

PLH Toddlers programme improves parent- and child-outcomes related to education and violence-prevention



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The nature of the parent-child relationship impacts children's ability to develop well in their early years

“The presence of a supportive and nurturing relationship with even one primary caregiver helps children to be more resilient and develop well.”

- Harvard Centre for the
Developing Child













Family strengthening

The PLH Toddlers programme, called Dialogic book-sharing, improves child and parent outcomes

Let's see why



What did you observe between the mother and child?

-  Interactive
-  Closeness
-  Easy
-  Engaging
-  Exciting
-  Lively
-  Inquisitive
-  Enjoyable
-  Supportive
-  Respect

Early “serve and return” experiences maximise stimulation in the language centres

In “serve and return” interactions, meaningful responses from adults stimulate connections in the infant’s language centre in the brain



Two recent research results

“Stronger predictor of language and cognitive development than number of adult words heard”

“Greater stimulation of brain areas associated with language processing than number of adult words heard”

Parents need to be supported to have interactions and exchanges during book-sharing with their children, rather than simply reading the words on the page

Randomised Control Trial of Book-Sharing (DBS) in South Africa

- 91 mother-child dyads
- Infants aged 14 – 16 months
- 8-week programme in book-sharing (n=49) or control (n=42)

Primary outcomes:

- Child Language (CDI)
- Child attention (ECVT)

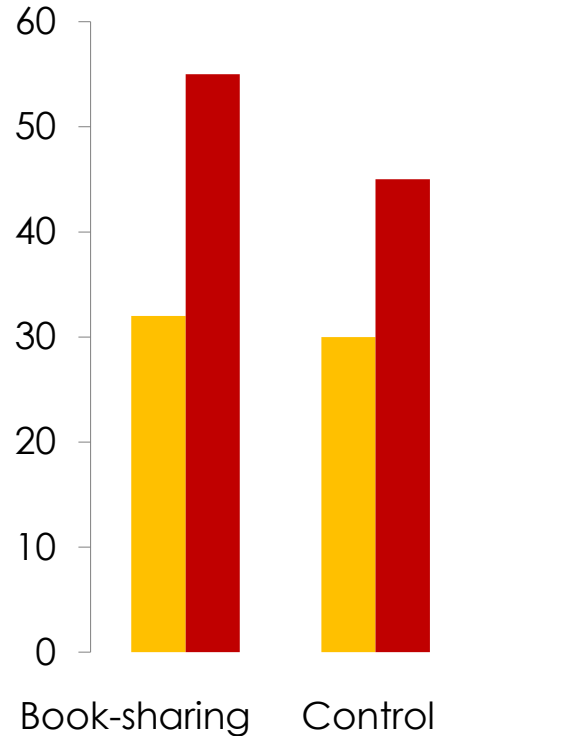
Secondary outcome:

- Maternal book-sharing

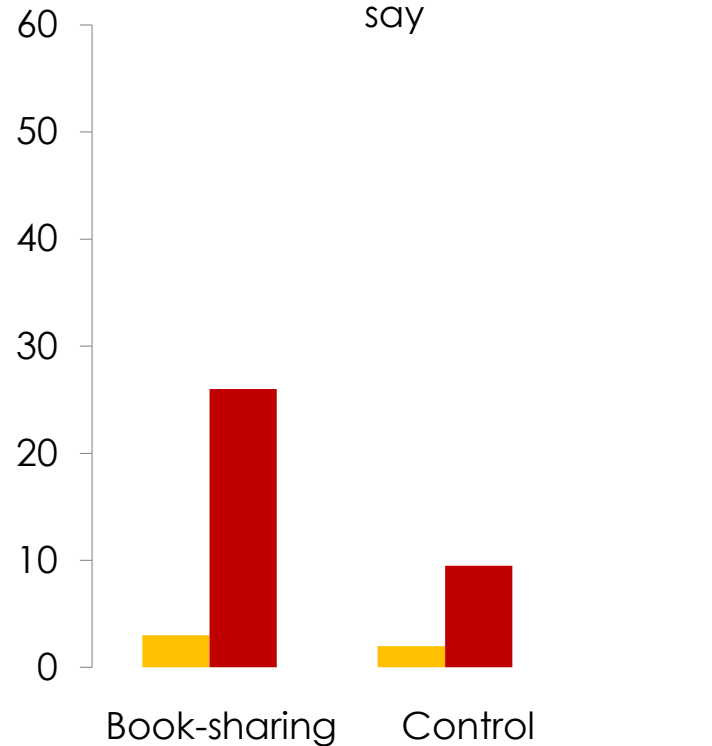
Vally et al. (2015) 'The impact of dialogic book-sharing training on infant language and attention', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*

Book-sharing had positive effects on children's language and attention

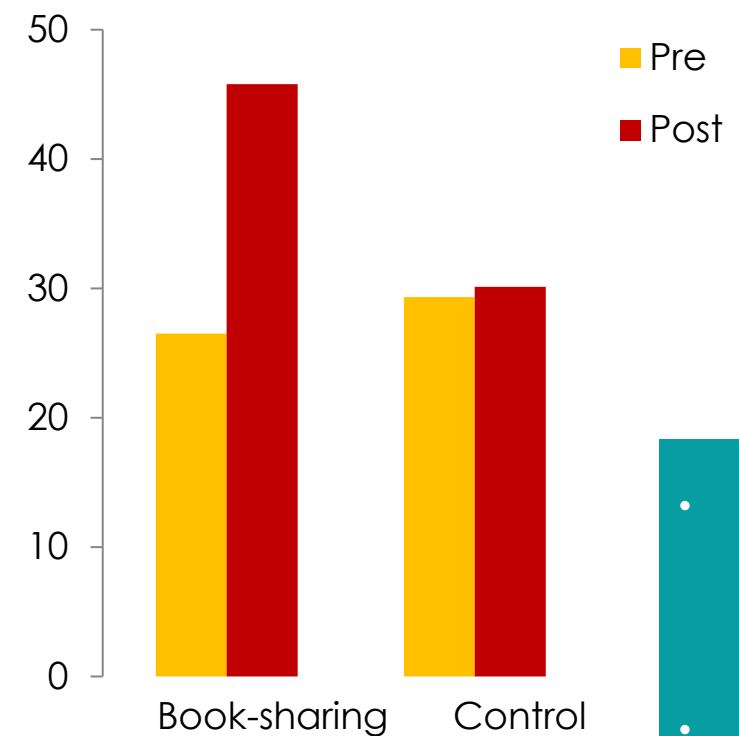
Parent report on infant receptive language –
no. of words understands



Parent report on infant expressive language –
no. of words understands and can say

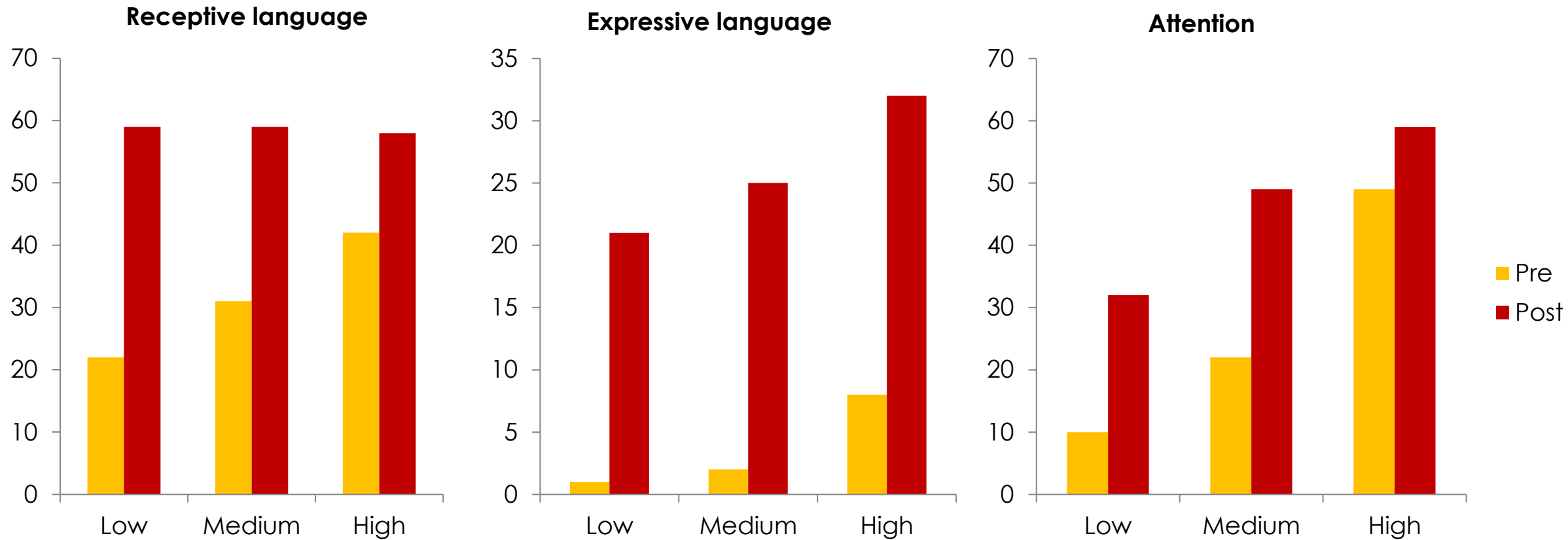


Attention
i.e., % time focused on task



- Randomised controlled trial, Khayelitsha
- 14 – 16-month-old infants

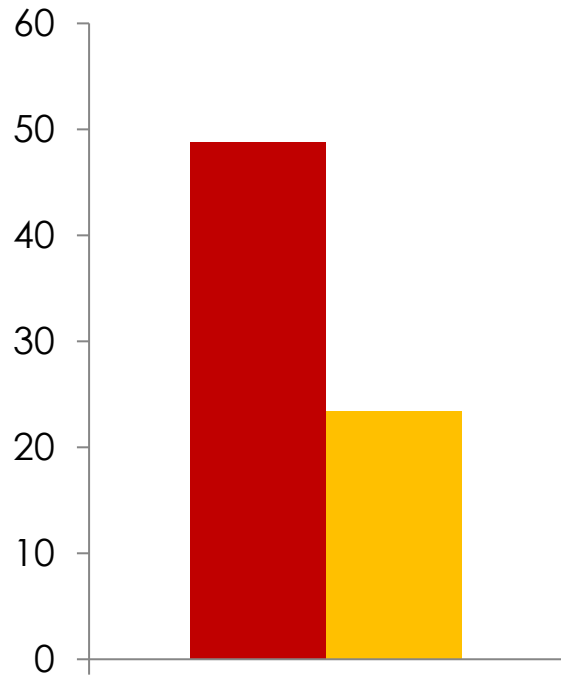
Children who begin with lowest level of performance improve the most



Book-sharing also improves young children's socio-emotional development...

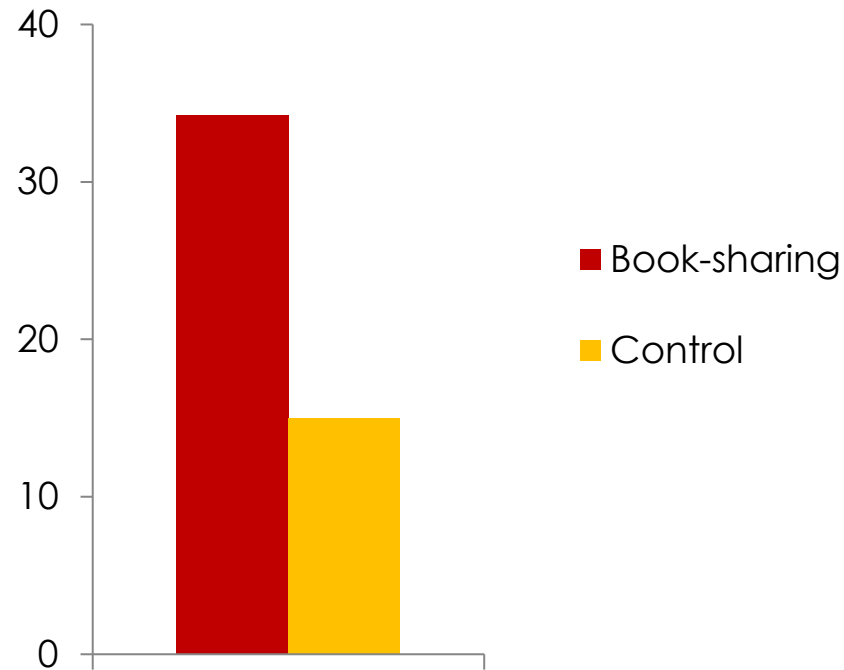
Empathy

% of children demonstrating empathy in a help task



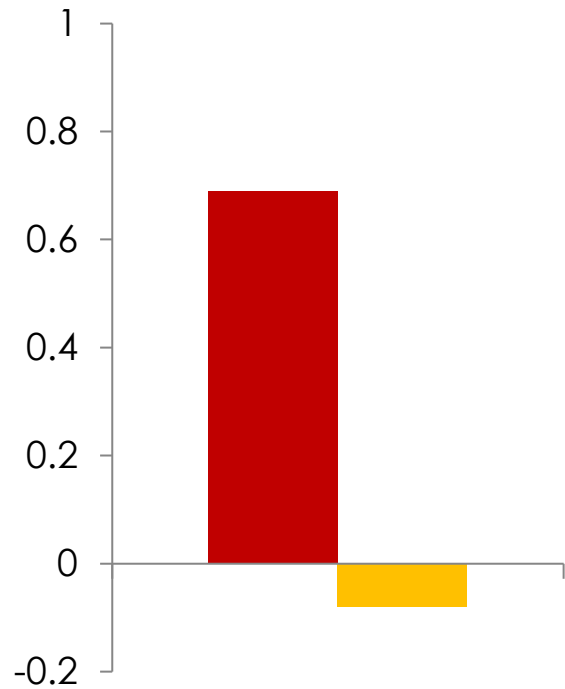
Imitation of affectionate interaction

% of children showing behaviour

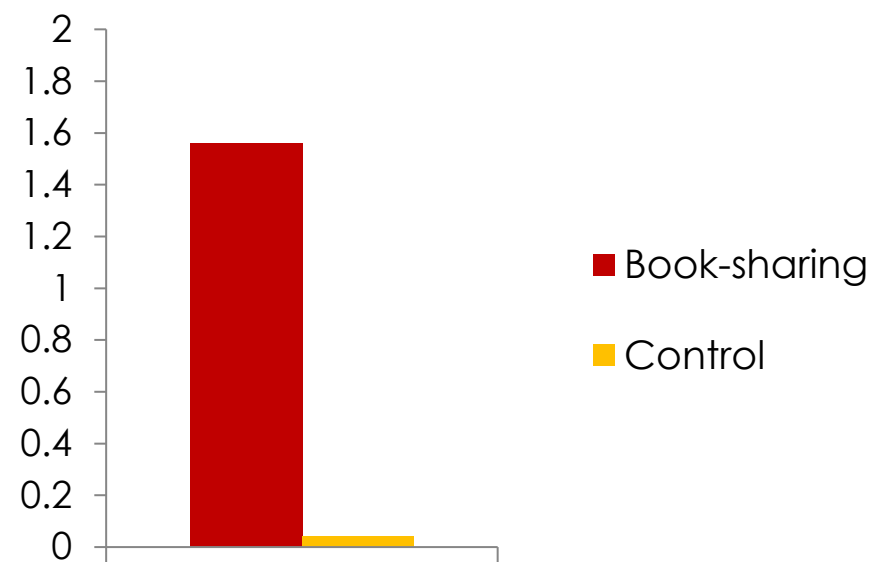


... and helps mothers respond more sensitively and reciprocally with their children

Parental sensitivity during book-sharing



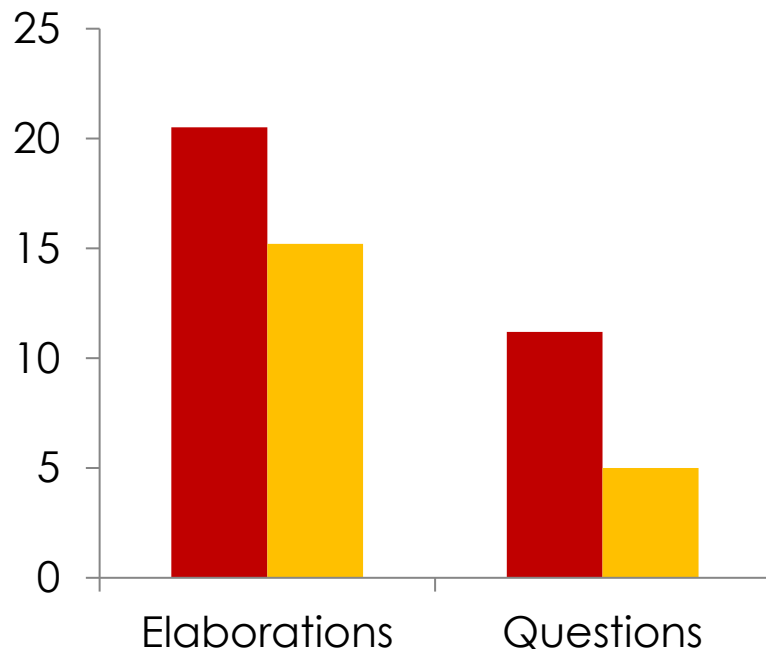
Parental-child reciprocity during book-sharing



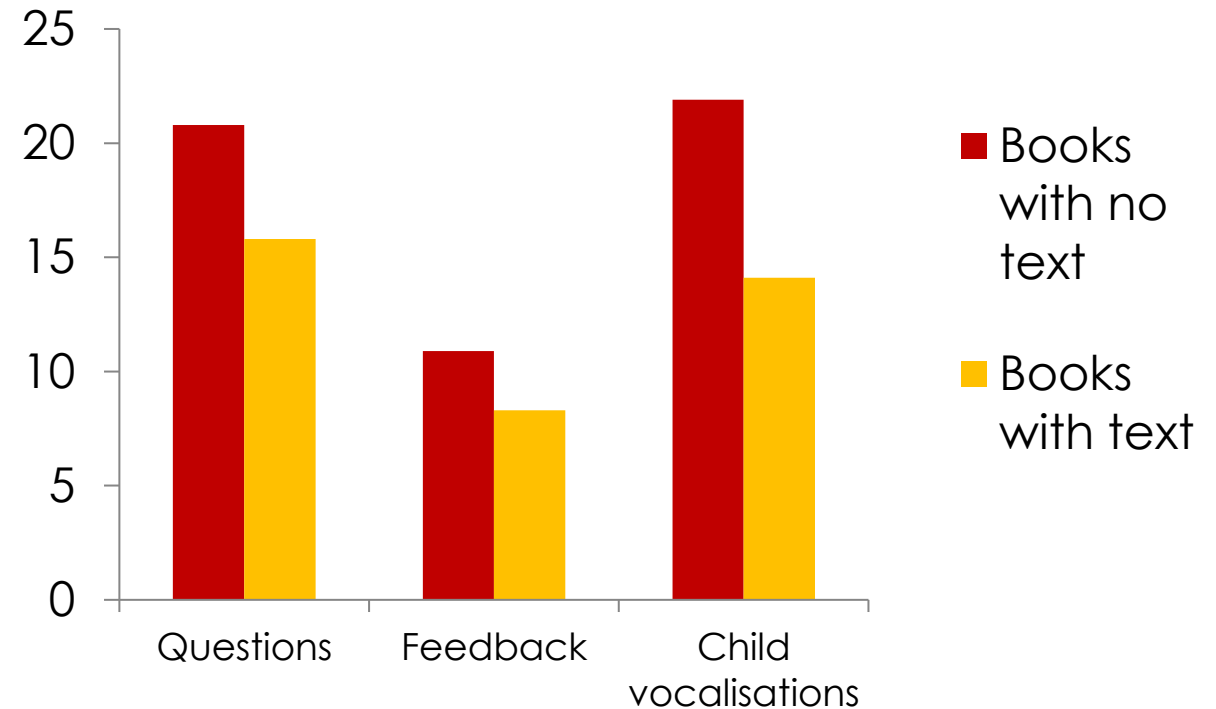
Training parents and caregivers in the book-sharing programme has the potential to make a significant contribution to both educational achievement and the reduction of aggression through development of more harmonious family relationships and more stimulating engagement.

The “wordless” nature of the books promotes more interaction and engagement between parents and children

Parent interactions (9 month olds),
Mean number of:

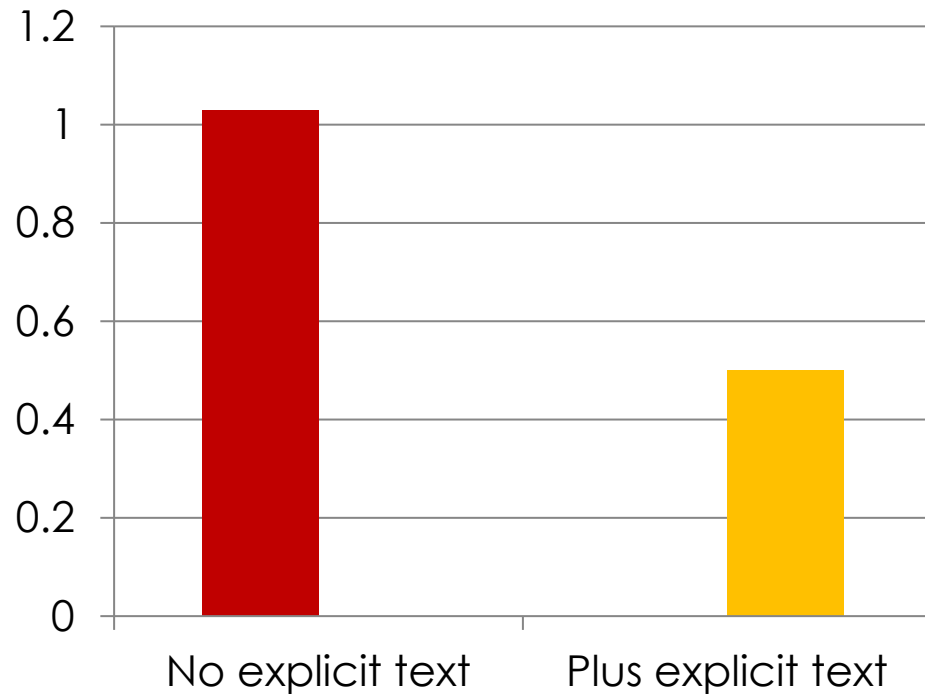


Parent and child interactions (27 month olds), Mean number of:



Books without words also promote more adult mental state talk which, in turn, helps children's mental state understanding

Scores for child mental state explanation



The group of children who shared books without explicit text had better scores on explaining mental states

Why do wordless books promote richer interaction?

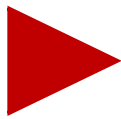
- The adult has to make sense of the story
- There is an opportunity to tailor the story to the child's experience
- The adult cannot just 'fall back' on a text

How does book-sharing impact violence reduction?

Violent behaviour develops in early childhood

- Majority of research and intervention into gender-based violence has focused on societal and attitudinal factors
- This work looks at the individual psychological variables that impacts the development of violent behaviour

Normal child aggression peaks at age 2 - 3



If children fail to learn emotional regulation



And fail to learn adaptive ways to manage aggressive impulses



Leads to persistent and pervasive child aggression by age three-to-four

An additional benefit: Book-sharing helps improve parents' early parenting challenges to decrease child risk factors for violence

Early parenting difficulty

Resultant child risk factor

Book-sharing benefit

Unresponsive or insensitive parenting



Child is insecurely attached to parent



Secure infant attachment and increased maternal sensitivity

Harsh or inconsistent parenting



Child behaviour problems



Improved parent containment strategies and reduced child defiance and aggression

Poor cognitive stimulation and support



Child cognitive problems and education failure



Improved child language and attention

Significant predictors of persistent child aggression and later violent behaviour

Associated with decreased risk for aggression and later violence

Parents occupy many spaces within society that could be used to support their bonding and stimulation activities with their babies

We need to support parents in the spaces where they find themselves with their babies



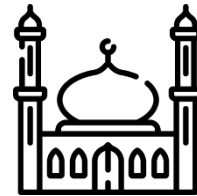
Clinics



ECD centres



Home affairs



Religious spaces



Libraries



Community-based organisations

Community-based organisations: 4 - 8 week programme



Non-profit organisations

Book-sharing
for Babies
- Fathers

- Four session programme
 - Six session programme

Book-sharing
for Tots

- Six session programme

Book-sharing for
Young Children

- Eight session programme

- Group sessions
- 8 – 10 participants
- Weekly sessions
- Themed book per session
- Discussion, practice and mentorship

Research studies:

- Murray et al
- Cooper et al
- Dowdall et al

ECD Classrooms: 4 week programme



ECD Classrooms

- 4 session programme
- Manualised programme with videos and powerpoint slides
- Group sessions of 8 – 10 ECD teachers

Research studies:

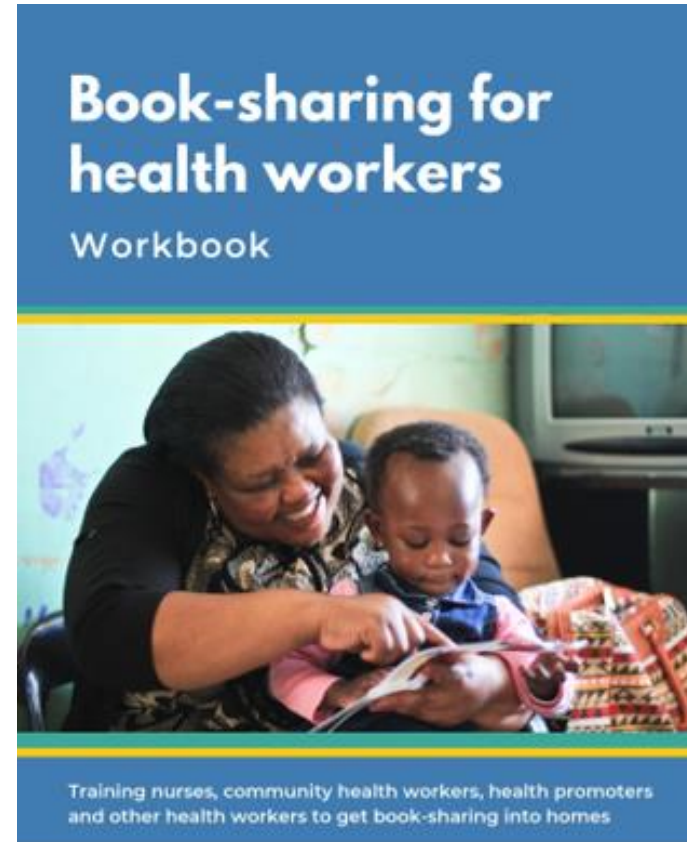
- Study on impact of training ECD teachers on teacher and child outcomes

Clinics: Home visitor programme through Community Health Workers



Clinics

- Home visitors trained to introduce mothers in the First Thousand Days to concepts on early stimulation and book-sharing
- Mothers receive 1 – 4 visits on book-sharing, depending on district model
- Planning with local authorities on implementation approach and delivery mechanisms
- All mothers received 1 book



Libraries: Provide supplementary support to parents exposed to book-sharing through Community Health Workers



Libraries

- Libraries in Districts where CHWs and clinics are offering book-sharing are also targeted to offer book-sharing
- Ongoing support and mentorship offered to mothers, and other caregivers, on book-sharing
- Libraries stocked with additional wordless books

Introduction to book-sharing



Book-sharing

Online librarian's
Parenting Book-Sharing training



Book-sharing for Librarians



Week 1: Orientation

3 June 2020



A story from a parent (1/2)

“

When my daughter was little, she would ask me to help her with her reading homework. Most of the time her reading would be in Afrikaans and I can't read in Afrikaans, so I would avoid her.

After being trained in the book-sharing programme, now with my younger son, I understand that he and I have the freedom to create our own story, in our own words. I am able to learn more about my son and he is able to know me better as his mother.

”

A story from a parent (2/2)

“

I used to have the most stubborn child. I would tell him what to do, and it would be like he never even heard me.

I would shout at him – nothing.

I would threaten to hit him – nothing.

I would hit him – still nothing.

But now, when I want him to do something, we sit down at talk about it, and then he does it. Now, I realise that...

I was the stubborn one.

”

Thank you!



APPENDIX






We are also conducting a study to adapt the book-sharing programme for delivery to fathers

Stage 1: Adapt existing book-sharing programme for fathers

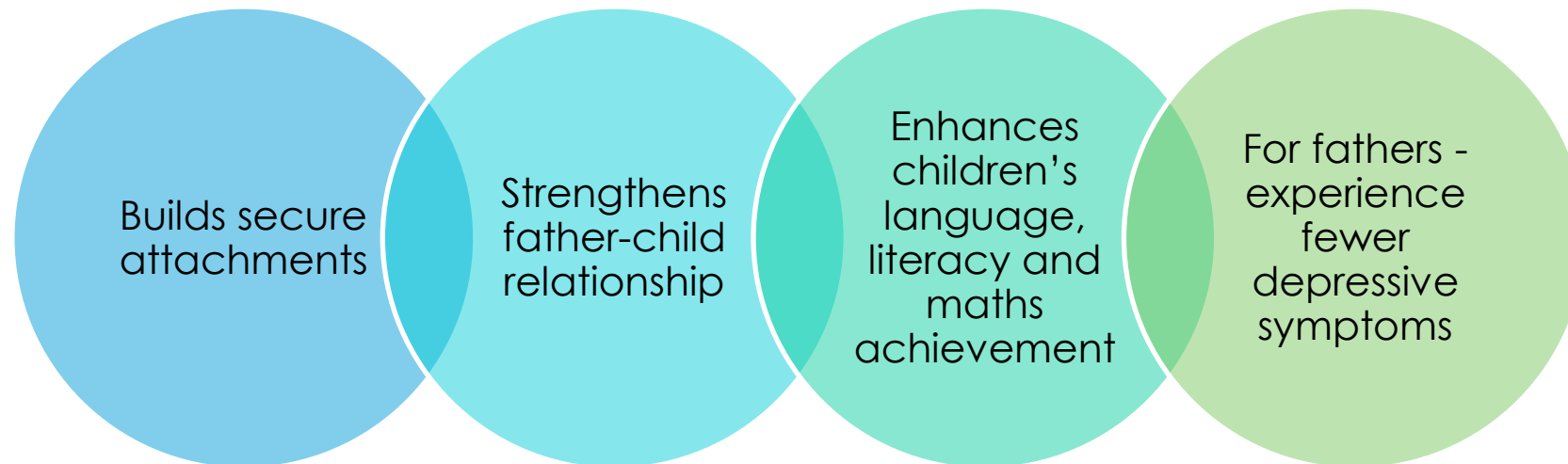
Stage 2: Conduct preliminary evaluation of its acceptability and feasibility

Fatherhood and care work

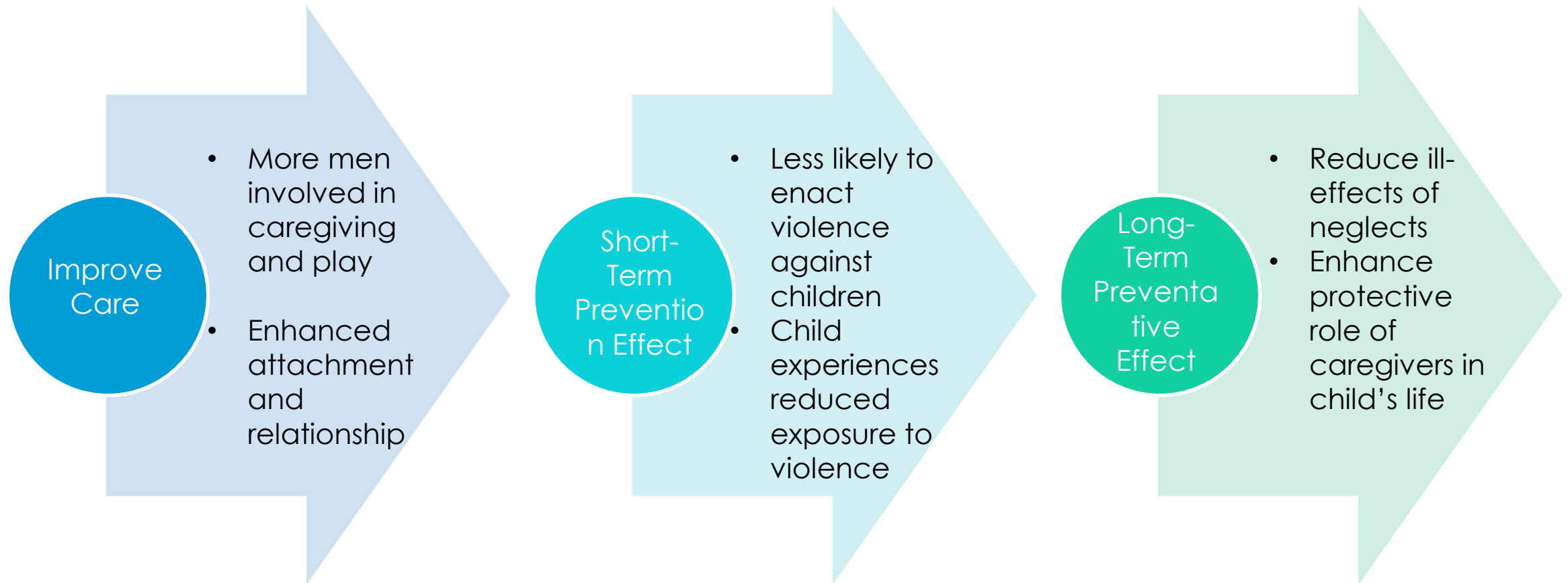
- Fatherhood is gendered  Women take on 70% of the total care work within home
- Global shift in view of father role  Due to changes in employment structures, family composition, and better understanding of importance of father involvement
- Father engagement is unique  This type of father-child interaction in play is predictive of a long-term, positive impact on the child

Fathers' involvement in children's literacy development

- As contemporary fathers are taking on multiple roles (bread-winner, caregiver, educator) within the home environment, they are engaging more in literacy practices with their children
- A range of benefits to engaging in early literacy activities:



Fathers' involvement in children's care can lower risk factors for violence



Fathers' involvement in the early years benefits children's overall development

- Improved cognitive skills and learning outcomes
 
 “...higher IQs, enhanced linguistic abilities”
- Improved psychosocial outcomes
 
 “...improved child well-being”
 “...more confident”
 “...better social relationships with peers”
- Improved social competence
 
 “...better regulation of the way they feel and behave”
 “...better management of feelings of aggression”

Research Measures

	What will be assessed	How it will be assessed
Fathering outcomes	How often fathers share books with their children each week	Assessed using the Father Involvement Scale to be completed by both mothers and fathers (Belsky, 1984; Lamb, 1987).
	Sensitivity and Reciprocity	Fathers will be filmed interacting with their child, rated for paternal sensitivity and facilitation, and for reciprocity (Murray et al, 2016; Dowdall et al, 2020). Use of positive parenting (praise) and harsh parenting using Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (Essau et al., 2006).
	Gender equitable attitudes	Fathers' attitudes to gender equality will be assessed before and after participating in the intervention using the Gender Equitable Men Scale (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2008)
Child outcomes	Language	Assessed indirectly by father and mother report (using a local adaptation of the MacArthur Child Development Inventory)
	Attention	Assessed with the Early Childhood Vigilance Task (Goldman, Shapiro, & Nelson, 2004).