once the parents believed that they were pleased with a book's content, they decided to purchase it for the children.

4.5 FACTORS PARENTS CONSIDERED WHEN SELECTING BOOKS

Parents mentioned key factors that guided their selection or purchase of a book for their child. These factors were categorised into six main themes (domains) namely, illustrations and aesthetics, content, parents' discretion, children's characteristics, recommendations, and price.



4.5.1 Illustrations and Aesthetics

Illustrations and aesthetics were mentioned as one of the key factors the parents considered when choosing a picture book for their children. Things the parents mentioned to indicate the attractiveness of a book were the presence of pictures, attractive pictures, interesting and attractive covers as well as how hard the cover of the book is.

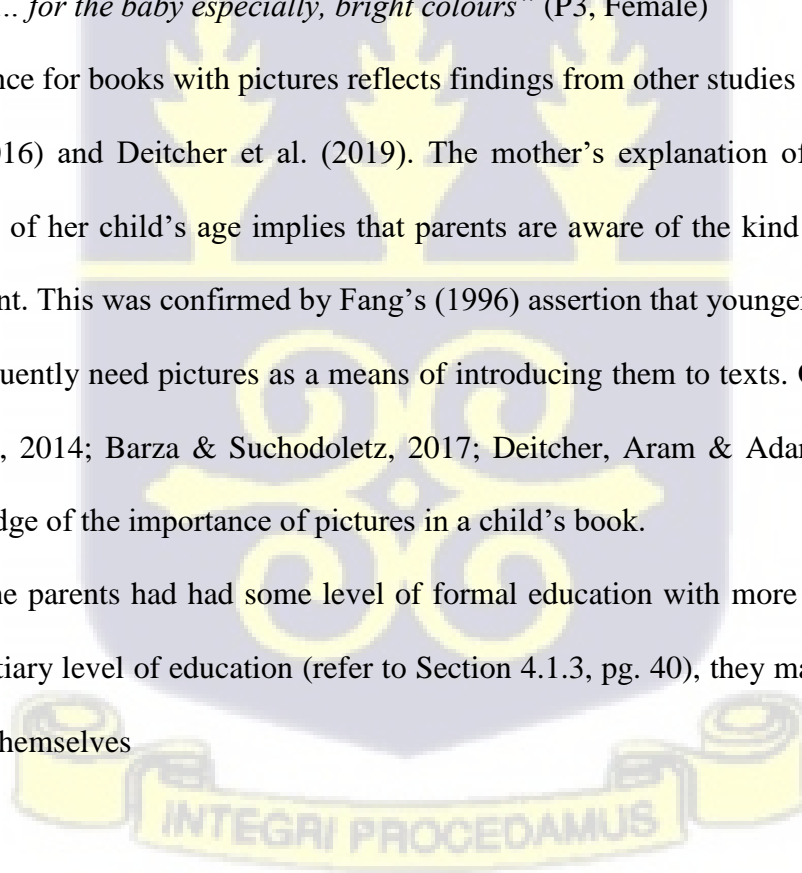
The parents explained that books they select for their children ought to have many pictures. According to them, the pictures ought to be colourful to be able to attract their children's attention. This, they believed, could keep their children engaged in reading. A mother explained:

“... with my 2-year-old, I buy books mostly based on pictures. Because for them, they can't read and with kids, they like colours more so if you get colourful books and then other pictures, it also helps you to teach the child in a different way.” (P10, Female)

“... and also books with lots of pictures so that as you are reading, they can follow along with you... for the baby especially, bright colours” (P3, Female)

Parents' preference for books with pictures reflects findings from other studies such as Barza and Suchodoletz (2016) and Deitcher et al. (2019). The mother's explanation of a preference for pictures because of her child's age implies that parents are aware of the kind of book the child needs at that point. This was confirmed by Fang's (1996) assertion that younger children who are unable to read fluently need pictures as a means of introducing them to texts. Other studies (e.g. Agyün & Abaci, 2014; Barza & Suchodoletz, 2017; Deitcher, Aram & Adar, 2019), affirmed parents' knowledge of the importance of pictures in a child's book.

Since most of the parents had had some level of formal education with more than half of them having had a tertiary level of education (refer to Section 4.1.3, pg. 40), they may likely have had this knowledge themselves



Parents also mentioned the cover of the book as a factor they would consider when selecting a book. They described that they would prefer a book that has a hard cover with attractive pictures. This, they believed, would last longer than other books. A mother explained:

“You know that children are very destructive, so if you look at the books I buy for my children, they are very hard...” (P3, Female)

This statement confirms the argument given by Birckmayer, Kennedy and Stonehouse (2008) that hard books are more appropriate for toddlers as they are less likely to get damaged easily.

Explaining the essence of the attractiveness of the cover of children’s books from a marketing perspective, Hladikova (2014) and Hsiao and Chang (2016) explained that picture books ought to be attractive to create a first good impression to catch the attention of buyers (in this case parents).

4.5.2 Content

The parents were particular about the content of the books their children were exposed to. Similar to this study, Chiong and DeLoache (2012) stated that one of the main reasons parents purchased books for children is to teach children the book’s content. In this study, the kinds of content the parent mentioned included books with good moral messages.

Some of the parents in the qualitative study explained that they expected some specific behaviours from their children and therefore, they were very careful with the contents they chose for them.

Two of the parents voiced this out by saying:

“She is quite ‘hyper’ so I mostly get books that talk about good habits and teaches her about normal living- how to do things and all that.” (P1, Female)

“...the content of the book. I’m a Christian, so I will also be mindful of the contents, the words that are being used and then the expressions; whether they actually align with my Christian faith or not. Then also look at what the child will gain after reading the book.” (P5, Male).

The mentioning of moral messages by parents had already been indicated by Barza and von Suchodoletz (2016) who also explained that participants in their study prioritized moral messages. Tetteh (2020) explained that inherent in many Ghanaian folktales are the expected moral values which parents tell their children, expecting that they will imbibe these into their own lives. Hence, it is not surprising that parents in this study considered moral content.

Apart from the moral messages, a few parents also mentioned how the book would influence their children's education. They explained that they wanted their children to succeed academically and hence would select a book that would enhance their literacy and build their knowledge. Two fathers opined:

“When I say educative, I mean I want something that will enrich the knowledge of my boy”
(P12, Male)

“...in terms of their past and present performance and in terms of what they're doing, at any point in time we know that 'okay fine, you are very good in this area. I don't need to get you so many books in this area because you are already good.' But this is an area that needs improvement so at any point in time I'm like okay fine let me get you books that are in this area that you need to improve upon.” (P14, Male)

It has also been confirmed in literature (e.g. Anderson et al., 2001; Deitcher, Aram & Adar, 2019; Korkmaz, 2021) that one of the key interests of parents concerning books is whether or not the book gives educational insights to children, and whether the book can expand the children's academic knowledge.

4.5.3 Discretion

The parents also indicated that they bought books using their own discretion. This means that they bought what they felt was good or best for their children. This assertion is similar to that of Sheth's (1974) family buying decision theory which simply makes the children the consumers of their

parents' discretions without any input of their own. The parents just made a decision autonomously by determining what they think their children must read. Some of them said:

"... if I find it interesting, I buy it." (P13, Male).

"I just go through it myself and see that it is okay, then I opt." (P12, Male)

"Usually I look at the back of the book and see if they'll be interested in it. So I read about the book a little and then I judge or predetermine that they will be interested..." (P2, Female).

4.5.4 Recommendations

The respondents indicated that they also bought or selected books based on recommendations they received from others. They reported that mostly they took recommendations from their children's teachers or their schools who were perceived as professionals. One of the parents stated that:

"Since he started school at the Montessori, I got one they wrote for me and his father went to Accra to buy it" (P8, Female)

Schwarz et al. (2015) indicated that people should rely on professionals (such as teachers) when selecting books for children as they are trained to be able to guide the selection of specific desired attributes in children.

4.5.5 Children's Characteristics

Eleven parents indicated that they considered the age of their children before they made any selections of books for their children. Deitcher, Aram and Adar (2019) were of the view that a child's age can be a mediating factor when books are being selected, and this is seen evidently in this study. A mother expressed her views by saying:

"I consider the age and pick a book... Sometimes just by the title or by the summary you immediately know that this book is not appropriate for this particular child, you know, maybe it's referring to things that you have not yet spoken with or spoken to with the child so I don't want the child to go into books and read those things and you may find a lot of books that may be like that... it's not appropriate for their age." (P11, Female)

Some of the parents hinted that they could know which books were for which ages as these were indicated on the books shelves in the bookshops and fairs they visited. One parent explained that:

“Mostly when you enter the bookshop, it’s written on the shelves... the bookshop I have entered and then the child fair that they do, they mark the shelves based on the ages. So maybe you can see from one year to three years and then you go to the next place, you’ll see four years to six and you go to a different place, the shelves are mostly based on the ages. So that’s how I select the books.” (P5, Female)

Commenting on the age factor when selecting books, Dwyer and Neuman, (2008) stated that a selected book must be developmentally appropriate for a particular child to meet the developmental needs of the child. This was probably the guiding principle followed when they selected books for their children.

Meanwhile, six (6) indicated that they selected books based on the interests of their children. It is interesting that in Sheth’s (1974) buying decision theory, he indicated that some decisions are made jointly or autonomously. Though in this study, it has been revealed in various sections how decisions were made autonomously for children to consume, it was also realised that some of the books were selected based on their children’s interests or even allowing the children themselves to select the books. Some of the parents expressed these sentiments by saying:

“...she likes girls, travelling, and things like that so I would walk through and try to find books that follow along her interest. and then for the boys, I know they liked action heroes so it would be something about cars or trucks, things that have to do with things that I know they would be interested in, look at the pictures and that they would want to pick up the books themselves even if they couldn’t read it I know they would want to go through it, if that makes sense” (P4, Female)

“...I pick the books based on what they actually like doing most. Maybe, his interest is singing, or rhymes. Maybe the interest is in arranging of bricks and things” (P4, male)

“... And knowing what they like... You know cartoon-like, mickey mouse, and this they’re kind of cartoon, what they usually watch” (P7, Male)

4.5.5.1 Child's Gender

One finding this study revealed is the gender of the children. This factor was not of particular interest. However, three parents considered the gender of their children before they selected a book for them. They described:

“I also consider the gender because really, I want to teach him what it means to be a boy so I pick books along those lines” (P5, Male)

“According to their gender. I find myself buying maybe Cinderella and you know those kinds of stuff for the girls. It's not like you planned but... and I find myself buying books on cars and stuff for boys” (P6, Female)

“...she likes girls, travelling, things like that so I would walk through and try to find books that look like she would have interest in. and then for the boys, I knew they liked action heroes so it would be something about cars or trucks, things that have to do with things that I know they would be interested in, look at the pictures and that they would want to pick up the books themselves even if they couldn't read it I know they would want to go through it, if that makes sense” (P4, Female)

Munthre (2013) found the importance of children seeing themselves in the books they read. A few studies (e.g. Anderson et al., 2001; Chapman et al., 2007; Barza & Suchodoletz, 2017) though, have measured the use of gender as a factor in selecting children's books. Similarly, some of the parents in this study mentioned the gender of their children as a factor they would consider when selecting books.

PHASE 2 (QUANTITATIVE STUDY)

As noted, the study was conducted in two phases. The results from the qualitative study were used to develop a questionnaire for the quantitative phase of the study. This section presents results from the quantitative phase of this study.

4.6 PREFERENCES FOR CHILDREN’S BOOKS

Table 4.3 captured the parental preferences for either local or foreign books. The four different categories which emerged from the qualitative phase were measured in the quantitative phase. Approximately 46% of parents indicated a preference for locally pictured books for their children. Approximately 44% were all in favour of foreign books.

Table 4.3: Parents’ preferences in terms of the origin of children’s books

Preference	Freq. (N)	Perc. (%)
Local books	93	46.1
Foreign books	89	44.1
Both books	59	29.2
No preference	60	29.7

4.7 FACTORS CONSIDERED BY PARENTS WHEN SELECTING BOOKS

The overall means and standard deviations for the variables as well as the results for each variable are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Overall means of themes/domains

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Illustration and Aesthetics	4.18	1.19
Content	4.05	0.41
Discretion	3.91	1.20
Children’s characteristics	3.78	0.79
Recommendations	3.04	1.50
Price	2.64	0.99

Table 4.4 shows that parents considered illustrations and aesthetics, and content of books as their main selection criteria. All these criteria mentioned by the parents in this study have been documented in the literature (e.g. Anderson et al., 2001; Aram & Aviram, 2009; Schwarz et al., 2015; Hsaio & Chang, 2016; Deitcher, Aram & Adar, 2019).



Table 4.5 Factors Considered by Parents

Factors	Freq.	Perc.
Illustration and Aesthetics		
Attractive Pictures	186	92.1
Interesting and attractive covers	184	92.1
Pictures	177	87.6
Hardcover	162	80.2
Content		
Educational aim	193	95.5
Moral message	182	90.1
Language	167	82.7
Events that match daily life	167	82.7
Familiar characters	162	80.2
Familiar words	154	76.2
Short books	148	73.3
Specific subject	136	67.3
Discretion		
Read blurb	161	79.7
Read entire book	113	55.9
Recommendations		
Teachers	113	55.9
Colleagues	55	27.2
Media	35	16.3
Children's Characteristics		
Children's age	162	80.2
Children's interests	140	69.3
Books children select	100	49.5

*Note: *Multiple responses*

From Table 4.5, it was observed that the majority (92.1%) of the parents preferred books with attractive pictures. Though the majority of them said they would select books with pictures, it was

observed that a few more parents wanted attractive pictures. It must be noted that as indicated (refer to Section A (4.1.1), pg. 36) that most of the participants of this study were younger parents whose children were also found to be younger. Again, a correlation analysis showed a negative relationship ($r = -0.148$, $p > 0.01$; Appendix F- Table 3) between children's age and colourful illustrations. Thus, once the child grows, their dependency on colourful illustrations diminishes. This may explain parents' preference for books with attractive pictures.

Similar to the results from the qualitative study, it was revealed that approximately 80% of them preferred books with hard covers.

With regards to content, the majority (approximately 96%) were particular about educationally oriented content while contents with characters their children were familiar with, or language and daily life followed those the parents were concerned with. More than two-thirds (approximately 67%) were concerned about specific subjects of interest to them. About 73% said they preferred short books.

Regarding parental discretion in choosing books for their children, parents mainly read the blurb before choosing. Once the parents found a book interesting or deemed fit for what they wanted their children to know, that then became the basis of their choice. A correlational analysis revealed a positive relationship ($r = 0.262$, $p > 0.01$, refer to Appendix F- Table 1) between parents' education and discretion. This means that the higher the education of the parent the more likely the parent relies on their discretion (in reading the content of a book) before choosing a book for their children.

It was also revealed that teachers were considered the main source of the recommendations for appropriate children's books. However, a correlational analysis was used to find that there was a

negative significant relationship ($r = -0.198$, $p > 0.01$, refer to Appendix F- Table 4) between teachers' recommendations and parents' age. This meant that younger parents were more likely to consider teachers' recommendations. A few parents noted that they also took recommendations from friends and family members who have knowledge about children's books. It must be noted that very few of the parents (approximately 16%) in this study relied on the media as their source of recommendations when it came to selecting or purchasing children's books. However, a correlational analysis revealed a significant relationship ($r = 0.162$, $p > 0.05$) (refer to Appendix F- Table 4) between parental education and their use of media as a source of recommendation when choosing children's books. Thus, the few parents who opted for media recommendations were more likely to have a higher educational level. Again, the correlational analysis showed a negative significant relationship ($r = -0.162$, $p > 0.05$) (refer to Appendix F-Table 4) between media recommendations and parents' age. This implies that younger parents were more likely to consider recommendations from the media. The finding was similar to Wolf's (2021) argument that younger parents were more acquainted with technology and hence may rely more on it.

Regarding their children's peculiar characteristics, most parents (approx. 80%) considered their children's age when choosing a book for their children while about 69% considered their children's interests.

Based on the findings of this study, modifications were made to the conceptual framework of the study.



4.5 Observed Framework

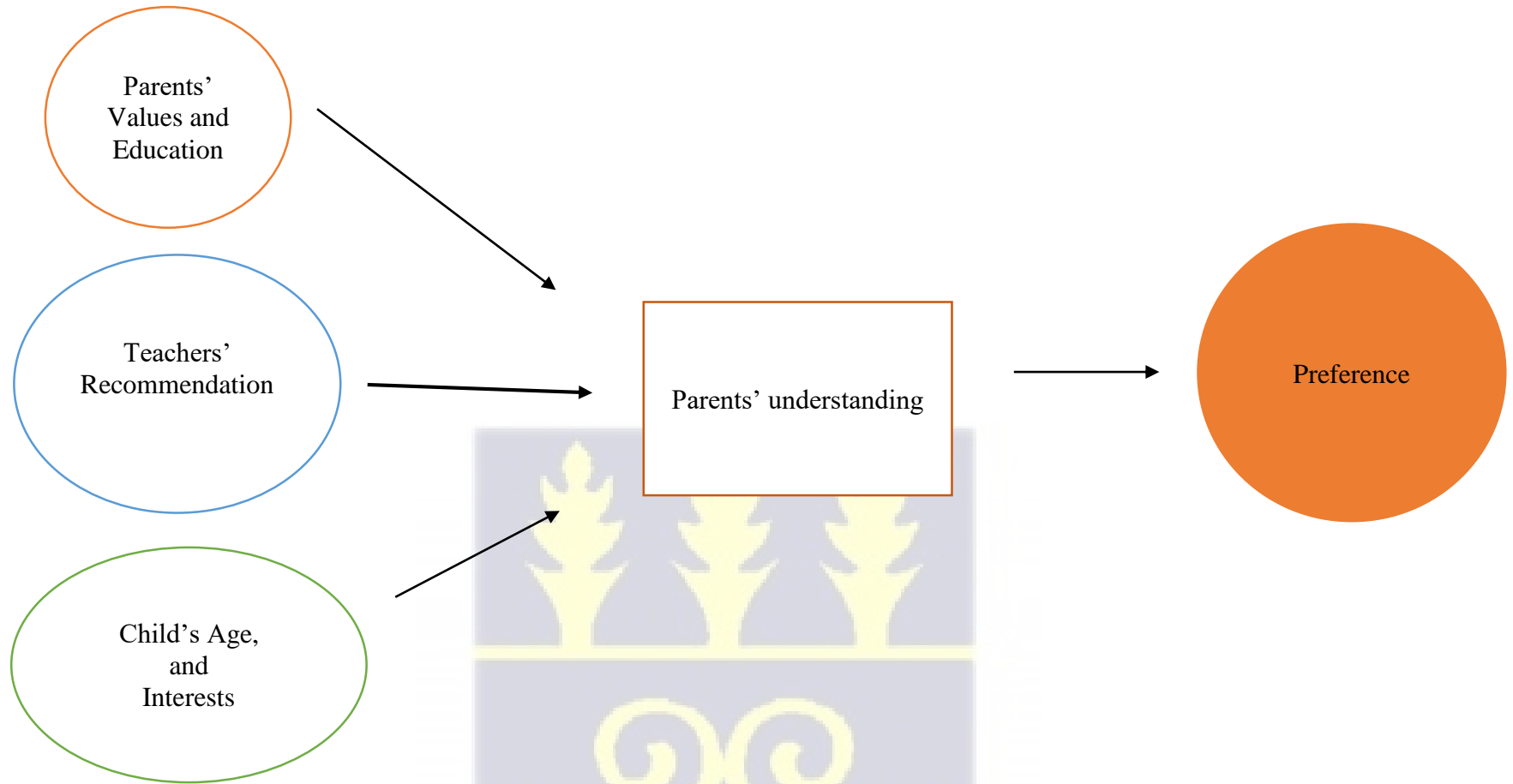


Figure 4.3: Observed framework showing factors influencing parents' choice of children's books

Figure 4.3 presents factors parents considered when making choices or a selection of a child's picture book. These included parents' values and recommendations from teachers, as well as the age and interests of their children. All these factors help formed a parental understanding which was a basis for selecting their children's books.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of this study, the conclusions drawn and recommendations.

5.1 SUMMARY

Children's books are books that fuse words and pictures to tell stories that socialize children with society and teach them various concepts. There were various recorded roles that children's books play in the social, cognitive and emotional development of children. The immense benefits called for a critical look at the type of books that are introduced to children. This study explored parents' perceptions and preferences and factors considered when selecting children's books.

The study employed an exploratory sequential mixed method to explore parents' perceptions and preferences regarding their selection of children's books. A snowballing approach was adopted to sample fifteen parents for the first phase (qualitative) of the study. Based on the themes that emerged from the interviews, Aram and Aviram's (2009) parental preferences questionnaire for selecting children's books was modified for the quantitative part of the study. Two hundred and two parents were selected purposively for the quantitative phase of this study. The findings of the study showed that many of the parents were between the ages of 31 and 40, with a few being over 50 years of age. The ages of their children ranged between the ages of three and eight with most of them being between the ages of 3 and 8. Two-thirds of the parents had a tertiary level of education while a few did not have any formal education. The findings showed that four categories of preferences emerged. These were preferences for only local books, only foreign books, both foreign and local books and no preference. Though some of

the parents indicated their preferences for more local books as they felt that would teach their children their cultural identity, they stated they would rather choose foreign books as some of them felt those were good in terms of finishing, and the age sensitive nature. Some expressed their disappointment about the local books as they claim some were filled with grammatical errors. Other factors considered by parents in this study but not prevalent in the literature included: considering children's syllabi and the gender of the children. Parents in this study did not consider the price of books as a factor in selecting children's books as is depicted in literature. Based on the findings, a modified version of the initial theoretical framework was created.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that parents mainly purchased their children's books from various bookshops. Foreign books (non-African) were dominant in the market as compared to local books. This creates a gap that would be filled if more local books that reflect parents' cultural values are published. Parents prioritized the quality of their children's books and used specific factors to select books for their children. It will therefore be more satisfying for parents if they have books that meet the standards they have set (in terms of the factors considered) and also depict the typical Ghanaian culture.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The study revealed that parents followed their children's syllabi and then use their own understanding to buy books for their children. Hence, it is recommended that to get the best out of this, schools could involve the parents on regular basis to throw more light

on their syllabi and make suggestions as to areas the parents can consider this can go a long way to help the children get the best from their parents.

2. If published, it would serve as empirical data for Teachers Associations and Ghana Writers Association to add more local pictures and proofread books to minimize grammatical errors, and the quality and content of these local books.
3. Further studies may focus on assessing the content of children's books available on the market.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographics

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Number of children
4. Children's gender
5. Children's ages
6. Place of residence

Parents' knowledge and views of children's books available

1. Do you have a particular place or some places you select the books your child reads?
2. What kind of books do you find around?
3. What do you generally think of the books available?
4. With regards to reading, do you read or do they do the reading?

Parents' preferences and reasons for their choices

5. In selecting books for your child, could you please tell me how it is done?
 - a. Why this process?
6. Are there specific things you look out for when selecting the books, you have mentioned?
 - a. Why these things?
8. What kinds of books do you generally buy for your children?
9. Do you prefer to purchase local and foreign books?
 - a. Why?

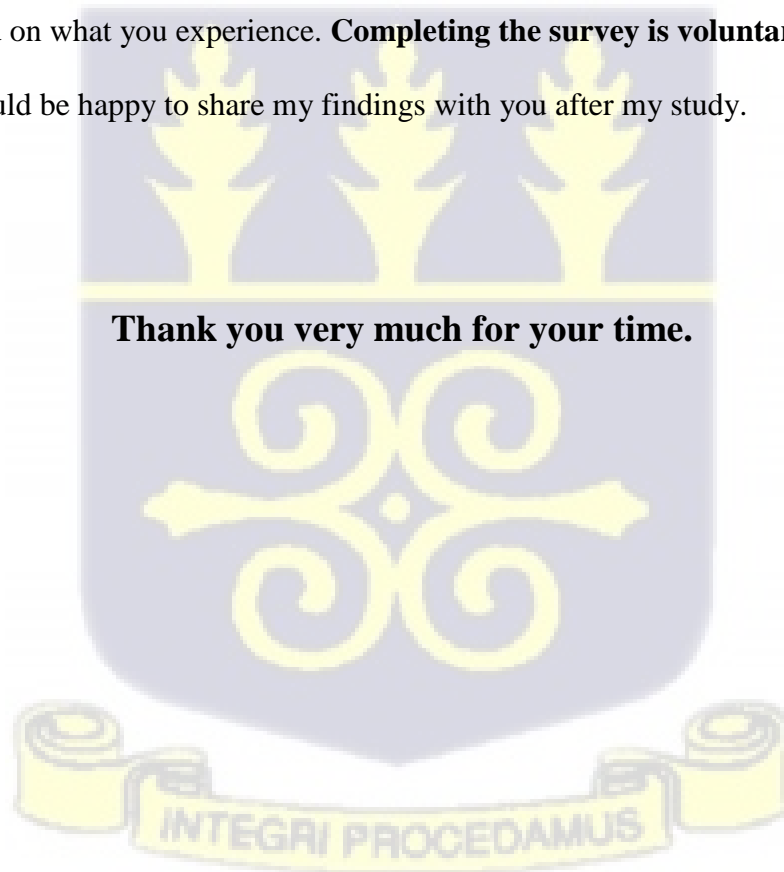
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

As part of the requirements of my postgraduate research on “PARENTS’ PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES OF CHILDREN’S PICTURE BOOKS”, I am surveying with parents of children below 8 years. The survey asks about **your choices and preferences of books you select for your children to read/ you read to your children** when you are home. I am interested in knowing about some of the things you consider when choosing books for your children. The information you give will be used to inform our understanding of parents’ choices of books and the reasons for their choices.

The answers you provide will be treated with maximum confidentiality. Please answer the questions based on what you experience. **Completing the survey is voluntary.**

However, I would be happy to share my findings with you after my study.



A. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age: 20-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 60+

2. Sex: Female Male

3. Educational Level: None Primary Junior Secondary Senior Secondary Tertiary

4. Place of residence:

5. Number of children:

6. Children's gender: Number of boys Number of girls

Section B. CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING CHILDREN'S BOOKS

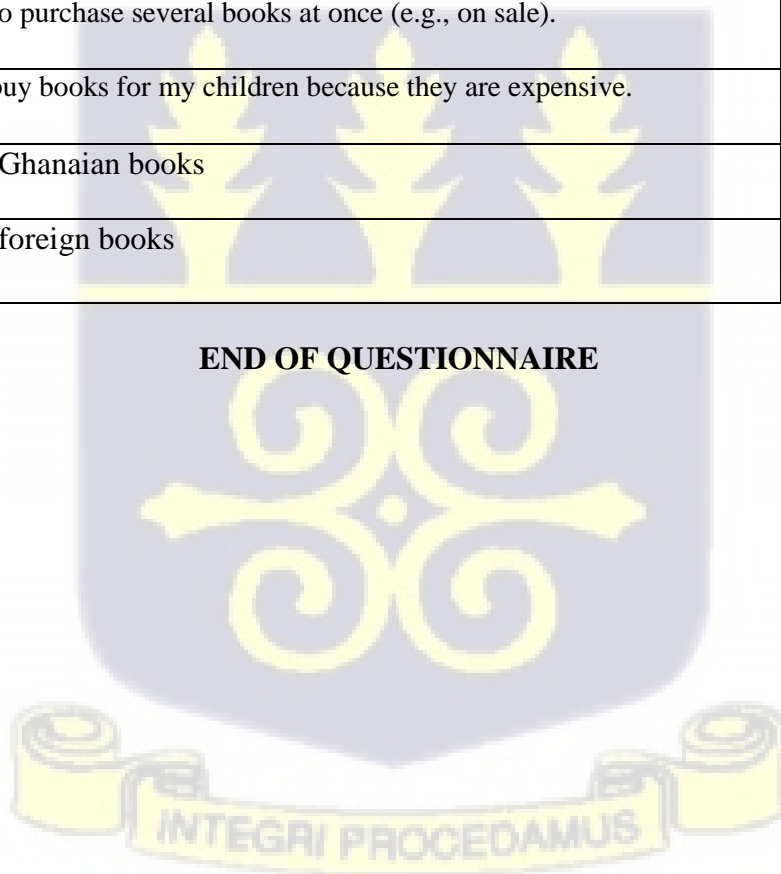
Below are a set of sentences. Please read the sentences and rate them according to how much you agree or disagree with each sentence; where **SD = Strongly Disagree**, **D= Disagree**, **N= Neutral**, **A= Agree** and **SA= Strongly Agree**.

		SD	D	N	A	SA
1	It is important for the words in a book to be familiar to my child.					
2	It is important that the book will be emotionally stimulating to my child.					

3	I prefer children's books with plots that connect to my child's everyday life.					
4	It is important that there be a logical connection between events in the book.					
5	It is important that the story includes interesting events.					
6	I think that children's books that include games or activities are better.					
7	Rich language is important in my choice of a children's book.					
8	It is important that the characters and their relationships are psychologically convincing.					
9	I prefer books with some sort of moral message.					
10	I think that short children's books are better					
11	I prefer children's books with complex, rich messages.					
12	I prefer books with an educational aim,e.g. learning about colours, and animals.					
13	I think that children's books should expose children to reality.					
14	It is important for the book's language to flow and be easy to follow.					
15	It is important that my child can identify with the characters in the book.					
16	I think that children's books' characters should be simple.					
17	The book's size (i.e., amount of pages and text on each page) is important					
18	It is important that the book talks about my child's interest					
19	I look for children's books that have a unique style in their illustrations.					
20	It is important that the book cover be interesting and attractive					
21	I like books with hard covers and pages					
22	I prefer books with stickers attached.					
23	I like books that are nice to touch, books that have a soft cover or pages.					

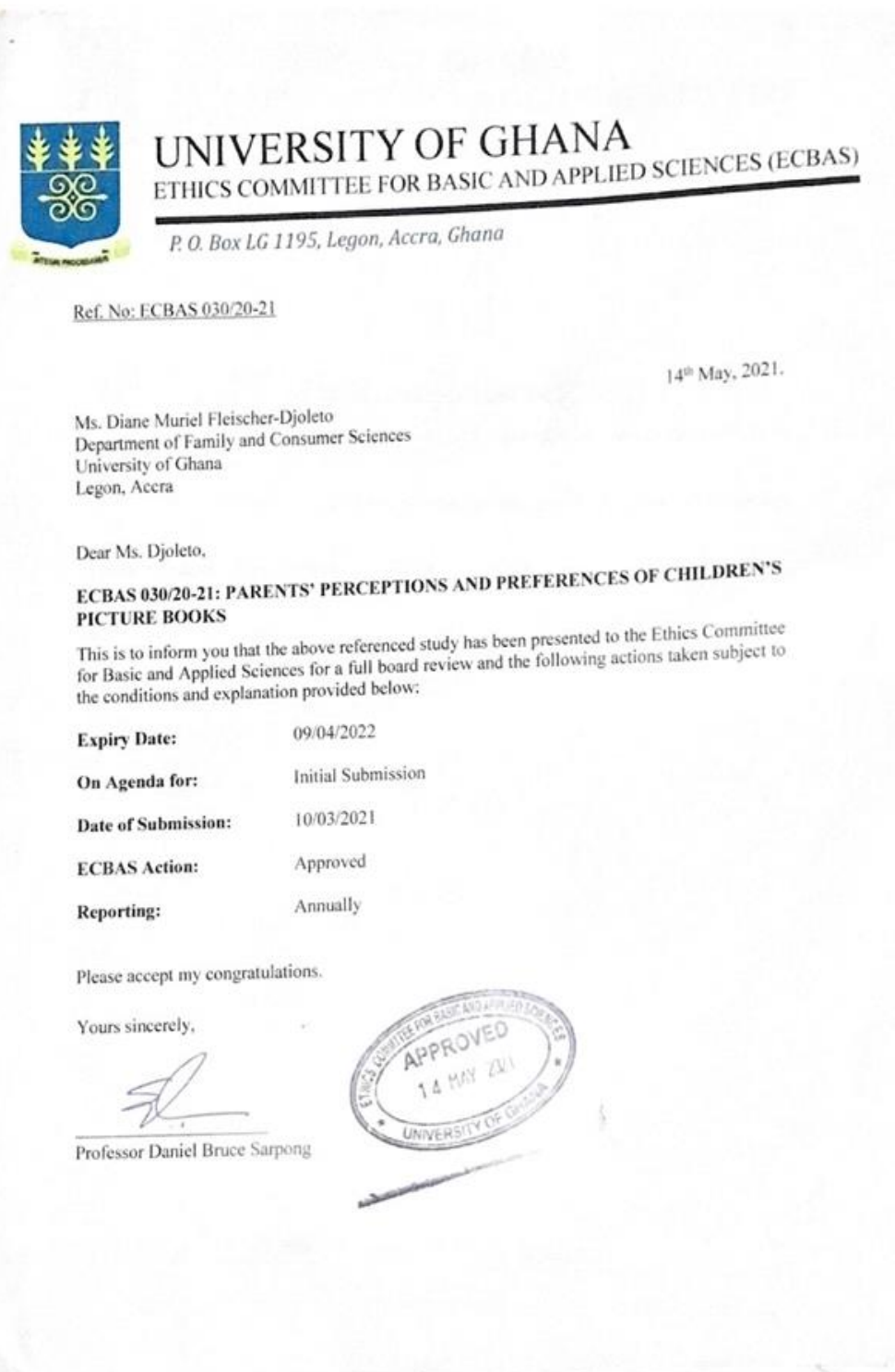
24	I prefer children's books with colourful illustrations.					
25	Illustrations are important in a children's book.					
26	I choose books according to teachers' recommendations.					
27	I choose children's books according to recommendations in the media.					
28	I choose books according to my colleagues'/friends' recommendations.					
29	Before I choose a book for my child, I read the blurb of the book.					
30	I read the entire book myself before I choose to read it to my child.					
31	When choosing books for my child, I look for specific subjects.					
32	It is important that the age on the book is similar to the age of my child					
33	I buy the books that my child selects					
34	I purchase children's books when on sale and with discounts.					
35	I prefer to purchase several books at once (e.g., on sale).					
36	I rarely buy books for my children because they are expensive.					
37	I prefer Ghanaian books					
38	I prefer foreign books					

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE





APPENDIX C
ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR STUDY



APPENDIX D

INTRODUCTORY LETTER



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE

Ref. No.:

March 12, 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

INTRODUCTORY LETTER
MS. DIANE MURIEL FLEISCHER-DJOLETO (10478850)


The above-named is an M.Phil. student of the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences of the School of Agriculture, University of Ghana.

She is conducting research on "Parents' Perceptions and Preferences of Children's Picture Books."

I shall be grateful if she is offered the necessary assistance to access the needed information from your outfit.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,


Dr. Cynthia Gadegbeku
(Head of Department)

COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES

• Telephone: +233 (0) 244 615 310

P.O. Box LG 91, Legon, Accra, Ghana

• Email: fcsciences@ug.edu.gh

• Website: www.ug.edu.gh

APPENDIX E

PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA



Official Use only

Protocol number

COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES

PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title of Study: PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES OF CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS

Principal: DIANE MURIEL FLEISCHER-DJOLETO

Investigator:

Certified

Protocol

Number

Section B- CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

General Information about Research

Children's books are important for children's development. Besides helping children with their words and literacy, children's books help children understand the feelings of other children and help them to know more about their world. The type of books exposed to children affect the perceptions and views they have of themselves, others and their overall world. This makes the selection of books for children crucial. This causes parents to consider some factors before

selecting from the books available to them. Hence, it is important to look at parents' views and preferences of books they select for their children. The study, therefore, seeks to find parents' perceptions and preferences of children's picture books in Ghana. Parents will be interviewed and provided with a questionnaire to get information for this study. The interview will last for about ten minutes. It will take you about ten minutes to fill out the questionnaire. Parents will be required to answer a few questions verbally. Some parents may be required to fill out a questionnaire.

Benefits of the study

Apart from adding to the body of literature in this area, this study will bring to light the type of books to which children are exposed and the reasons for parents' choices which may be useful for schools in stocking their libraries. Also, the findings will serve as a guide for parents who are yet to start selecting books for their children.

Risk of the study

There are no anticipated risks associated with this study.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be taken seriously during this study. Any information provided will be handled only by the principal investigator and research assistants under strict supervision. In addition, all identifying information (such as the name of the participant) will be withheld to protect the participants' identity.

Compensation

A token of hand sanitisers will be given to participants who take part in this study. The token will be provided to show appreciation for participating in the study.

Withdrawal from Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. This means that you may withdraw at any time without any penalty. It is also important to note that you will not be affected if you wish to stop participating.

Contact for Additional Information

For more enquiries about the research, the principal investigator can be contacted via;

- Email: dmfleischer-djoleto@st.ug.edu.gh
- Telephone number: 0209048504.

If you have any issues with your rights as a participant, you can contact the address below:

Administrator, Ethics Committee for Basic and Applied Sciences

College of Basic and Applied Sciences

University of Ghana

P. O. Box LG 68

Legon – Accra

IP No.: 3014

Email: ethicscbas@ug.edu.gh

Section C- VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

"I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and I am willing to give consent for me to participate

in this study. I have not waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records."

Name of Volunteer

Contact (Number)

Signature or mark of volunteer

Date

If volunteers cannot read the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

Name of witness

Signature of witness

Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

Name of Person who obtained Consent

Signature of Person who obtained Consent

Date

APPENDIX F

Table 1: Correlation matrix of all study variables

Study Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Child's age group (1)	1										
Age (2)	.239**	1									
Gender (3)	.038	.100	1								
Number of boys (4)	.039	.196**	.218**	1							
Number of girls (5)	.177*	.297**	.009	-.316**	1						
Educational level (6)	-.174*	-.165*	.086	-.152*	-.100	1					
Content (7)	-.078	-.059	-.040	-.076	-.029	.055	1				
Illustrations (8)	-.042	-.028	-.101	.013	-.150*	-.040	.118	1			
Recommendations (9)	-.161*	.009	-.075	.017	-.077	-.046	.037	.082	1		
Discretion (10)	-.115	.011	-.086	.020	-.010	.262**	.126	-.005	.612**	1	
Children's Characteristics (11)	.095	.096	.055	.079	-.011	-.078	.121	.085	.034	.198**	1
Price (12)	.027	-.059	-.083	-.074	.012	-.131	.116	.004	.242**	.268**	.030

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2A: Correlations between demographics and study variables (content domain)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	1														
2	.239**	1													
3	.039	.100	1												
4	.040	.196**	.218**	1											
5	.177*	.297**	.009	-.316**	1										
6	-.175*	-.165*	.086	-.152*	-.100	1									
7	.020	-.048	-.102	-.015	.036	-.086	1								
8	-.056	-.028	.001	.065	-.122	-.011	.329**	1							
9	-.050	-.142*	-.013	-.051	-.079	.085	.250**	.420**	1						
10	-.138	.062	.007	-.023	-.080	.084	.226**	.357**	.262**	1					
11	-.023	-.022	.019	.034	-.019	.120	.247**	.221**	.215**	.234**	1				
12	.019	-.177*	.013	-.091	-.006	.062	.081	.104	.301**	-.001	.073	1			
13	.005	.031	-.047	-.059	.072	.049	.091	.067	.124	.179*	.116	.141*	1		
14	-.108	-.067	-.147*	-.060	-.007	.074	.141*	.418**	.397**	.186**	.071	.273**	.271**	1	
15	.020	-.001	-.064	-.025	.081	.111	.264**	.161*	.114	.252**	.325**	.068	.253**	.205**	1

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

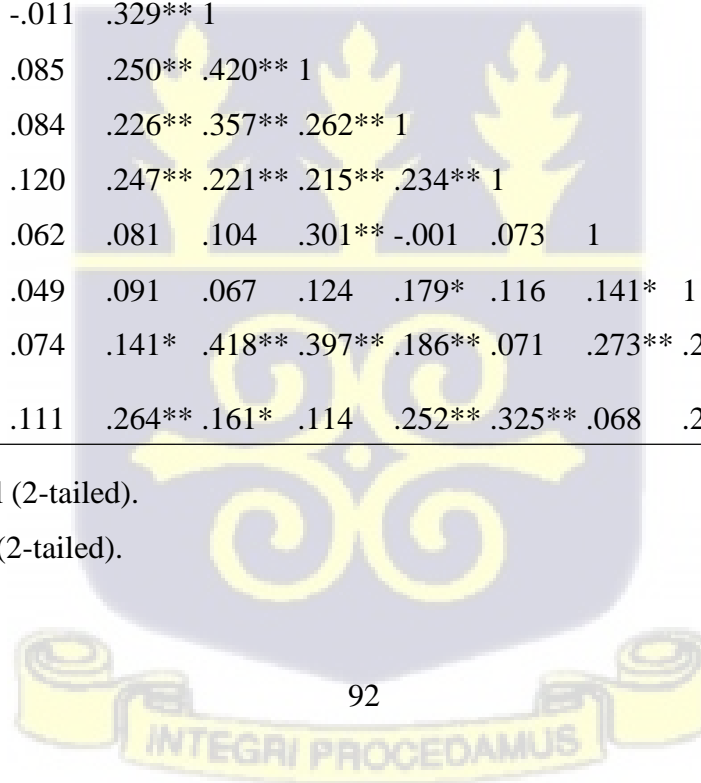
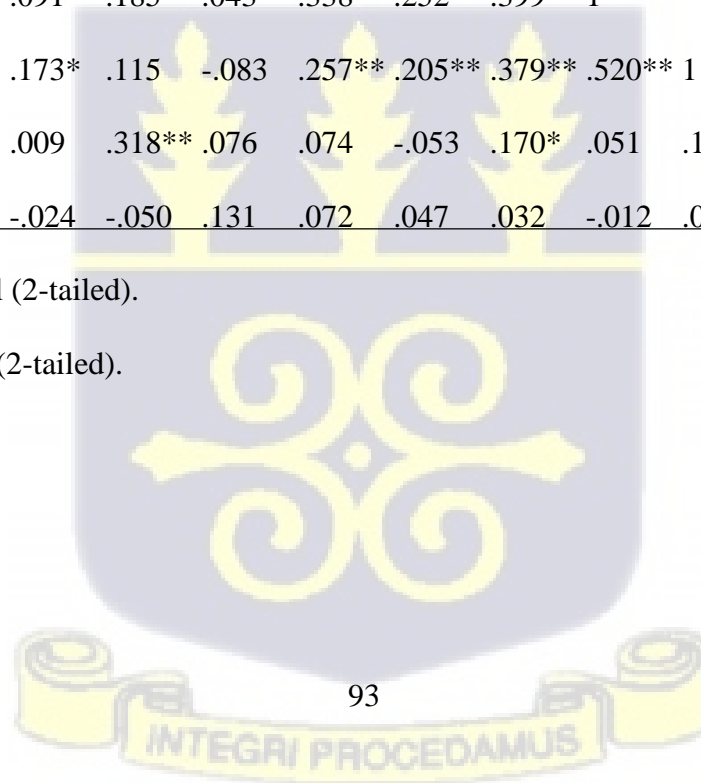


Table 2B: Correlations between demographics and study variables (content domain)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
16	-.054	-.021	-.054	-.045	.071	.017	1								
17	.030	.109	.116	.045	.028	-.152*	.053	1							
18	.014	.039	.003	-.067	-.012	-.006	.094	-.014	1						
19	-.051	-.066	-.017	-.019	-.117	.025	-.028	-.016	.053	1					
20	-.030	.079	-.021	-.029	-.001	-.010	.204**	.247**	.339**	-.079	1				
21	.022	-.063	-.047	-.117	-.059	.091	.185**	.043	.338**	.252**	.399**	1			
22	-.062	-.196**	.032	-.120	-.101	.173*	.115	-.083	.257**	.205**	.379**	.520**	1		
23	-.114	-.073	-.086	-.118	.060	.009	.318**	.076	.074	-.053	.170*	.051	.172*	1	
24	-.081	.052	.035	-.016	.039	-.024	-.050	.131	.072	.047	.032	-.012	.097	.151*	1

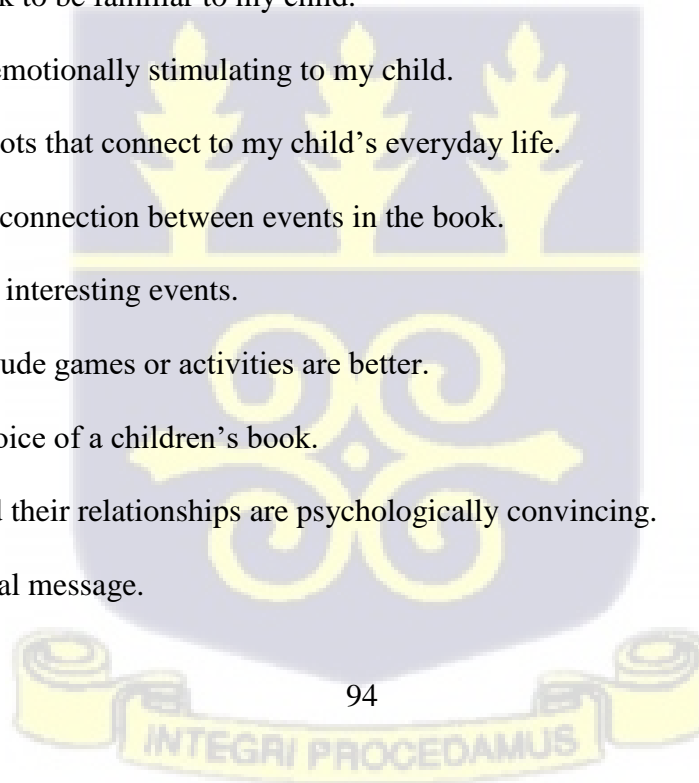
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



Key for Tables 2A and 2B.

- 1- Child's age group
- 2- Age
- 3- Gender
- 4- Number of boys
- 5- Number of girls
- 6- Educational Level
- 7- It is important for the words in a book to be familiar to my child.
- 8- It is important that the book will be emotionally stimulating to my child.
- 9- I prefer children's books that have plots that connect to my child's everyday life.
- 10- It is important that there be a logical connection between events in the book.
- 11- It is important that the story includes interesting events.
- 12- I think that children's books that include games or activities are better.
- 13- Rich language is important in my choice of a children's book.
- 14- It is important that the characters and their relationships are psychologically convincing.
- 15- I prefer books with some sort of moral message.



16- I think that short children's books are better

17- I prefer children's books with complex, rich messages.

18- I prefer books with an educational aim, such as learning about colours, and animals.

19- I think that children's books should expose children to reality.

20- It is important for the book's language to flow and be easy to follow.

21- It is important that my child can identify with (some of) the characters in the book.

22- I think that children's books' characters should be simple.

23- The book's size (i.e., number of pages and amount of text on each page) is important

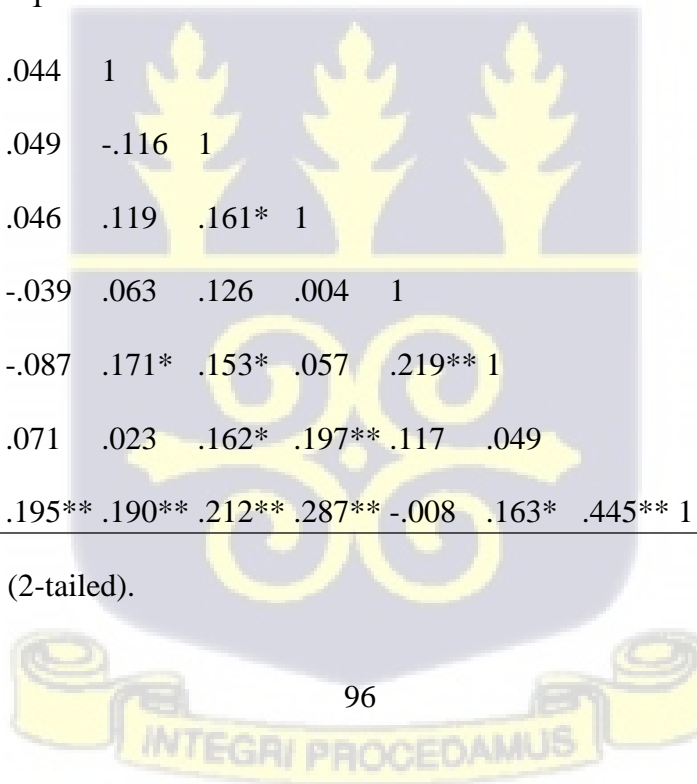
24- It is important that the book talks about my child's interest



Table 3: Correlations between demographics and study variables (illustration domain)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	1												
2	.239**	1											
3	.039	.100	1										
4	.040	.196**	.218**	1									
5	.177*	.297**	.009	-.316**	1								
6	-.175*	-.165*	.086	-.152*	-.100	1							
7	-.060	-.188**	-.069	-.135	-.006	.044	1						
8	-.037	-.065	-.033	-.020	.042	.049	-.116	1					
9	.006	-.012	-.038	-.067	-.022	.046	.119	.161*	1				
10	-.064	-.134	.000	-.007	-.150*	-.039	.063	.126	.004	1			
11	-.055	-.022	-.053	-.110	.059	-.087	.171*	.153*	.057	.219**	1		
12	-.148*	-.125	-.047	-.017	-.137	.071	.023	.162*	.197**	.117	.049	1	
13	-.138	-.027	-.016	-.088	.055	.195**	.190**	.212**	.287**	-.008	.163*	.445**	1

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



* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Key for Table 3

- 1- Child's age group
- 2- Age
- 3- Gender
- 4- Number of boys
- 5- Number of girls
- 6- Educational Level
- 7- I look for children's books that have a unique style in their illustrations.
- 8- It is important that the book cover be interesting and attractive
- 9- I like books with hard covers and pages
- 10- I prefer books with stickers attached.
- 11- I like books that are nice to touch, and books that have a soft or nice-to-touch cover or pages.
- 12- I prefer children's books with colourful illustrations.
- 13- Illustrations are important in a children's book.

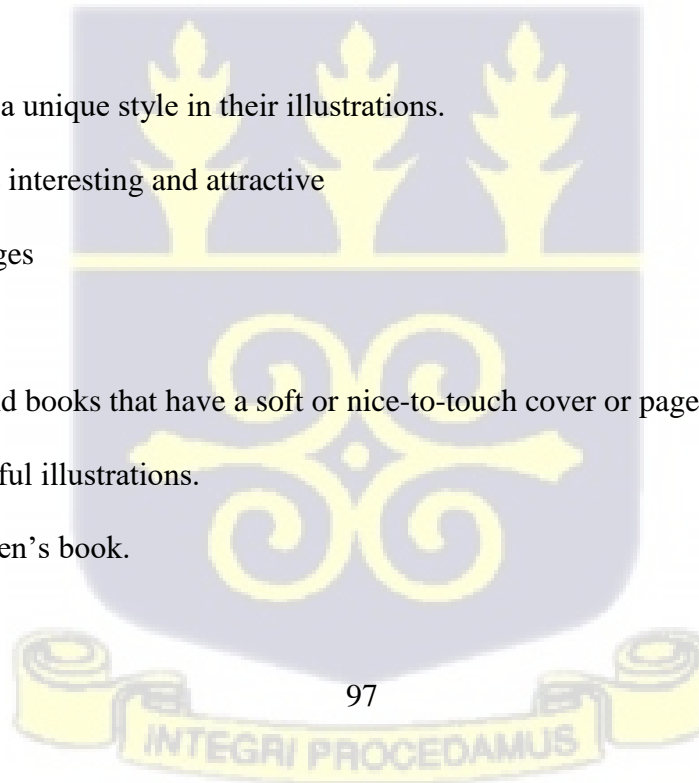


Table 4: Correlations between demographics and study variables (recommendations domain)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Child's age group (1)	1								
Age (2)	.239**	1							
Gender (3)	.039	.100	1						
Number of boys (4)	.040	.196**	.218**	1					
number of girls (5)	.177*	.297**	.009	-.316**	1				
Educational level (6)	-.175*	-.165*	.086	-.152*	-.100	1			
I choose books according to teachers' recommendations (7)	-.145*	-.057	.006	.003	-.012	-.198**	1		
I choose books according to recommendations in the media (8)	-.099	-.162*	-.084	-.074	-.123	.162*	.169*	1	
I choose books according to my friends' recommendations (9)	-.039	-.052	-.060	-.048	-.133	.136	.042	.638**	1

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

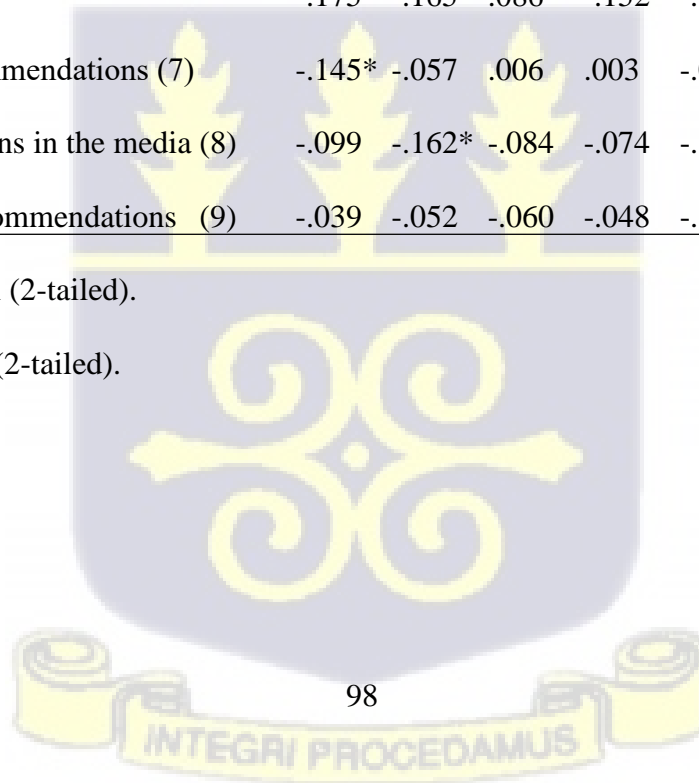


Table 5: Correlations between demographics and study variables (domain- discretion)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Child's age group (1)	1								
Age (2)	.239**	1							
Gender (3)	.039	.100	1						
Number of boys (4)	.040	.196**	.218**	1					
Number of girls (5)	.177*	.297**	.009	-.316**	1				
Educational level (6)	-.175*	-.165*	.086	-.152*	-.100	1			
Before I choose a book, I read the summary on the back cover (7)	-.012	-.134	-.058	-.138	-.056	.284**	1		
I read the entire book myself before I choose to for my child (8)	-.122	-.132	-.058	-.020	-.002	.186**	.429**	1	
When choosing books for my child, I look for specific subjects (9)	.058	.123	.042	.122	.089	-.070	.084	.103	1

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

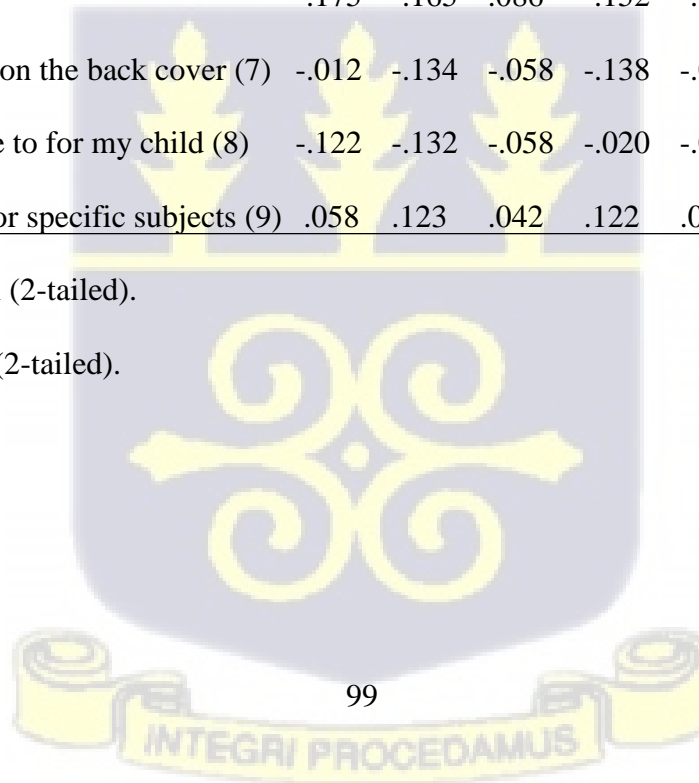


Table 6: Correlations between demographics and study variables (Children's Characteristics)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Child's age group (1)	1							
Age (2)	.239**	1						
Gender (3)	.039	.100	1					
Number of boys (4)	.040	.196**	.218**	1				
Number of girls (5)	.177*	.297**	.009	-.316**	1			
Educational level (6)	-.175*	-.165*	.086	-.152*	-.100	1		
It is important that the age on the book is similar to my child's age (9)	.058	.059	.043	.066	.012	-.020	1	
I buy books that my child selects	.095	.077	.052	.074	-.033	-.095	.287**	1

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

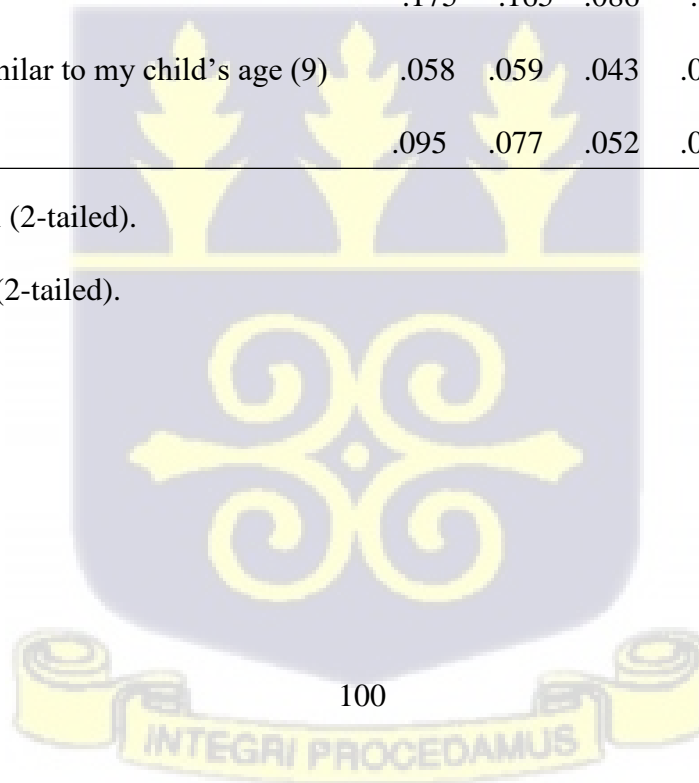


Table 7: Correlations between demographics and study variables (domain-price)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Child's age group	1								
Age	.239**	1							
Gender	.039	.100	1						
Number of boys	.040	.196**	.218**	1					
number of girls	.177*	.297**	.009	-.316**	1				
Educational level	-.175*	-.165*	.086	-.152*	-.100	1			
I purchase children's books when on sale and with discounts	.035	-.069	-.096	-.033	-.069	-.090	1		
I prefer to purchase several books at once (e.g., on sale)	-.005	-.068	-.114	-.141*	.069	-.019	.601**	1	
I rarely buy books for my children because they are expensive	.007	.002	.028	-.008	.028	-.189**	.485**	.556**	1

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

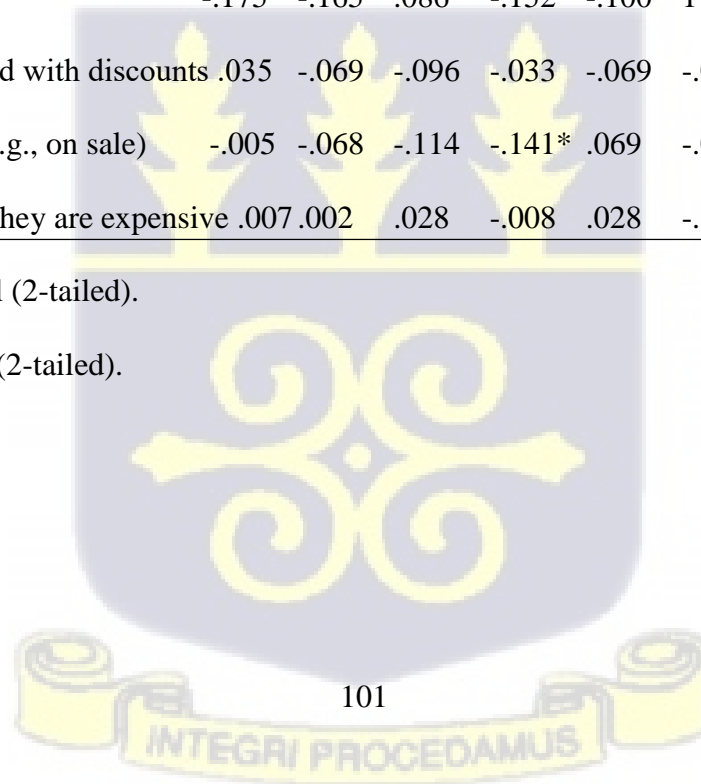
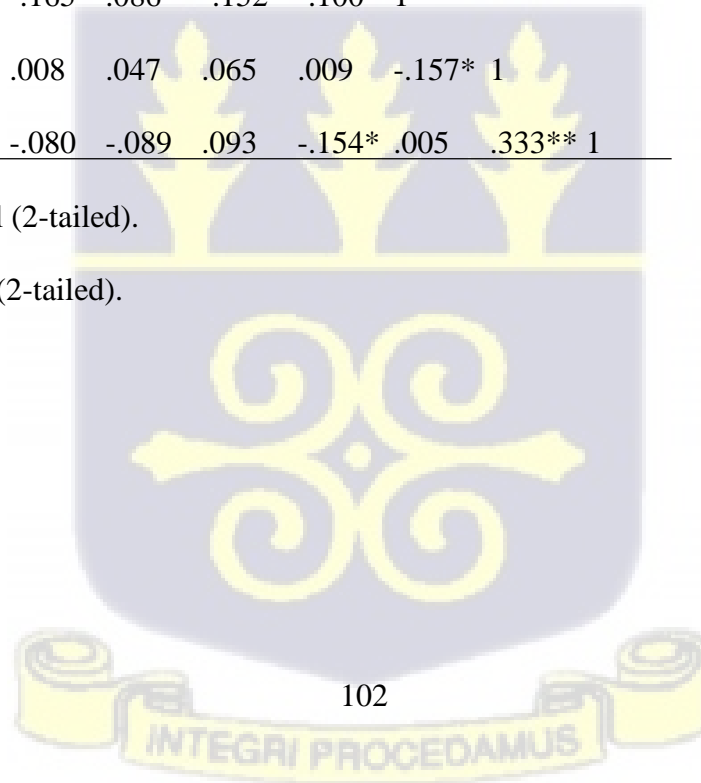


Table 8: Correlations between demographics and study variables- preferences

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Child's age group	1							
Age	.239**	1						
Gender	.039	.100	1					
Number of boys	.040	.196**	.218**	1				
number of girls	.177*	.297**	.009	-.316**	1			
Educational level	-.175*	-.165*	.086	-.152*	-.100	1		
I prefer to buy Ghanaian books	.018	.008	.047	.065	.009	-.157*	1	
I prefer to buy foreign books	-.031	-.080	-.089	.093	-.154*	.005	.333**	1

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



APPENDIX G

Cross Tabulation Between Ages of Parents and Children

Parents' Age		20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Total
Child's age	0-2	13	12	6	0	31
	3-5	22	62	12	3	99
	6-8	9	39	20	4	72
Total		44	113	38	7	202

